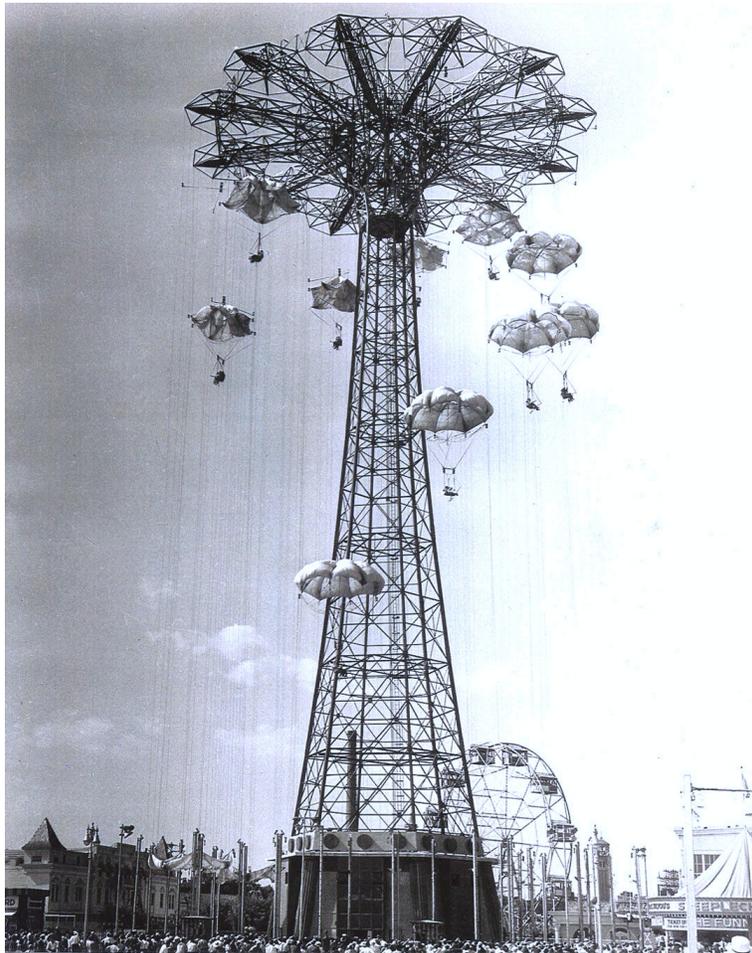


COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE **ARTS** | WRITING

FALL 2021



COURSEBOOK

Workshops ■ Seminars ■ Lectures ■ Master Classes

Updated: August 20, 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF COURSES BY DAY AND TIME

WORKSHOPS	1
SEMINARS	2
LECTURES	5
MASTER CLASSES	6

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SEMINARS	7
LITERARY TRANSLATION WORKSHOP	26
LECTURES	27
MASTER CLASSES	30
SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP	37

WORKSHOPS

FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Jean Kyoung Frazier
Mon., 10am-1pm
Rivka Galchen
Mon., 10am-1pm
Victor LaValle
Tue., 10am-1pm
Joshua Furst
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Heidi Julavits
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Joanna Hershon
Thu., 10am-1pm
Nicholas Christopher
Thu., 2pm-5pm
Ben Marcus
Thu., 2pm-5pm
Paul Beatty
Thu., 2:30pm-5:30pm
Rachel Sherman
Thu., 3:30pm-6:30pm

NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Kate Zambreno
Mon., 2:30pm-5:30pm
Jordan Kisner
Tue., 10am-1pm
Michael Greenberg
Tue., 3:30pm-6:30pm
Michelle Orange
Fri., 2pm-5pm

NONFICTION – THESIS (9 points)

Second-Years only

Leslie Jamison
Mon., 1:15pm-4:15pm
Phillip Lopate
Mon., 2:15pm-5:15pm
Brenda Wineapple
Mon., 2:15pm-5:15pm
Wendy S. Walters
Tue., 10am-1pm
Lis Harris
Tue., 3:30pm-6:30pm

POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

Cynthia Cruz
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Timothy Donnelly
Wed., 4:10pm-7:10pm
Shane McCrae
Thu., 10am-1pm
Asiya Wadud
Thu., 5:15pm-8:15pm
Mark Bibbins
Fri., 2pm-5pm
Emily Skillings
Fri., 2pm-5pm

SEMINARS

—MONDAY—

Keri Bertino (CG)

The Writer as Teacher

Mon., 10am-1pm

Gideon Lewis-Kraus (NF)

Reporting Non-News

Mon., 12pm-2pm

Dorothea Lasky (PO)

Unleashing the Poetic Demon

Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Tony Tulathimutte (FI)

Form, Etc.

Mon., 3:20pm-5:20pm

Rivka Galchen (FI)

Mysteries

Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Erroll McDonald (FI)

William Faulkner and World Fiction

Mon., 4:30pm-6:30pm

—TUESDAY—

Phillip Lopate (NF)

Studies in the Essay

Tue., 10am-12pm

Shane McCrae (PO)

A Different Kind of Wildness:

On Narrative Poetry

Tue., 10am-12pm

Lynn Steger Strong (FI)

Domestic Fiction

Tue., 10am-12pm

James Cañón (FI)

Link 'Em Up! Bridging the Boundary
Between Short Stories and Novels

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Timothy Donnelly (PO)

Nonsense

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Monica Ferrell (CG)

Word and Image: Reading and
Writing Contemporary Poetry for
Prose Writers

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Seminars and translation workshops
are 3 points.

(FI) = Fiction (NF) = Nonfiction
(PO) = Poetry (CG) = Cross-Genre
(TR) = Translation

SEMINARS (cont'd.)

—TUESDAY (cont'd.)—

Leslie Jamison (NF)

Strange Emotions

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Ben Marcus (FI)

State of the Art:

The Future of the Short Story

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Kimi Traube (CG, TR)

Borderlands:

Literature of the Liminal

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Brigid Hughes (CG)

Editing and the Writer

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Binnie Kirshenbaum (FI)

Writers as Characters

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Lara Vapnyar (FI)

Building a Scene

Wed., 10am-12pm

Deborah Paredez (PO)

Witness, Record, Document:

Poetry and Testimony

Wed., 10:10am-12pm

Margo Jefferson (NF)

Arts Writing, Life Writing

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Jeremy Tiang (CG, TR)

Literary Translation Workshop

Wed., 2pm-4:30pm

Hilton Als (CG)

Wright/Baldwin

Wed., 4:20pm-6:20pm

SEMINARS (cont'd.)

—THURSDAY—

Susan Bernofsky (CG, TR)
Literary Translation Workshop
Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Nicholas Christopher (CG)
Mosaics: Unified Collections of
Fiction & Poetry
Thu., 10am-12pm

Ruth Franklin (NF)
Writing Other People's Lives
Thu., 10am-12pm

Nalini Jones (FI)
The Big Moment
Thu., 10am-12pm

B.K. Fischer (CG)
The Comma Sutra:
Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis
Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Susan Hartman (NF)
Writing About Communities
Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

—FRIDAY—

Anelise Chen (FI)
Animal Tales
Fri., 10am-12pm

Alice Quinn (PO)
The Poems of Emily Dickinson
Fri., 10am-12pm

Katrine Øgaard Jensen (CG, TR)
Science Fiction Poetics
Fri., 2pm-4pm

Hilton Als (CG)
Bent
Fri., 2:30pm-4:30pm

LECTURES

—TUESDAY—

Alan Gilbert

Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry

(3 points)

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Lee Siegel

The Big Blur: Writing in the Space
Between Art and Life

(3 points)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

—THURSDAY—

Benjamin Taylor

Quests and Questers

(3 points)

Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

MASTER CLASSES

—MONDAY—

Julia Sanches

Mother Tongues?: Translation as
Multilingual Collaboration (1 point)
Mon., 10am-12pm
Nov. 15 - Dec. 6

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer's Imagination
(1.5 points)
Mon., 11:40pm-1:40pm
Sept. 13 - Oct. 18

Wes Enzinna

Breaking Into Magazines (1.5 points)
Mon., 6pm-8pm
Sept. 13 - Oct. 18

—TUESDAY—

James Wood

Fictional Technique in Novellas and
Short Stories (1 point)
Tue., 3:30pm-5:30pm
Nov. 9 - Dec. 7 (no class Nov. 23)

Joss Lake

Queerness and Literary Technologies
(1.5 points)
Tue., 6pm-8pm
Sept. 14 - Oct. 19

JC Hallman

Do Facts Even Matter? (1.5 points)
Tue., 6:45pm-8:45pm
Oct. 26 - Dec. 7 (no class Nov. 2)

—WEDNESDAY—

Heather Radke

Small Potatoes: Writing Nonfiction about
the Everyday (1.5 points)
Wed., 5:10pm-7:10pm
Oct. 27 - Dec. 8 (no class Nov. 24)

