

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS | WRITING

FALL 2024



COURSEBOOK

Workshops ■ Seminars ■ Lectures

Updated: August 23, 2024

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WORKSHOPS

FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

James Cañón
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Nicholas Christopher
Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Sophie Dess
Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Joanna Hershon
Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Heidi Julavits
Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Victor LaValle
Tue., 10am-1pm
Hilary Leichter
Fri., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Sam Lipsyte
Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Madelaine Lucas
Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Ben Marcus
Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Han Ong
Mon., 4:15pm-7:15pm

NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Cris Beam
Thu., 4:15pm-7:15pm
Wes Enzina
Wed., 4:15pm-7:15pm
Susan Hartman
Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Michelle Orange
Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm

NONFICTION – THESIS (9 points)

Second-Years only

Chloé Cooper Jones
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Jaquira Díaz
Mon., 10am-1pm
Wendy S. Walters
Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Brenda Wineapple
Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm
Kate Zambreno
Thu., 10am-1pm

POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

Mark Bibbins
Fri., 1:10-4:10pm
Alan Gilbert
Tue., 5pm-8pm
Dorothea Lasky
Wed., 4:15pm-7:15pm
Shane McCrae
Thu., 10am-1pm
Emily Skillings
Fri., 1:10-4:10pm

SEMINARS

Seminars and translation workshops
are 3 points.

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

—MONDAY—

Natasha Wimmer (TR)
*Landscapes Across Time: Latin
American Fiction in Translation*
Mon., 10am-12pm

Jared Daniel Fagen (PO)
*Contrary Tendencies: Surrealism &
Prose Poetry*
Mon., 11am-1pm

Lars Horn (NF)
*Disruptive Bodies, Disruptive Texts:
Transing Nonfiction*
Mon., 11am-1pm

Gideon Lewis-Kraus (NF)
Reporting Non-News
Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Erroll McDonald (FI)
*A Commodius Vicus of Recirculation:
Readings in High Modernism*
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

—TUESDAY—

Jaquira Díaz (NF)
Speculative Futures
Tue., 10am-12pm

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

Monica Ferrell (CG)
*Word and Image: Reading and Writing
Poetry for Prose Writers*
Tue., 10am-12pm

Hilary Leichter (FI)
Elastic Realities
Tue., 10am-12pm

Lincoln Michel (FI)
*Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing
Speculative Fiction*
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Wendy S. Walters (NF)
The Brilliant Voice
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Rivka Galchen (FI)
Not Exactly Science Fiction
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Binnie Kirshenbaum (FI)
*The Word, the Sentence, and the
Paragraph*
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

B.K. Fischer (CG)
*The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and
Praxis*
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Thom Donovan (CG)
Special Projects Workshop
Tue., 6:30pm-9:30pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Lara Vapnyar (FI)

Building a Scene

Wed., 10am-12pm

Lynn Steger Strong (FI)

Friendship

Wed., 10am-12pm

Brigid Hughes (CG)

Editing and the Writer

Wed., 10am-12pm

Farnoosh Fathi (PO)

Reading and Revolution

Wed., 10am-12pm

Margo Jefferson (NF)

Arts, Cultures and Criticism

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Michael F. Moore (TR)

Translation Workshop

Wed., 2pm-4:30pm

Sam Lipsyte (FI)

The Thrill of Agony, the Victory of Defeat:

Sports and Contemporary Writing

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Keri Bertino (CG)

The Writer as Teacher

Wed., 2pm-5pm

Alan Ziegler (CG)

Short Prose Forms

Wed., 5:15pm-7:15pm

—THURSDAY—

Susan Bernofsky (TR)

Translation Workshop

Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Rosanna Warren (TR)

Translating Lyric: Making and Breaking Form

Thu., 10am-12pm

Nicholas Christopher (CG)

Mosaics: Unified Collections of Fiction and Poetry

Thu., 10am-12pm

Susie Luo (FI)

Imitation is the Sincerest Form

Thu., 11am-1pm

Dorothea Lasky (PO)

Unleashing the Poetic Demon: Seminar for 1st Year Poets

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

Ben Marcus (FI)

The Future of the Short Story

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

Joss Lake (FI)

Creating New Worlds in Writing

Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Benjamin Taylor (NF)

The Fingerprint of Style

Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Joshua Furst (FI)

The Clock, The Calendar, The Almanac: Time in Fiction

Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Yasmine Seale (TR)
Translation Workshop
Thu., 4:15pm-6:45pm

—FRIDAY—

Marwa Helal (PO)
Beast of No Poetics
Fri., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Michael Dumanis (PO)
Genres and Forms of Poetry
Fri., 1:10pm-3:10pm

LECTURES

—MONDAY—

Joshua Cohen (FI)
Story, Plot, Narrative
Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Alice Quinn (PO)
Poets on Poets
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Chloé Cooper Jones (NF)
Foundational Approaches to Narrative Structure
Wed., 10am-12pm

MASTER CLASSES

—MONDAY—

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer's Imagination
(1.5 points)

Mon., 10am-12pm
Oct. 7 – Nov. 25

Nicola Maye Goldberg

The Art of the Sentence (1.5 points)
Mon., 11am-1pm
Sep. 9 – Oct. 14

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

*The Art of the Short Story: From Opening Line
to Publication* (1.5 points)
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Sep. 9 – Oct. 14

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page (1.5 points)
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Sep. 9 – Sep. 25 (Also Wednesdays)

Salvatore Scibona

Two Novels by Don DeLillo (1.5 points)
Mon., 6:30pm-8:30p
Sep. 9 – Oct. 21

—TUESDAY—

Mychal Denzel Smith

Un/Familiar Territory (1.5 points)
Tue., 10am-12pm
Sep. 10 – Oct. 15

Emmeline Clein

*Writing Through Illness: Manifesto, Memoir,
Myth* (1.5 points)
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Sep. 10 – Oct. 15

Lilly Dancyger

From Thesis to Book: The Path to Publication
(1.5 points)
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Oct. 22 – Dec. 3

Matvei Yankelevich

Creative (Mis)translation & Radical Derivation
(1.5 points)
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Oct. 22 – Dec. 3

Jack Lowery

Living Subjects: A Dilemma (1.5 points)
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Sep. 10 – Oct. 15

—WEDNESDAY—

James Wood

*Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short
Stories* (1 point)
Wed., 5:10pm-7:10pm
Oct. 2 – Oct. 23

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page (1.5 points)
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Sep. 9 – Sep. 25 (Also Mondays)

Amy Grace Loyd

The Editing Cycle (1.5 points)
Wed., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Oct. 23 – Dec. 4

—THURSDAY—

Matthew Burgess

*Serious Play: Teaching Imaginative Writing to
Young People* (1.5 points)
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Oct. 24 – Dec. 5

—FRIDAY—

Omer Friedlander

Open-Heart Surgery on the Sentence Level

(1.5 points)

Fri., 11am-1pm

Oct. 25 – Dec. 6

Edwin Torres

Room to Roam: Writing the Voice of the Body

(1.5 points)

Fri., 11am-1pm

Oct. 25 – Dec. 6

SEMINARS

Keri Bertino

The Writer as Teacher

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wed, 2pm-5pm

This class, for students with an interest in teaching creative writing in any setting, takes as a starting point two classic questions of writing pedagogy: “Can creative writing really be taught?” and “Is it possible to teach literature in such a way that people stop killing each other?” Together, we’ll develop more (and more-nuanced) inquiries in response to these questions, then seek to answer them aided by our exploration of the theories, practices, and contexts of teaching creative writing. Primary topics include fundamentals of both general and writing pedagogy, assignment and course design, creating classroom communities, responding to student writing, grading and evaluation, the workshop, and exploration of varied sites of creative writing both in-person and online. Throughout, we’ll also take up broader questions of power structures, the role of the artist and teacher in communities, issues of professionalization, and the ways that practices of teaching and writing inform and fortify one another.

Nicholas Christopher

Mosaics: Unified Collections of Fiction and 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

The Prodigal — Derek Walcott

Jesus' Son — Denis Johnson

Palm-of-the-Hand Stories — Yasunari Kawabata

The World Doesn't End — Charles Simic

Invisible Cities — Italo Calvino

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

Jaquira Díaz

Speculative Futures

(NONFICTION)

Tue, 10am-12pm

Afrofuturist writers and artists have been envisioning possible futures since the mid twentieth century, at the intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation (Ytasha Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*). In “Writing Toward a Definition of Indigenous Futurism,” Métis futurist Chelsea Vowel insists on the power of writing to disrupt colonial narratives, that language is “a place where reality can be shaped.” As we reflect on the global climate crisis and our shared future, how can the work of futurists inform our conceptions of time, justice, and liberation? Is it possible to write a history of the future? How can speculative fiction (including climate fiction) and science writing simultaneously inform our thinking?