—THURSDAY—

Tan Lin

Rules and the Poem (1.5 points)
Thu., 12:10pm-2:10pm
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9 (no class Nov. 25)

Jay Deshpande

First Books of Poems, Then and Now
(1.5 points)
Thu., 6pm-8pm
Sept. 16 - Oct. 21

—FRIDAY—

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page
(1.5 points)
Fri., 10am-12pm
Sept. 10 - Oct. 15

Jason Gots

Narrative Podcasting (1.5 points)
Fri., 10am-12pm
Oct. 1 - Nov. 5

Adam Wilson

The Ecstasy of Influence (1.5 points)
Fri., 12:10pm-2:10pm
Sept. 17 - Oct. 22

—OTHER—

Richard Ford

Reading *The House in Paris* (1.5 points)
Nov. 11, Thu., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 12, Fri., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 15, Mon., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 16, Tue., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 17, Wed., 6pm-8pm

SEMINARS

Hilton Als

Bent

(NONFICTION)

Fri., 2:30pm-4:30pm

Queer writers ranging from Thomas Mann to Carson McCullers to Dennis Cooper have produced a body of literature that increases our understanding of difference as it's played out in the larger world. So doing, they have also helped to widen our understanding of what "queer" might mean. Is a story, memoir, or piece of criticism queer because it's written by a homosexual writer, or because it's about a character's "different" sexuality, or because a particular character lives in the margins, and feels at odds with society as a whole? What does "queer" mean to you, the writer, and how would you describe or represent those thoughts and feelings in your work? How does difference play itself out in contemporary society, where straight men, for instance, feel free enough now to say they're queer-identified, while some transgendered people don't want to be called queer at all.

In this seminar, we will read a number of short masterworks, mostly nonfiction, that gives voice to these various issues. We will also look at a film that has a bearing on the issues the class raises. Readings include work by Gertrude Stein, Truman Capote, Elizabeth Hardwick, James Baldwin, and Dennis Cooper.

Hilton Als

Wright/Baldwin

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wed., 4:20pm-6:20pm

By the time James Baldwin died in 1987, he had, arguably, become the voice of black and queer America. As the author of numerous novels, essays, plays, and social commentaries, the Harlem-born author had managed, over his nearly forty-year career, to write about race, sex, gender, and the politics of difference in a style that was uniquely his own. His voice was personal, analytical, and highly literary, all at once.

In this course, we will not only examine James Baldwin's career, but the times that defined him and a relationship that was, early on, central to his life as an artist: his friendship with Richard Wright, whose best-known works remain *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945). How did Baldwin, a Harlem-born native, become our premier poet of exile? Wright emigrated to Paris before Baldwin. Did their respective self-exiles make them quintessentially American artists, and our greatest critics?

Our discussions will be divided between analyzing student writing, and various Wright and Baldwin texts, which include Baldwin's *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (1948), *Giovanni's Room* (1956), and *The Fire Next Time* (1963), in addition to Wright's *Eight Men* (1961) and the texts cited above.

Keri Bertino

The Writer as Teacher

(CROSS-GENRE)

Mon., 10am-1pm

This class, for students with an interest in teaching creative writing in any setting, takes as a starting point two foundational questions of writing pedagogy: "Can it be taught?" and "Is it possible to teach English [/writing] so that people stop killing each other?" Together, we'll develop more (and more-nuanced) inquiries in response to these questions, and seek to answer them through our exploration of the theories, practices, and contexts of teaching creative writing. Primary topics include fundamentals of both general and writing pedagogy (including process, multiple intelligences, creativity, and growth mindset), creating classroom communities, exercise and course development, responding to student writing, the workshop, and exploration of varied sites of creative writing. We'll also take up broader questions of the role of the artist and teacher in communities, issues of professionalization, and the way that practices of teaching and writing fortify and inform one another.

In this part-seminar, part-practicum course, students design course descriptions and goals, and create and present both writing exercises and sample lessons, in addition to other readings, responses, and assignments.

James Cañón

Link 'Em Up!: Bridging the Boundary Between Short Stories and Novels

(FICTION)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Is it a collection of short stories? Is it a novel? Actually, it's both! This seminar will focus on highly acclaimed short story cycles, or collections of linked stories, or novels-in-stories, or composite novels—call them by whatever name you like—those books made up of individual narratives that stand alone as short stories, with all the intensity that the form entails, but are connected so the book achieves an aggregate, novelistic force, a collection that adds up to something even more compelling than the power of its component parts. We'll look at works by Jamaica Kincaid, Sherwood Anderson, Julia Álvarez, Daniyal Mueenuddin, Mia Alvar, Edward P. Jones, Mavis Gallant, and Nam Le, among others. We'll explore organizing around place, character, theme, and event. We'll look at using repetition of landscape and objects to maximize emotional impact. We'll delve into long and short timeframes—how one

approaches writing a multi-generational linked cycle versus a cycle of stories that occurs in a day. We'll focus on the importance of plot: how throughlines and lines of tension function in both individual stories and through a linked collection. Lastly, we'll consider connection and disconnection in relation to broader questions of identity and community.

Anelise Chen

Animal Tales

(FICTION)

Fri., 10am-1pm

Animal stories are as old as storytelling itself. Before the rupture between humans and nature, animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded man, the essayist John Berger argues in "Why Look at Animals." Animals, at once foe and food, were so vital to human flourishing that the first forms of art were created to solidify the relationship. Today, as the human world becomes increasingly divorced from the natural world, the animal stories, too, have gone away. How have writers attempted to bring animals back into the first circle of awareness? In this course, we will look at works of fiction that pull the animals back in. We will read stories about humans looking at animals, loving animals, and transforming into animals. As the popular post-humanist scholar Donna Haraway puts it: We polish an animal mirror to look at ourselves. What can animals teach us about ourselves, and more importantly, about how to survive our own nature? In the midst of this sixth extinction, will it still be possible to cohabit peacefully, ecologically, together? By imagining the private lives of animals and writing stories from their perspective, can we still intervene and cultivate the necessary cross-species connections that will carry us into a more just and entwined future? To explore these questions, we will read fiction by Franz Kafka, Russell Hoban, Sigrid Nunez, Andre Alexis, Yoko Tawada, Julio Cortazar, Leonora Carrington, Ted Chiang, as well as critical texts by Donna Haraway, Yi-Fu Tuan, Jack Halberstam, and others. This is a reading seminar course, but there will be opportunities for generative creative exercises.

Nicholas Christopher

Mosaics: Unified Collections of Fiction & Poetry

(CROSS-GENRE)

Thu., 10am-12pm

We will examine assorted volumes of interconnected stories and book-length sequences of poems and prose-poems. The complex tension in such collections between the discrete, often eclectic, elements—whether stories or poems—and the unified whole make them a potent form that rivals the novel or long poem in imaginative resonance. By virtue of their verve and uniqueness, these books have influenced many others in their particular genres. The reading list is international, and thematically varied. Each week there will be a short student presentation. A single paper will be required at the end of the term: a brief formal proposal (including a sample chapter or introduction) for a book in a particular genre—informed by all the varieties we have explored—that the student might want to write.

A Universal History of Iniquity, Jorge Luis Borges
The Bloody Chamber, Angela Carter
Madwomen: The “Locas Mujeres” Poems, Gabriela Mistral
Mr. Cogito, Zbigniew Herbert
Red Cavalry, Isaac Babel
Jesus’ Son, Denis Johnson
Palm-of-the-Hand Stories, Yasunari Kawabata
The World Doesn’t End, Charles Simic
Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino
Parentheses, Yannis Ritsos
In Our Time, Ernest Hemingway
The Ink Dark Moon, Onono Komachi & Izumi Shikibu, trans. by Jane Hirshfield
 & a selection of *Sanskrit Love Poems*, trans. by W.S. Merwin
Concerning the Angels, Rafael Alberti (a selection)
The Street of Crocodiles, Bruno Schulz

Timothy Donnelly

Nonsense

(POETRY)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

“Almost everywhere there is happiness there is pleasure in nonsense.”
 —Nietzsche

“And if logic can’t prevail, perhaps hilarity can, as an attribute of a revolutionary
 practice of everyday life, dismantling control and reforming connectivity.”
 —Lyn Hejinian

In this seminar we will use the word “nonsense” as an umbrella term for a wide array of artistic practices that challenge normative modes of meaning making or seek to defy common-sense reasoning. Readings will range from Aristophanes’ comedy *The Birds*, both for its fantastical “collision and collusion of signifiers” (Gregory Dobrov) as well as its depiction of birdsong, to William Benton’s concrete poetry collection *Birds* (1972), in which each poem is presented as “a visual event.” We will start with a review of the fundamentals of semiotics to remember how sense is made in the first place, with specific emphasis on the Saussurean model and such key rhetorical tropes as irony, metonymy, synecdoche, and especially metaphor—which Lacan says “occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from nonsense.” In addition to our appreciation of the various aesthetic motives (and delights) of subverting sense, we will likewise embrace the politics of writing as “a constant disruption of the means of semantic production.” (Fred Moten) We will consider the place of nonsense in the thought of Nietzsche, Bergson, Wittgenstein, and most especially in the work of Cixous, whose concept of *l’écriture féminine* promises to “erase the divisions between speech and text, between order and chaos, between sense and nonsense,” as well as in the early work of Deleuze, whose study *Logic and Sense* draws a crucial distinction between the playful

“nonsense of the surface” of Lewis Carroll and the terrifying “nonsense of depth” of Antonin Artaud.