In this seminar, we'll examine how writers and thinkers across various disciplines speculate about our shared future and how multi-genre writers integrate personal narrative with science or nature writing. We will consider the research required to write scientifically informed futures, and spend several weeks engaged in research, reading, and discussion, and then each student will work on a project of their own design that incorporates their own climate or environmental research. Students may choose to write essays, memoir, literary journalism, cultural criticism, other areas of nonfiction, or multi-genre work. Readings may include the work of writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Louise Erdrich, Jeff Goodell, Cal Flyn, Wangari Maathai, Lauret Savoy, Octavia Butler, Mario Alejandro Ariza, David Wallace-Wells, Emily Raboteau, Camille Dungy, Elizabeth Rush, and Omar El Akkad.

*This course fulfills the Research Seminar requirement for Nonfiction students.

Michael Dumanis

Genres and Forms of Poetry

(POETRY)

Fri, 1:10pm-3:10pm

It has been popular to assert since the middle of the 20th century that, as Robert Creeley first put it, “form is never more than an extension of content.” This contrarian class aims to suggest the opposite, that content is actually no more than an extension of form, that the granular and macro

choices one makes concerning music, sound, rhythm, lineation, intertextuality, repetition, and style radically affect the way a poem moves, means, feels, and communicates. In this seminar, students will be introduced to the vocabulary and practice of traditional prosody, acquire a familiarity with writing in meter and using rhyme, and attempt traditional forms such as the sonnet, the villanelle, the sestina, the pantoum, the ghazal, and the abecedarian. Particular attention will be paid to the evolution of traditional forms and the myriad innovative and experimental ways contemporary poets approach form and prosody. Additionally, this seminar will closely examine the various less prescriptive stylistic modes in which poetry is commonly written, including the elegy, the ode, the ekphrastic, the pastoral, the aubade, and the litany. Poets whose work will be discussed include Agha Shahid Ali, John Ashbery, Rick Barot, Elizabeth Bishop, Reginald Dwayne Betts, Jericho Brown, torrin a. greathouse, Kenneth Koch, Randall Mann, Maggie Millner, Nicole Sealey, Evie Shockley, and Mark Strand. Each week, students will read a packet of poems in a given genre or form and will attempt a poem in that style.

Jared Daniel Fagen

Contrary Tendencies: Surrealism & Prose Poetry

(POETRY)

Mon., 11am-1pm

“Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all.”

—André Breton, *Nadja*

This infamous line, which concludes Breton’s second book, captures the complex spirit of surrealism and will equally serve as the guiding light for this course. Indifferent to talent, impatient with craft, and dismissive of poetic genius, surrealism calls to those who would delight in paroxysm and paradox, the upheaval of traditional forms and the collapse of categorical boundaries, the ruptured instant of reverie and—as René Char put it—the “exalting alliance of contraries.” This light which no longer binds beauty to a single isolated object, but blinds the beholder with a milieu of simultaneities, will thus be our primary concern. To that end, we will consider the fundamental passageways of surrealist experience—irrational juxtapositions and chance encounters, inexhaustible unconscious desire and quotidian rapture—in the very playground of its hybrid compositions, specifically the prose poem, lyric essay, dream journal, fable, and aphorism, as well as trace the ways in which surrealist tendencies remain embedded within contemporary cross-generic forms. Our exploration of the radical amalgamation of genres will be conducted by close readings of, as well as theoretical approaches to, surrealist and surrealist-adjacent texts whose antithetical ontologies sing the emancipatory articulations of diverse aesthetic and social realities. Some writers we may read and discuss include: Will Alexander, Antonin Artaud, John Ashbery, Gaston Bachelard, Georges Bataille, Charles Baudelaire, André Breton, Claude Cahun, Leonora Carrington, Aimé & Suzanne Césaire, René Char, Hélène Cixous, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Lyn Hejinian, Vicente Huidobro, Max Jacob, Ghérasim Luca, Henri Michaux, Valentine Penrose, Benjamin Péret, Alejandra Pizarnik, Gisèle Prassinos, Nathalie Quintane, Pierre Reverdy, Arthur Rimbaud, Yi Sang, and others.

Farnoosh Fathi

Reading and Revolution

(POETRY)

Wed, 10am-12pm

If the same person does the talking and the listening why so much the better there is just by so much the greater concentration. One may really indeed say that that is the essence of genius, of being most intensely alive, that is being one who is at the same time talking and listening. —
Gertrude Stein

In this seminar, we join in consideration of our consciousness in the act of creation on and off the page, as a means and expression of revolution. We explore what a revolution in reading as writing and writing as reading means, in experience, for each of us; rather than relegating our understanding of consciousness to total mystery, the project of this class is to directly and indiscriminately transcribe our contents—thoughts, feelings, our experiences of fear, love, and so on—and to learn from what we write. The revolution, the reading of ourselves, or, as Gertrude Stein calls it, listening while talking to one's self, is about attention.

Our work will be to create, combine and consider our attention, with the goal of seeing how this effort—a paradoxically effortless one—rather than forced determination to fulfill a particular purpose, can be the real work of writing. Each class will function as an extended meditation to support this work, and involve collective inquiry and response that seeks in part to balance our relationship, on and off the page, to meaning and purpose.

Readings include a variety of writings describing the revolution in terms of a creative, non-dualistic consciousness in compassionate pursuit of the root causes of violence within and without and range in interdisciplinary fashion from literature to philosophy, religious and political writings, in excerpt or entirety: J. Krishnamurti's *Freedom from the Known*; Clarice Lispector's *Agua Viva*; Ety Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life*; bell hooks' *All About Love*; Eihei Dogen's "Mountains and Rivers;" Simone Weil's *The Iliad or a Poem of Force*; Audre Lorde's "The Uses of the Erotic"; poems by Paul Celan and Miklos Radnoti; as well as assorted gathas, sutras, canticles and poems by anchorites, adepts, beguines, and the anonymous.

Our activities may include: "via negativa" writing and apophatic thinking exercises; listening "booths" and logs; thoughtography; overnight writing; asemic writing; working with questions in the manner of koan study; thinking like a plant and other somatic exercises; erotic writing and inside jokes; and new activities to develop more spontaneously and collaboratively together. You will explore those activities and texts that you find most supportive more deeply as part of your mid-term and end-of-semester portfolio.

Monica Ferrell

Word and Image: Reading and Writing Poetry for Prose Writers

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue, 10am-12pm

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, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, Mark Strand, Claudia Rankine, Inger Christensen, Terrance Hayes, Aditi Machado, Cynthia Cruz, and Jericho Brown.

B.K. Fischer

The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

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)

Tue, 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—is an essential skill to learn. 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 imagine 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, Jenn Shapland, and others.

Joshua Furst

The Clock, The Calendar, The Almanac: Time in Fiction

(FICTION)

Thu, 4:15pm-6:15pm

Controlling the way a story or novel navigates time is one of the most crucial tasks of the writer. Whether to tell the story chronologically or in bookends, whether to place the narrative in retrospect or in the immediacy of an unrelenting present action, whether to present the action in scene or in summary, these among many other time-related decisions have profound effects on the formal possibilities of the story as well as the experience that will be imparted on the reader.

In this course, we will explore the role time-management plays in the formal organization of narrative. We'll study the various tools writers have at their disposal by which to control and manipulate and sometimes distort the passage of time in their fiction. Through close readings and formal breakdowns of short stories, we will examine some of the ways a story's positioning in relation to time affects other elements of the story. Students will be asked to write a brief story of their own in which the manipulation of narrative time affects the readers' experience.

Readings may include writing by Katherine Anne Porter, Harold Brodkey, John Cheever, Flannery O'Connor, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Yukio Mishima and David Foster Wallace, among others.

Rivka Galchen

Not Exactly Science Fiction

(FICTION)

Tue, 4:15pm-6:15pm

In this course we will explore the possibilities of scientific language and ideas both as literature and in literature. The texts we will consider will range from science fiction, to nature writing, and much else. We will also consider some works that might at first appear unrelated to scientific thinking, such as folk tales, mysteries, and fantastical stories. Special attention will be paid to the effects generated by scientific language when used near or within other styles of expression. Readings will include works by Octavia Butler, Primo Levi, Weike Wang, Julio Cortazar, Stanislaw Lem and others.