In addition to those mentioned above, specific texts and topics are likely to include Jonathan Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* and the art of digression; Victorian champions of nonsense such as Carroll himself and Edward Lear, as well as the latter’s echo in the Modernist, feminist work of Stevie Smith; the relationship between nonsense and melancholy; William James’s “stream of consciousness” and the empire of Gertrude Stein; Alfred Jarry, his parodic ‘pataphysics, and its influence on Dada, Surrealism, and the OuLiPo; the possibilities of the baroque and its “excess of signification” and “madness of vision” (Nadir Lahiji), including the “extravagant verbiage” (Rita Dove) of Melvin B. Tolson’s *Harlem Gallery*; nonsense as a way of “figuring the unfigurable” (JA Mitchell); disproportion as a measure of fatal/futile desire in Wilde’s *Salomé*, Ferenc Juhász’s “The Boy Changed into a Stag Clamors at the Gate of Secrets,” and elsewhere; “the overabundance of the signifier” (Byung-Chul Han) as a characteristic of ritual; the relationship of nonsense to music, specifically popular song; the place of *ero guro nansensu* (erotic grotesque nonsense) in Modern Japanese culture; “The Cut Up Method” of William Burroughs; N.H. Pritchard’s *The Matrix*; certain practices associated with Language poetry, including homophonic translations of David Melnick’s *Men in Aida* and others; Lyn Hejinian’s *The Unfollowing* and its potent “rejection of the logic of mortality and of capitalism”; Harryette Mullen’s “ruses of the lunatic muse”; Roland Barthes’s *The Pleasure of the Text*; and a look at what Flarf was, and why. Each student will submit six short writing assignments as well as provide a brief presentation on one of the topics of our study at some point during the semester.

Monica Ferrell

Word and Image: Reading and Writing Contemporary

Poetry for Prose Writers

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Open to Fiction and Nonfiction students only. This is a workshop-format course in the reading and writing of poetry for students of fiction and creative nonfiction. With a focus on contemporary poetry, we will discuss various approaches to how to read a poem, and examine a range of aesthetics including modernism, formalism, confessional writing, the New York School, and hybridity. We will also discuss free and formal verse, the prose poem, and the lyric essay. Topics explored will include music and sound, word choice, imagery, line-break and stanza-break, repetition, syntax, silence and the unsaid, and poetic closure. We will attempt to write a new poem each week, as we consider work by such authors as Wallace Stevens, John Berryman, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, Claudia Rankine, Inger Christensen, Terrance Hayes, Cynthia Cruz, and Safiya Sinclair.

B.K. Fischer

The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis

(CROSS-GENRE)

Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

This course aims to convince the skeptic that even if Gertrude Stein was mistaken in saying “I really do not know that anything has ever been more exciting than diagramming sentences,” grammar is at least the second most fulfilling human pursuit. Fundamental to our exploration will be a study of grammatical terminology and principles as an anatomy lab for language—a method for exposing its inner workings, mechanisms, and connective tissues to understand more fully its capacities and effects. This technical scrutiny will give rise to discussion of a variety of topics relevant to creative practice in poetry and prose, including patterns of syntax, point of view, polysemy, closure, disjunction, the *non sequitur*, parataxis and hypotaxis, deixis, the subjunctive, vernaculars, and code-switching. Our analysis of grammar will dovetail with theoretical perspectives beyond subject and predicate, drawing insights from linguistics, cultural studies, feminist theory, race theory, ethics, activist politics, aesthetics, and media studies. We will dissect and revel in sentences by Virginia Woolf, Claudia Rankine, Henry James, Nathaniel Mackey, Marilynne Robinson, Emily Dickinson, Teju Cole, Jorie Graham, Taiye Selasi, Layli Long Soldier, and Vampire Weekend, among many other writers, and read essays by Nietzsche, M. NourbeSe Philip, Cecilia Vicuña, Gloria Anzaldúa, Hélène Cixous, Giorgio Agamben, Lyn Hejinian, and others. Taking the form of a sutra—texts threaded together to build a working manual—the course will focus in every class on how grammatical ideas are vital to writing praxis. Participants will write seven one-page responses to extend the seminar’s conversation, one of which must include graphic or visual (or any non-linguistic) elements, and a final paper of approximately five pages.

Ruth Franklin

Writing Other People’s Lives

(NONFICTION)

Thu., 10am-12pm

As writers, we’re often told to draw from our own experience. But the practice of getting inside another person’s head—and the radical empathy generated by trying to see the world from a perspective different from ours—can be invaluable. In this course, we’ll dig deep into the ethics and the practice of writing the lives of others, in forms such as biography, memoir, and profile. Topics will range from the practical—identifying sources, refining interview techniques, analyzing structure—to the philosophical. Who decides whose lives are worth writing about, and how have the criteria that inform those decisions changed over time? What should be taken into consideration when writing about the living or when dealing with a subject’s family members? What makes us think we can ever know what goes on in someone else’s mind, anyway? Readings will include works by classic practitioners and analysts of the genre such as Robert Caro, Carolyn Heilbrun, and Janet Malcolm, as well as recent experimental works by Saidiya Hartman, Kate Zambreno, and others.

Rivka Galchen

Mysteries

(FICTION)

Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Mystery once referred primarily to religious ideas: divine revelations, unknown rites, or the secret counsel of God. In the twentieth century, the word began to be used in reference to more prosaic things, like whodunits. But what is coming to be known in a story? Why and what is a reader tempted to try to know, and what, today, can she possibly think is going to be revealed? When do the ‘tricks’ of withholding information annoy, and when do they compel? What are clues? What are solutions? In what ways can stories not straightforwardly written as mysteries use the tropes of mystery? What turns pages and why do cliffhangers compel? What techniques of mystery can we integrate into our own writings?

In this course we’ll read novels, stories, and case histories with the intention of noticing how writers have borrowed, avoided, warped, translated, or disguised the structures of mystery.

Readings will include:

The Gospel of Mark

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allan Poe

“Afterward” by Edith Wharton

“The Rat Man” from the Case Studies of Sigmund Freud

Dora Bruder by Patrick Modiano;

“Cafeteria” by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Distant Star by Roberto Bolaño

“The Final Problem” and “A Scandal in Bohemia” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Memento Mori by Muriel Spark

“A Poor Aunt Story” and “The Year of Spaghetti” by Haruki Murakami

opening of “The Ruined Map” by Kobo Abe

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd by Agatha Christie

“Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin

Mystery Girl by David Gordon

“Guy de Maupassant” by Isaac Babel, “The Horla” by Guy de Maupassant

excerpts from *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust

Susan Hartman

Writing About Communities

(NONFICTION)

Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

In this seminar, students will learn feature writing techniques—how to interview, report on, and structure a story—as they explore a small community outside campus. New York City can be seen as a galaxy of tiny communities: a Bronx salsa bar where veterans hang out; a

storefront church in Brownsville; a midtown support group for transgender teens. We'll discuss: How do you gain access to a close-knit community? How do you establish trust? How do you ask difficult questions? We'll look at selected readings by journalists and authors, including N.R. Kleinfield, Rachel Aviv, and Joseph Mitchell. By the last class, students will have completed a short feature story.

Brigid Hughes

Editing and the Writer

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This course will examine the past, present, and future of literary magazines, from the perspectives of both the editor and the writer. We will analyze specific issues by magazines such as *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, *Monkey Business*, *Noon*, *Evergreen Review*, *Callaloo*, *Triquarterly*, and others. We will discuss the elements that distinguish a magazine, including unifying themes, layout and design, and criteria for the selection process. The editorial relationships between known editors and writers will also be examined. Assignments will include exercises in editing, graphics selection, and assessing work from various sources. By the end of the seminar, you will develop a mission statement and create a sample issue. This seminar is designed for writers who are interested in the editorial side of publishing, and how editor-writer relationships would shape their work.

Leslie Jamison

Strange Emotions

(NONFICTION)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

In this seminar, we'll explore the strangeness of emotion from all angles: feelings that catch us by surprise—unexpected attractions or sorrows, sudden upswells of memory—and feelings we think we're not supposed to be having: envy, schadenfreude, annoyance, grief giggles. What lurks beyond the doorways of these strange or shameful feelings? When is emotion ever anything *but* strange?

A friend of mine once described her emotional life as a sunburn all over her body. We'll be talking about *that*. We'll be talking about emotion as a sunburn, or a fever, or a bruise, or a cut, or a delicious taste, or a cold blue winter sky. We'll talk about metaphors! How they invite our grasping, our longing to say what we can't. We'll discuss ways of using various craft techniques and structures—fragmentation, scenic narration, dialogue, exposition—to evoke emotional life as specifically as possible. How can we use the concrete and the visceral to evoke the intangible? How can we estrange ourselves from emotions enough to map their contours, but inhabit them fully enough to make them crackle with truth on the page? We'll talk about a whole range of emotions, including delight, grief, adoration, rejection, and joy, as

well as the strange ways they conjoin and intersect. When does joy come tinged with loss? Does it ever not? Are positive feelings like joy and love harder to write than pain?

We'll talk about sentimentality—one of our biggest literary taboos. Oscar Wilde called a sentimentalist someone “who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it,” and these days sentimentality has inspired its own special breeds of fear, shame, and derision. This seminar will investigate what “sentimentality” means and why we strive so mightily to avoid it. We'll think about how we might “earn” feeling on the page and what the payout might look like. (Also why the conversation about written sentiment has become so economic!) We'll think about the range of emotional encounters a reader might have with a text—how emotion might be expressed by a writer or evoked in a reader; what the difference between these might be. We'll also think about questions like: How can emotion be public? When and how does emotion feel self-indulgent? We'll talk about emotion as a way of connecting to the divine, to strangers, to the possibilities of collective political action. We'll talk about emotion as something we barely survive, and one of our primary reasons for survival.

We'll be reading a range of texts across a variety of genres, including Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights*, Cathy Park Hong's *Minor Feelings*, Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick*, Elizabeth Hardwick's *Sleepless Nights*, Kiese Laymon's *Heavy*, Tove Ditlevesen's *The Copenhagen Trilogy*, and Terese Marie Mailhot's *Heart Berries*; poetry by Kaveh Akbar, Danez Smith, Natasha Trethewey, Kiki Petrosino, Jack Gilbert; and essays by Hilton Als, Charlie D'Ambrosio, Jia Tolentino, Zadie Smith, James Baldwin, and Kristen Dombek.

Margo Jefferson

Arts Writing, Life Writing

(NONFICTION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

How does our analysis and interpretation of literature, film, music, dance, or visual art intersect with the materials of memoir: personal histories, emotional ambiguities, self-examination, and confession? We'll study writers who explore these intersections, among them: Natalie Leger, Hanif Abdurraqib, Wayne Koestenbaum, Zadie Smith, Brian Dillon, Namwali Serpell, Patricia Lockwood and Durga Chew-Bose.

Katrine Øgaard Jensen

Science Fiction Poetics

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Fri., 2pm-4pm

“If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe.”
—Carl Sagan

Science fiction is the literature of the human species encountering change. It is the literature of the Other, of philosophy and ideas, of innovation and experimentation. This seminar will examine how poets and writers from around the world have imagined alternate realities and futures, linguistic inventions, and new poetic expressions inspired by science. We will discuss what these imaginings might tell us about the cultural and political presents in which they were conceived, as well as what the extreme conditions offered by science fiction might teach us about writing into the unknown.

Topics will include astroecology and apocalyptic eco-poetics, extraterrestrial aphrodites, monstrous and pregnant bodyscapes, cyborgs and multispecies speculations, indigenous aliens, space exploration and colonization, future creoles and the evolution of language, bio-poetics and crystalline formations, immortal texts, illuminated codices, and global futurisms—from the European Futurists of the early 20th century to Afrofuturism, as well as recent figurations such as Gulf Futurism and Islamofuturism.

Course reading will include work by Aase Berg, Johannes Heldén, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Velimir Khlebnikov, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Hao Jingfang, Eve L. Ewing, Sun Ra, Anne Kawala, Kojo Laing, Inger Christensen, Ursula K. Le Guin, Italo Calvino, Gabriela Torres Olivares, Ahmed Saadawi, Ursula Andkjær Olsen, Dempow Torishima, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Octavia E. Butler, Tracy K. Smith, Cathy Park Hong, Chen Qiufan, and others.

Nalini Jones

The Big Moment

(FICTION)

Thu., 10am-12pm

This seminar will consider different ways to write “big” moments: moments of high action or intensity, moments of great emotion or enlightenment, moments of anguish or beauty, moments of high comedy, moments that draw us into a work of fiction, and climactic moments. We’ll discuss what makes particular scenes in fiction feel “big”—which is to say, significant, memorable, exciting, pivotal, surprising, or deeply satisfying—and we’ll consider some of the elements that help create those moments, including the prose itself. The focus will be on craft, with readings chosen for their variety of narrative strategies. We’ll be looking at stories, novels, and memoir (with some book-length readings and some excerpts) by a wide range of authors such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Peter Carey, Angela Carter, Anton Chekhov, Anita Desai, Charles Dickens, Maureen Howard, Earl Lovelace, William Maxwell, Nancy Mitford, Rohinton Mistry, Alice Munro, Sigrid Nunez, Flannery O’Connor, Sembene Ousmane, Grace Paley, Salman Rushdie, Sam Selvon, Jim Shepard, Carol Shields, Joan Silber, Graham Swift, and nonfiction by Joan Didion, Gerald Durrell, Sarah Manguso, and George Orwell. Students will work on several short writing exercises throughout the semester.

Binnie Kirshenbaum

Writers as Characters

(FICTION)

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

For this seminar, we'll be reading a wide variety of literature (novels, short stories, nonfiction, and poetry) in which the protagonists are writers and could not be anything *but* writers. How does their profession define them as characters, inform their lives, and create and affect the content of the work? How do authors avoid the pitfalls of self-protection, self-indulgence, grandiosity, cliché, romanticizing, and the tedium of writing about characters who spend their days alone tapping at a keyboard? No doubt we will digress into conversation about the differences between autofiction, autobiographical fiction, memoir, and confessional poetry, but the lion's share (no pun intended) of attention will be paid to the ways in which authors employ writers as characters to embody a spectrum of the human condition in their experiences of love, loathing, family, politics, society, sorrow, alienation, loneliness, and madness.

The reading list includes works by Clarice Lispector, Roberto Bolano, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, Pat Barker, J.M. Coetzee, Tash Aw, Mona Van Duyn, Lorrie Moore, Rabih Alameddine, Richard Wilbur, James Baldwin, Nam Le, and Sarah Blakewell, among others.

There will be a workshop component to this class.

Dorothea Lasky

Unleashing The Poetic Demon

(POETRY, 1st-year poetry students only)

Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

In this seminar for first year poets, we will explore the idea of the poetic demon and what makes the poems that we love to read and write so captivating. In thinking about the poetic demon, we will consider the multifaceted relationship that exists between poet, poem, poetic demon, and audience. We will discuss how this dynamic is developed in the space of a poem and how we might, as poets, establish our own relationships with our readers. The course reader will be co-created with the class participants and will include poems that they have chosen to share. In addition, we will read poems by: Myung Mi Kim, Cecilia Vicuña, William Blake, John Keats, Sylvia Plath, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Wanda Coleman, Miyó Vestrini, Bhanu Kapil, Douglas Kearney, Kazim Ali, Emily Dickinson, CA Conrad, and Terence Hayes. Assignments will include: keeping up a reading journal, weekly readings and discussions, mid-term critical paper, and a final creative manuscript.

Gideon Lewis-Kraus

Reporting Non-News

(NONFICTION)

Mon., 12pm-2pm

This seminar looks at information-gathering for writers, with particular emphasis on non-news—that is, information that cannot exclusively or interestingly be gathered inside one’s house, via email, or over the telephone. It examines attitudes about and practices of reporting in light of the assumption that what people say and do explicitly is not necessarily of greater relevance than how they said or did it, what they were wearing at the time, what the weather was like that day, and how the listener happened to feel about what was said or done. The class will dwell on actual information-gathering skills—which approaches tend to yield greater or lesser quantities of the varieties of useful information—but will (for the most part) reject the following ideas: that reporting and writing are distinct rather than interrelated elements of the process; that reportorial skills are innate, or are trade secrets, or can be dismissed as “mere” practical techniques of no use to the pure of heart; and that reporting for memoir or first-person rumination or fiction is somehow different in kind from reporting more traditional magazine stories. Readings will in turn be drawn from contemporary feature journalism, sociology, fiction, and possibly poetry, and may or may not include such writers as Grace Paley, Larissa MacFarquhar, Howard S. Becker, Janet Malcolm, Jia Tolentino, Ben Lerner, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Anne Carson, Katherine Boo, Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Kenneth Tynan, Elif Batuman, Rachel Aviv, and Tracy Kidder.

Phillip Lopate

Studies in the Essay

(NONFICTION)

Tue., 10am-12pm

We will be examining the development of the essay form, through the great line of essayists in the English language. Starting in eighteenth-century England, with Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, Addison & Steele, through the great nineteenth-century practitioners, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, R. L. Stevenson, Thomas De Quincey, and John Ruskin, and the twentieth-century masters, such as Max Beerbohm, G.K. Chesterton, Virginia Woolf, and George Orwell, then hopping over the Atlantic to Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, H. L. Mencken, James Thurber, E.B. White, Mary McCarthy, James Baldwin, and M.F.K. Fisher. We will be looking at how the same writers handle personal and impersonal essays, memoir pieces, and literary criticism, to investigate the techniques of narrative structure and suspense in essays, and how the mysterious projection of authorial personality traverses any and all situations.

Ben Marcus

State of the Art: The Future of the Short Story

(FICTION)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

This seminar will look at where the short story has been, what it is now, and where it might be going. What will the short story be like in fifty years? In what ways has the short story today progressed from short stories of the 1960s? In other words, how does this strange, flexible, vital form change, and how can we relate these changes to the development of our own fiction?

This, then, is as much a course about the progress and future of a literary art form as it is about the way our own work changes over time.

We will examine the subtle ways the short story reflects, if not the news of the day, then the literary styles and values that circulate and influence us more discretely, and in looking speculatively into the future of the art form, we will assess our own ambitions as writers: where are we taking our own work, how are we responding to the challenges of the present historical moment, literary or otherwise, and how might we advance, or otherwise put our stamp on, this form?

Our readings will be wide-ranging and will seek to represent a multitude of approaches across diverse traditions. We will look at influential short stories from the past, compelling models from today, along with some intriguing stories that might be lesser-known but no less vital. We will also read some literary position papers and manifestos in order to get a sense of how writers and critics have articulated a variety of literary value systems.

Students will engage in discussion of weekly readings, and, most importantly, work on aspects of their craft in several writing exercises throughout the semester.

Shane McCrae

A Different Kind of Wildness: On Narrative Poetry

(POETRY)

Tue., 10am-12pm

You like reading stories, right? Of course you do—the feeling that one’s experience of time is at least minimally organized is a good feeling. Each of us lives a wild narrative; stories at least appear to tame stretches of it. And, hey, maybe you like reading, and maybe even writing, poems, too. But poems aren’t the same thing as stories—even as they tame, poems introduce a different kind of wildness. But that doesn’t mean poems can’t *tell* stories, just that stories are more something poems do than something poems are. In this seminar, we will explore ways poems tell stories by reading narrative poetry and the occasional text about narrative poetry, and by writing fragments of narrative poems—and even whole narrative poems, should we feel like it and/or should our fragments add up. You’ve got a story, right?

Erroll McDonald

William Faulkner and World Fiction

(FICTION)

Mon., 4:30pm-6:30pm

Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez unabashedly claims William Faulkner as “my master,” says that “Faulkner is present in all the novels of Latin America,” and mischievously insists that “*The Hamlet* is the best South American novel ever written.” Since the 1950s, other major writers from around the world have similarly trumpeted the crucial influence of Faulkner on their writing. Why? What about Faulkner excited their imagination and inspired their work, allowing them to achieve their own singularities? This course aims to elucidate not only Faulkner’s formal inventions and literary techniques but his social and moral concerns, so as to examine how they inform such writers as Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Antonio Lobo Antunes (Portugal), Toni Morrison (United States), Juan Rulfo (Mexico), and Kateb Yacine (Algeria).

Among the works we will read are: Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *Sanctuary*, and *The Sound and the Fury*; Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnificent*; Garcia Marquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch*; Lobo Antunes’s *Act of the Damned*; Morrison’s *Beloved*; Rulfo’s *Pedro Paramo*; and Yacine’s *Nedjma*. The course will conclude with a reading of selections from *Faulkner, Mississippi*, meditations upon the writer by Martinican poet and critic Edouard Glissant.

The course requirements are: a short (three-to-five-page) piece of literary criticism on a clearly defined topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor—this essay will be orally presented to the class—and a twelve-to-fifteen-page final exercise in imitation of any writer covered during the semester.

Deborah Paredez

Witness, Record, Document: Poetry and Testimony

(POETRY)

Wed., 10:10am-12pm

This seminar takes up the terms witness, record, and document as nouns and verbs. What is poetry of witness? Documentary poetry? Poetry as (revisionist) historical record? What labor and what ethical, political, and aesthetic considerations are required of poets who endeavor to witness, record, or document historical events or moments of trauma? How is this approach to poetry informed by or contributing to feminist theories, aesthetic innovation, and revisionist approaches to official histories? Course materials include: 1) essays that explore the poetics and politics of “poetry of witness” or “documentary poetry”; 2) a range of contemporary American poetry that has been classified as or has productively challenged these categories; 3) and audio, video, and photographic projects on which poets have

collaborated. Our encounters with this work will be guided by and grounded in conversations about ideas of “truth,” “text,” the power relations of “documentation,” and issues of language and representation in poetry. We will also critically examine the formal (rhyme, rhythm, diction, form, genre, point of view, imagery, etc.) and philosophical components and interventions of the work we study and create. *This is an undergraduate seminar open to graduate MFA students.*

Alice Quinn

The Poems of Emily Dickinson

(POETRY)

Fri., 10am-12pm

This class will be a deep-dive immersion in the poems and the world of Emily Dickinson. We will begin with a selection of Dickinson’s poems made in 1968 by Ted Hughes, the twentieth-century English poet (and husband of Sylvia Plath) with an introductory essay, which is one of the finest accounts of her life and artistic path. Adopting the Hughes selection and introductory essay as a model, our goal will be for each of you by the end of the term to make a selection of fifty of your favorite poems and introduce them with an essay of your own, a selection and introduction which we might conceive of as something we could give to friends, especially those who have not yet experienced the infinite pleasures and rewards of Dickinson’s oeuvre.

We will be refining what this selection and introduction might be as we go along, but both should fundamentally express a profound personal response to the poet’s passions and preoccupations, her philosophy and the mystery of her being, her adaption to the life she was born into and chose to make for herself, her sensitivity to the national crisis of the Civil War (April, 1861-April, 1865) when she was 30-34, her love of the world, creatures, and birds, and the astonishing testament to her genius, which her poems supply.

For several classes as noted, I will assemble packets of material, but for most, you will each make an individual choice as to what to read from the list below, which will translate, I hope, to your bringing a fresh, individual perspective to class each week as we seek to register and explore the tendrils of influence from these sources—guess at them, ponder them—in the poems we are reading together. And, naturally, we’ll be discussing her biography intensely, too, along the way.

Here is a list of what we’ll explore in the course of the term:

- The Bible: (any book from the Old Testament, any gospel from the New Testament, or the Psalms)
- Botanical illustrations & lectures she studied at Amherst Academy
- Shakespeare (any play)
- George Eliot (any novel)
- Charlotte Brontë (any novel) and any poems by Emily Brontë

Any essay by Jonathan Edwards

Letters of Emily Dickinson (Everyman Pocket Poets, edited by Emily Fragos)

Any essay by John Ruskin and passages from *Religio Medici* by Sir Thomas Browne
Poets: George Herbert, Wordsworth, Keats (any of the *Odes*), Emerson (his poems and any essay, but “The Poet,” “Threnody,” and “Fate” are recommended, particularly), Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, and Walt Whitman. We will also read poems from Kevin Young’s Library of America anthology, *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*.

Webster’s dictionary (pick ten pages of a letter). Webster was a guest in her brother and sister-in-law’s home in Amherst as he was compiling the first installment of his magnum opus. Nomenclature and definition were crucial to her art.

Herman Melville’s Civil War poems and Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

We will have visits from several contemporary poets who love Dickinson’s work and whose own poems I greatly admire. Additionally, I would like each of us to memorize a poem each week. They are mostly fewer than twenty lines so this shouldn’t be daunting, and there is absolutely nothing like having poems by heart.

Lynn Steger Strong

Domestic Fiction

(FICTION)

Tue., 10am-12pm

One of the trickiest parts of writing is containment and choice-making. We want to write about Life, and Truth, and Big Ideas, but all we have is a few hundred pages, maybe; all we have is words. How best to hold everything we want to hold inside of language, how to contain our work in ways that make us feel most free to say and show the things we most want to show and say? Often, constraints can be more freeing than the opposite. A novel over a day can open you up more than one without a clear sense of time, a story set inside a single room can force you to really look and see all a single room might be capable of helping you portray.

The term “Domestic Fiction” has been bandied about in all sorts of different contexts over the years; sometimes, when written by women, it’s called, often derogatorily, “Women’s Fiction” instead. In both these instances, there is often a suggestion of smallness, and yet, so many of these books are able to contain so much of life. In this class, we will look at books that might, in all sorts of complicated and varied ways, be thought to be “domestic.” We will think about what that idea and the specific constraint of a defined space might contain, how it might be an opportunity for rich and complicated exploration; how big, in fact, novels might get, within a small restricted space.

The reading list includes:

Housekeeping, Marilynne Robinson

Mrs. Bridge, Evan S. Connell

Family Lexicon, Natalia Ginzburg (trans. Jenny McPhee)
Remains of the Day, Kazuo Ishiguro
Corregidora, Gayl Jones
House of Mist, Maria Luisa Bombal
Visitation, Jenny Erpenbeck (trans. Susan Bernofsky)
The Housekeeper and The Professor, Yoko Igawa (trans. Stephen Snyder)
The Perfect Nanny, Leila Silmani
How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe, Charles Yu
We The Animals, Justin Torres
A House in Norway, Vigdis Hjorth (trans. Charlotte Barslund)
The Secret Lives of Church Ladies, Deesha Philyah

Kimi Traube

Borderlands: Literature of the Liminal

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Borderlands are sites of contradiction: neither here nor there, they are simultaneously connections and divides. Life on the border begets a liminality of identity—you may find yourself belonging to both sides and to neither one. What does it mean to exist between countries, categories, conceptions of the self? If borders represent attempts to exert the human power to define and divide onto the fluidity of the natural world, borderlands and those living in them refute these divides with their very existence, overflowing the illusion of clear-cut categories to spill forth in all of humanity’s messy complexity. Far from the border, it is easy to imagine separate categories of “us” and “them.” Life in the borderlands reveals the forced fiction of such frameworks.

This course will examine texts that engage with various kinds of borders—some geographical, some more intangible. We will look primarily at Latin American literature of liminality to examine different kinds of in-between-ness: of language, of identity, of self, and beyond, beginning with Luis Rafael Sanchez’s classic, *Macho Camacho’s Beat*. This novel, translated by the late great Gregory Rabassa, is set in Puerto Rico (on the border of state and colony) and composed in a combination of Spanish, English, and advertising jingles. As a translation, it presents a fascinating challenge—how does one convey the in-between-ness of language and identity that Sanchez’s Puerto Rican readers are already familiar with through lived experience to a readership in the North and beyond? What kind of considerations go into translating works that insist on hopping borders and walking the line?

We will read Mayra Santos Febres’ phenomenal novel *Sirena Selena*, translated by Stephen Lyttle, a multilingual text that centers on a young diva walking the lines between male and female, identity and access, power and poverty, vulnerability and stardom. We will also consider texts set in more literal borderlands, including Lisa Dillman’s translation of Yuri Herrera’s *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, and Juan Villoro’s short story “The Scissors” (in my translation). The seminar will look at border poetry, including multilingual work by Chicano and Chicana poets, and various approaches to the challenges of translating Neruda

or Sor Juana. The course will also cover pieces such as Jorge Luis Borges' "The South" (tr. Bonner) and Samanta Schweblin's "Toward Happy Civilization," (tr. McDowell) which toy with the borders of reality and fantasy, fact and fever dream. Further readings include work by Gloria Anzaldúa, Antonio Lobo Antunes, Sandra Cisneros, Rosario Ferré, Julio Cortázar, Valeria Luiselli, Eliseo Alberto, Rosario Castellanos, Juan Rulfo, Zoé Valdés, Ada Limón, Elizabeth Acevedo, Alfonsina Storni, Marosa di Giorgio, Juan Felipe Herrera, Alberto Ríos, Federico García Lorca, and Jack Spicer, among others.

Texts will include novels, short stories, poetry, and some translation theory. Readings are primarily drawn from the literatures of Spanish-speaking Latin America, spanning a variety of author/character identities and time periods, though the majority were written in the 20th and 21st centuries. Students will be responsible for brief readers' responses, and a culminating project in which they write a borderworld of their own.

Tony Tulathimutte

Form, Etc.

(FICTION)

Mon., 3:20pm-5:20pm

Donuts, diamonds, stories: form somehow adds nothing and defines everything. What does a reader need to know, and when? How do beginnings establish a reader's expectations, and how are those expectations satisfied by the end? How can a story's shape convey its themes and subject? What makes a scene a scene, and when should you dramatize, summarize, or skip? These are all questions of form that huge nerds like me were born to teach.

The class itself is structured by length: we'll begin with close readings of sentences and passages, and expand from there. We'll discuss the elasticity of time, such that an entire life can be narrated in two pages (Robert Coover's "Going for a Beer"), or a moment can expand to fill a whole book (Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine*). Form is useful not just for revision, but for generating ideas and suggesting ways forward. We'll see how the constraints of Carmen Maria Machado's "Especially Heinous" are used to expand, rather than limit, the story's direction, even when the form is itself rigid or trite. With whatever free time we have, we'll discuss career stuff too, why not?

Lara Vapnyar

Building a Scene

(FICTION)

Wed., 10am-12pm

Individual scenes are important building blocks of any prose narrative, yet the craft of designing a scene is often neglected by aspiring writers. In this class we will study all the aspects of designing a successful scene: setting, inner plot, inner structure, spotlight on the characters, P.O.V., choreography of physical movement, and dialogue. We will study how to

write sex scenes, death scenes, party scenes, battle scenes, and nature scenes. The readings will include Tolstoy, Ferrante, Bolano, Proulx, Munro, Waters, and Wallace.

LITERARY TRANSLATION WORKSHOP

Susan Bernofsky

Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Jeremy Tiang

Wed., 2pm-4:30pm

These workshops are open to students translating from all languages at all levels, from novice to experienced, and within or across all genres: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They are designed to introduce or help refine the tools necessary to be an active and engaged translator as well as a rigorous reader of translated literary works, to hone your editing skills across literary genres, and to demonstrate how the art and craft of literary translation can expand your practice as a writer. We will have lively discussions about the role of the translator today, with special attention to translation practice as it intersects with questions of race, migration, and national scripts of exclusion/belonging.

Participants may come with a project already in mind, or may work with the instructor and the group to select projects early on that will be workshopped over the course of the term. The focus will be on close examinations of nuances of style and voice, linguistic play, and methods of representing linguistic and literary innovation in English while actively considering the nature and sociopolitical context of “the original.”

Fluency in a language other than English is not required. A good reading knowledge of a second language is desirable, but students with basic second-language skills who are interested in understanding translation processes and how translation can enhance the craft of writing are also encouraged to register—and to continue improving their second-language skills. Ideally, we will have a group that is committed to examining translation as a tool to dig deeper as a writer, and where notions of expertise and/or mastery are secondary to the willingness to explore and experiment. Readings in translation theory and methodology will be assigned throughout the term based on the different languages and interests students bring to class and the nature of the projects in the group.

LECTURES

Alan Gilbert

Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This class will focus on the history of twentieth-century avant-garde poetry. We will begin briefly in the nineteenth century with Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Lautréamont, and Stéphane Mallarmé, and then examine various avant-garde, experimental, and non-mainstream poetry movements, including Symbolism, Imagism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Harlem Renaissance, Négritude, Black Arts Movement, Black Mountain School, Beats, New York School, Objectivism, feminist poetry, cross-cultural poetics, spoken word poetry, hip-hop, Language poetry, concrete poetry, and more. We will end by focusing on recent trends such as Flarf, Conceptual writing, and digital poetry. Along the way, we will pause to talk more extensively about important figures in this history such as Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Amiri Baraka, John Ashbery, and Adrienne Rich, as well as read the work of a few younger writers. We will also reference parallel developments in twentieth-century avant-garde art, film, and music.

Lee Siegel

The Big Blur: Writing in the Space Between Art and Life

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Acknowledging the artifice of both art and life has been a rich vein in fiction. But now some of our most original writers are exploring not just the boundaries of fiction and reality—that goes back to Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveau roman* and, further, to Tristram Shandy—but the evolution of social life itself into some kind of hybrid animal of fact, art-making, fantasy, lies, and self-deceit.

This is hardly brand new. Movies like *Synecdoche, Being John Malkovich*, and *Birdman* have been exploring this terrain for years. And far beyond the screen and the page, openly fraudulent performances of authenticity are either being embraced as the real thing, or welcomed as assaults on realities that many people find intolerable. Behold our political life.

On the page, fiction blurring fiction and nonfiction has a long history, and in this course we will take a look at the antecedents of what you might call today's neo-realist-postmodernists. We might touch on the *roman à clef*, that mixing of art and real life that now seems almost quaint, and then a memoir or two that is consciously a composite of what really happened and what didn't happen, and then a couple of novels that are frankly works of autobiography. After that, things get more complicated.

Authors and works might include Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (fiction disguised as memoir), followed by Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (memoir written like fiction) followed by Elizabeth Hardwick's *Sleepless Nights* (memoir disguised as fiction). We might take up Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the great granddaddy of so many. Then it's on to Frederick Exley's *A Fan's Notes*, Philip Roth's *The Counterlife*, Dave Eggers' *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, the trying yet delicious Knausgaard, and the delicious yet sometimes trying riddle of Elena Ferrante (the more anonymous she remains, the more her fiction seems a revelation of her identity). We will conclude with three contemporary masters of The Big Blur: Sheila Heti, Rachel Cusk, and Ben Lerner. In their work, shifting boundaries of the real and the not, un-, sur- or unreal are no longer the stuff of a meditation on the nature of literary art. These writers are portraying the way we live now.

One five-to-ten page paper is required. The paper may be a critical response to works we have read, or it could be an example of The Big Blur itself—either an excerpt from a future or imaginary novel, or a self-contained piece of creative writing in the style of a novel that purposefully plays with levels of fact and fiction, art and actuality.

Benjamin Taylor

Quests and Questers

Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Our readings span various genres: fiction, memoir, travel writing, biography, reportage. Our itinerary includes India, Tibet, England, Italy, Poland, Austria, France, Russia, Illinois, and Ohio. Our theme is searchers condemned to—and exalted by—some quest for the hidden, the dangerous, the ineffable, the unconquerable. We read the following:

We read the following:

INTRODUCTION:

September 9: *A Passage to India* (E. M. Forster)

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL QUESTS:

(September 16: YOM KIPPUR)

September 23: *Hope Against Hope* (Nadezhda Mandelstam)

September 30: *A Farewell to Arms* (Ernest Hemingway)

October 7: *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (William Maxwell)

October 14: *My Father and Myself* (J. R. Ackerley)

October 21: *The Bluest Eye* (Toni Morrison)

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTS:

October 28: *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (Edmund de Waal)

November 4: *Hermit of Peking* (Hugh Trevor-Roper)

November 11: *The Snow Leopard* (Peter Matthiessen)

November 18: *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Hannah Arendt)

(November 25: THANKSGIVING)

December 2: *In Cold Blood* (Truman Capote)

December 9: *The Journalist and the Murderer* (Janet Malcolm)

Students are asked to read Forster's *A Passage to India* prior to the first class.

MASTER CLASSES

Jay Deshpande

First Books of Poems, Then and Now

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Thu., 6pm-8pm

(Dates: Sept. 16 - Oct. 21)

In any poet's career, the first book is both a station and a passage: it's something to achieve and something to get through. This course will provide a short but immersive exploration of first collections, considering the genres and architectures of the debut. To map the changing functions of first books through the decades, we will read collections in pairs: Seamus Heaney and Safiya Sinclair, Jorie Graham and Solmaz Sharif, Brigit Pegeen Kelly and Derrick Austin, James Schuyler and Tommy Pico. As we investigate influence and audience, students will also write new poems, testing how they might introduce their work to a larger world.

Wes Enzinna

Breaking Into Magazines

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Mon., 6pm-8pm

(Dates: Sept. 13 - Oct. 18)

This master class will immerse students in the world of longform journalism, teaching them how to combine reporting and research with scene-writing and carefully crafted prose. My initial idea for the course was a simple one: I learned to write professionally—that is, I learned about narrative, structure, character, voice, and all of the other elements that go into a publishable work of nonfiction—by writing for specific magazines, mastering the conventions demanded by each. What makes a great pitch for the *New York Times Magazine*? What makes a *New Yorker* feature different from a *Harper's* feature? By examining how editors at various publications work with writers to shape articles, this course will give students the building blocks necessary to produce high-quality longform writing, whether they aspire to write investigations, creative nonfiction, or memoir/personal essays. Students will pitch article ideas, report stories, write on deadline, and be edited rigorously. They will learn about ledes, “billboard” paragraphs, story vs. topic, and paradox as key tools in the longform journalist's toolbox. Editors at *Harper's*, *GQ*, and *The New York Times* will visit the class to share lessons from their work and tips for aspiring writers. By the end of the course, students will have a fully developed, polished, and workshopped story idea ready to send to the magazine of their choice.

Richard Ford

Reading *The House in Paris*

5 sessions, 1.5 points

The five sessions are on:

Nov. 11, Thu., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 12, Fri., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 15, Mon., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 16, Tue., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 17, Wed., 6pm-8pm

This class will be an intense engagement with Elizabeth Bowen’s masterpiece of the last century. The spine of the course will be this: to question, comment on, and evaluate the formal decisions taken by Bowen—as evidenced in the text—in creating this novel (which is to say to *read the book as a writer would*). We’ll pay special attention to the novel’s narrative mode, its characters, its narrative structure, its beginning and ending movements, its word choices, its revelation of new intelligence, its demands upon the reader, its possible flaws, its rewards—plus, anything else that seems interesting to you and us. The presumption of the course is that by becoming a better reader of indisputably great writing, one learns to be a better reader of one’s own writing—which aspires to greatness.

The second concern of the course is to ensure that you get your extra-curricular writerly questions aired and addressed by me. A writing life runs along the same rails as one’s day-to-day life. There are, therefore, no inappropriate “writing life” concerns that you might choose to bring up. Feel free.

Students should’ve read *The House in Paris* entirely and with intelligence, within a week of the course’s commencement. Prompt attendance is absolutely required. Any absence will result in a grim no-pass.

The text edition we’ll use is the Anchor softcover, which is in stock at Book Culture, under the course number. I advise against reading the A.S. Byatt foreword (or any foreword) before you read the novel.

Jason Gots

Narrative Podcasting

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Fri., 10am-12pm
(Dates: Oct. 1 - Nov. 5)

It’s been a few years since *Serial*’s first season sent everyone scrambling to figure out what exactly a podcast was and how to listen to one. Since then, podcasting has morphed from a fringe basement hobby into the stuff of venture capitalists’ dreams. Somewhere in the middle lies great audio storytelling and the rise of narrative podcasts, some fiction, some non—some totally DIY, others highly produced by the likes of Marvel and Gimlet Media. This

masterclass will immerse you in the best of all these worlds and teach you how to write and produce compelling audio stories.

The class will give you an overview of the state of the podcasting industry today with special attention to audio storytelling—from scripted, ongoing fiction podcasts like *Welcome to Night Vale* to narrative nonfiction shows like Jonathan Goldstein’s *Heavyweight*. You’ll learn from the work and insights of some of today’s most talented writers and producers what’s involved in world, story, and character building for audio. And you’ll put this knowledge to work, producing and workshopping a narrative audio piece of your own. You will finish the class with a strong, hands-on, foundational understanding of audio storytelling.

J.C. Hallman

Do Facts Even Matter?

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Tue., 6:45pm-8:45pm

(Dates: Oct. 26 - Dec. 7, no class Nov. 2)

Do facts even matter? If so, why? If not, why not?

Debates over nonfiction have been inescapable in the last twenty years, but the terms of the discussion have tended to remain superficial. This course will consider a variety of texts traditionally classified as nonfiction, fiction, and poetry, but all of which refuse to settle for genre designations that may be convenient for bookstores and libraries but are not particularly helpful in coming to understand what is artful or literary. Authors likely to be considered include Marguerite Duras, Geoff Dyer, Audre Lorde, Roberto Bolaño, Henry James, Lydia Davis, Alain de Botton, Clarice Lispector, Edward P. Jones, Andrei Codrescu, Nicholson Baker, Yasunari Kawabata, Aminatta Forna, Edward Hirsch, James Agee, and others. Discussion will aspire to remain theoretical, and the course will culminate in students producing a short essay—a modest *ars poetica*—in which they articulate for themselves what they believe to be the distinctions (if there are any) among the genres traditionally classified as creative writing.

Joss Lake

Queerness and Literary Technologies

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Tue., 6pm-8pm

(Dates: Sept. 14 - Oct. 19)

What happens when queer writers reimagine the limits of human perception and storytelling? What can marginalized writers reveal to us about ways of resisting or side-stepping dominant technological and literary discourses? We will look at the writing of CAConrad, Akwaeke Emezi, Renee Gladman, Andrea Lawlor, and Carmen Maria Machado to dig into new ways of

writing about causality, gender, power, tools, and liberation. We will also complete generative exercises and craft four short pieces in which we'll experiment with engineering new literary technologies.

Tan Lin

Rules and the Poem

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Thu., 12:10pm-2:10pm

(Dates: Oct. 28 - Dec. 9, no class Nov. 25)

This is a course on constraint-driven, prison-escape schemes, and rule-bound forms of composition, including work with nonsense, fixed forms such as the pantoum and sestina, punctuation excision and abbreviation/elision, tabulation and spreadsheet poems, cut ups, homophonic and dialect/idiolect translations, ingredient and to do lists, top-10 lists with irrelevant annotations, enumerative bibliographies, photographic captions, personal indexes, chronologically-based/ diaristic accumulations, recipes of objects and atmospheric conditions, Wikipedia assemblages, experiences experienced as numbers which are then experienced as colors, and the footnote. Students will read, study, and amplify a number of constraint-based works. A significant portion of the course will be geared to generating and workshopping student-generated work: poems, prose poems, abecedarians, bibliographic entries, top ten annotated lists, and counting poems for children and adults. The following books will be used in whole or in part: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*; Harryette Mullen, *S*PeRM**K*T*; Hannah Weiner, *Code Poems*; Ulises Carrion, *Arguments* and *(a, b, c)*; Brandon Brown, *The Four Seasons*; Sawako Nakayasu, *The Ants*; Charles Bernstein, *Asylum*; and Edouard Leve, *Autoportrait* and *Newspaper*.

Heather Radke

Small Potatoes: Writing Nonfiction about the Everyday

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Wed., 5:10pm-7:10pm

(Dates: Oct. 27 - Dec. 8, no class Nov. 24)

When sitting down to write an essay, it can be tempting to write into life's most difficult or exalted moments, which offer deep feelings and high drama. But the history of the essay shows us that there is also much material to be mined from the quotidian; subjects that at first seem boring can offer expansive territory for meaning-making.

In this class, we will read essays that take daily life as their subject and do creative exercises that prompt explorations of the seemingly-mundane. Readings will include work by E.B. White, May Sarton, Zadie Smith, Claudia Rankine, and others. We will do exercises designed to provoke curiosity about the world and learn how to do historical research that uncovers the hidden histories of everyday objects. The goal of the course is to offer students multiple ways to use moments of daily experience as artistic material and to raise questions about why

our most traumatic and extraordinary experiences feel like the ones most worthy of writing about.

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer's Imagination

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Mon., 11:40pm-1:40pm
(Dates: Sept. 13 - Oct. 18)

When and why do writers evoke music? How does music evoke ideas? What does music reveal about character? This course connects writing with the power of music, offering writers an expanded awareness of the relation of music to language. We take an interdisciplinary approach, exploring key works where the imaginations of writers, composers and, in some cases, painters converge. Drawing on Charles Baudelaire's idea of "correspondences," close readings will be paired with close listening of relevant music. How do we approach texts that have a hidden soundtrack? Marcel Proust's writing on the elusive experience of listening to instrumental music—music without words—gives us a place to begin. Thomas Mann's lesson on Beethoven's last piano sonata, a full chapter in *Dr. Faustus*, provides a detailed narrative—we will listen and follow. Virginia Woolf's private diaries become a Pulitzer Prize-winning musical drama to what effect? What does jazz evoke for James Baldwin in "Sonny's Blues?" Where do music and character merge? The explosive beginnings of the last century put music center stage; mutual sympathies emerge in the writings of Freud and Strindberg, the visual art of Max Klinger and Klimt, provoking us to listen to the works of Brahms and Schoenberg in a new light. Genres of fiction and nonfiction merge in these excerpted readings. Classes will also include video excerpts of interdisciplinary concert theater works, and the instructor will lead some sessions from the piano.

Julia Sanches

Mother Tongues?: Translation as Multilingual Collaboration

4 sessions, 1 point

Mon., 10am-12pm
(Dates: Nov. 15 - Dec. 6)

What are mother tongues, and to whom do they belong? For years we have been taught that writing (and therefore translation, as a form of writing) is best done in the language that we are born to and raised in: our so-called mother tongue. But just about half the world is said to be bilingual and a number of authors—including several who are household names—have either chosen or been compelled to write in their acquired languages. So, why the primacy of the mother tongue, and how was it invented? How can our other languages inform our writing? How do certain translation practices highlight or challenge some of these questions?

In this master class, we will read a selection of writing by and interviews with multilingual and bilingual authors and translators (among them, Don Mee Choi, Yoko Tawada, Khairani Barokka, Aron Aji, and Sandra Cisneros) as a way to explore the possibilities of multilingualism in original writing and in translation. Has the author chosen to reflect a bilingual environment? If so, what effect does this have on the reader and how might it manifest in translation? We will also actively engage with the question of who gets to translate, of accessible and inaccessible information, and of publishing's role in promoting one English or Spanish over another. For example, how did Angie Cruz's *Dominicana* find its way into Dominican Spanish, to be published by a U.S. press? What have translators into other languages done with Julia Delgado Lopera's *Fiebre Tropical*? How can we reflect the *lingua-franca* (read: imperial) status of English in a text written in another language that is then translated into English? And what is the relationship between the writing practice of a multilingual writer and the desire or even need to translate? The master class will dwell in these hyphenated spaces, and aim to disrupt certain normative practices.

Other texts we'll likely consider include: *Translation is a Mode=Translation is an Anti-neocolonial Mode* by Don Mee Choi; *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Post-Colonial Condition* by Yasemin Yildiz; *The Paraguayan Sea* by Wilson Bueno (tr. Erin Moure); as well as various reports by working translators that explore their translation practices.

Students will also be asked to engage in solo and collaborative translations of both monolingual and multilingual texts. (No previous translation experience required.) Knowledge of a language other than English is not required either, but we'll make use of our communal linguistic resources as a group when engaging in our explorations.

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Fri., 10am-12pm

(Dates: Sept. 10 - Oct. 15)

It can be argued that we can only write a Nature Poetry worthy of the ecological imperative when we realize we are inside both nature and language, vulnerable to the encounter, able to surrender a certain control... in other words, not outside Nature, positioned so as to write about it, but speaking from inside it, as if Nature were the Unconscious. Given these affinities, what do literary texts and ecosystems hold in common? Certainly, they are both complex systems, in which all elements are interrelated. In language, a single word added or removed to a text can potentially alter the balance of rhythm, image, and meaning in that text. Languages and eco-systems are both polyvalent hybrids, capable of happening in multiple directions simultaneously; how do we work on our writing practice as to maximize the strength and growth of all those tendrils? What does it mean to write from the black of the page, as opposed to accepting the illusion of the white? Through both reading and writing exercises this class will explore how an ecopoetics can respond. Readings will be drawn from the great Chilean poet Raul Zurita, Camille Dungy's anthology *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, S. Yizhar's novel *Khirbet Khizeh*, Brenda

Iijima's *The Eco Language Reader* and Jed Rasula's *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives In American Poetry*. The class will address these issues as they relate to poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction.

Adam Wilson

The Ecstasy of Influence

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Fri., 12:10am-2:10pm
(Dates: Sept. 17 - Oct. 22)

This is a master class on the nature of literary influence, and the value of imitation in the development of voice. Students will read from both contemporary and canonical works by Jamaica Kincaid, Thomas Bernhard, Patrick Cottrell, Mary Robison, Renata Adler, and others. We'll track the movement of stylistic and structural approaches to fiction across time. Students will also write their own, original short fictions modeled after the readings. Just as musicians cover songs, we will "cover" novels and short stories, adding our own interpretive imprints.

James Wood

Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short Stories

4 sessions, 1 point

Tue., 3:30pm-5:30pm
(Dates: Nov. 9 - Dec. 7, no class Nov. 23)

In this class we will examine fictional technique in four short texts by Saul Bellow, Muriel Spark, Akhil Sharma, and Lydia Davis. We shall be examining characterization, realism, style, and form, and reflecting on a century of fictional experiment.

Texts:

Saul Bellow, *Collected Stories*
Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
Akhil Sharma, *Family Life*
Lydia Davis, *Collected Stories*

SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP

Leanne Shapton

Wed., 9:30am-12:30pm

Open to 2nd-year students only. This six-point workshop is designed to provide students with the opportunity and instructional support to develop significant text-based works outside the constraints of genre-specific workshops. While existing Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry workshops offer some flexibility in the kinds of work that students are allowed to submit within their genre, the Special Projects Workshop will accommodate new kinds and categories of work by offering an environment with no predetermined generic boundaries or expectations. These projects might include, but are not limited to, verse essays and other cross-genre projects, prose or verse sequences, conceptual projects, works in hybrid forms, procedural and experimental texts, text-based art objects, or any number of other projects that might be best supported, for whatever reason (including special research or production needs), by a balance of vibrant group critique, intensive one-on-one mentorship, and self-guided research and composition.

Unlike most traditional workshops, the Special Projects Workshop will assist students in developing and refining project proposals for their work; these proposals will include a detailed project description that features a rationale, a production schedule, and a bibliography of related reading, viewing, or listening (if applicable). The workshop will ideally bring together students from all three concentrations and facilitate a level of cross-generic conversation—from conception through execution and reception—traditionally not possible within the context of genre-specific workshops.

Students enrolled in a Special Projects Workshop will meet as a group six times throughout the term (four meetings at the start of the term, two at the end) with three or more conferences with the instructor and/or in smaller, focused groups paced out in between. To be considered for the class, students must submit to the department an application no more than three pages in length consisting of the components mentioned above. The application will also be expected to address why the proposed work would be best achieved in the context of a Special Projects Workshop rather than in that of a traditional genre-specific workshop.