Students will be responsible one brief in-class presentation, several brief writing exercises, and one extended creative piece.

Marwa Helal

Beast of No Poetics

(POETRY)

Fri, 1:10pm-3:10pm

The beast belongs nowhere and everywhere. Attuned to instinct, habitat, viscera—the beast resources efficiently, especially that resource that is language—down to the exacting knife of etymology. In this generative seminar, students will explore the poetics of placelessness; convergences of interior experience, and encounters with physical and dream landscapes. Using formal and experimental techniques students will be encouraged to transform their approach to writing: *‘beast’ing* their way into a rigorous practice resulting in an idiosyncratic poetics that is wholly their own. Readings will include works by Brandon Shimoda, Cheswayo Mphanza, Kyle Carrero Lopez, Diana Khoi Nguyen, Harryette Mullen, Tracy K. Smith, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gala Mukomolova, Ana Bozivezic, Louise Bogan, Susan Briante, Jena Osman and more.

Lars Horn

Disruptive Bodies, Disruptive Texts: Transing Nonfiction

(NONFICTION)

Mon, 11am-1pm

Until the mid-twentieth century, philosophies of embodiment failed to think through the morphology of trans bodies and lives, leaving trans experience, in a sense, “un-worded” in the critical imagination. *Disruptive Bodies, Disruptive Texts: Transing Nonfiction* will examine how trans creatives have responded to this silence, rethinking cis-centric theories of embodiment to unearth innovative “vocabulary” for those lives and bodies long erased from archives and linguistic intelligibilities. Indeed, even in its representations of silence and loss for trans experience, the archive demands a certain attention: What is held in the weight of silence? How do such silences, or rather “silencings,” inform trans embodiment? Is transness destined to forever see itself bound up in hauntings, in violence?

The US publishing industry favours trans narratives that operate within traditional memoir or political and activist nonfiction. Yet, transness, in its disruption of supposed bodily norms, powerfully destabilises essayistic conventions. What is trans nonfiction when its written for us and by us? How then do we define trans nonfiction? What is transness at the level of the sentence, the paragraph? What textures, dimensions, or discussions does it bring to nonfiction as form, genre, and critical discourse? *Disruptive Bodies, Disruptive Texts: Transing Nonfiction* will explore transness not only as content but as syntax, as form. The course will consider those works of trans creation that remove cis-lenses for approaching, organising, and understanding trans experience and literature. Instead, we will consider how the trans body emerges as rich centre from which to rework ideas of embodiment and essay form. And from that centre we will disrupt.

Readings may include work by T. Fleischmann, Zeyn Joukhadar, Andrea Long Chu, C. Riley Snorton, Meredith Talusan, Cameron Awkward-Rich, Cyrus Dunham, Taylor Johnson, Roque Salas Rivera, Aaron Apps, Ari Baniyas, Jos Charles, Paul Tran, Meg Day, Hil Malatino, and others.

Brigid Hughes

Editing and the Writer

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wed., 10am-12pm

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.

Margo Jefferson

Arts, Cultures and Criticism

(NONFICTION)

Wed, 2pm-4pm

This course will examine the lineaments of critical writing. Criticism joins the subjective and objective and the speculative in complex ways. A critic tracks the history of an artwork, (form, genre, social and cultural context), while placing it on contemporary landscapes and considering its future. A single piece can report, analyze, argue, describe, reflect, and interpret. And, since examining a work of art also means examining oneself, implicitly or explicitly, the task includes a willingness -- an eagerness -- to probe one's own assumptions, biases, and emotions. We are in conversation with cultural canons, tastes, quarrels, and beliefs. Who are we speaking to, for and with?

We will read works that address a wide range of forms and genres. How do writers craft their personae, shape language and viewpoint? How do we express not just our certainty but our vulnerability and ambivalence?

Binnie Kirshenbaum

The Word, The Sentence, and The Paragraph

(FICTION)

Tue, 4:15pm-6:15pm

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God

John; King James Bible; 1:1

(This quotation is based solely on its content. The source is irrelevant to the seminar.)

In this craft seminar we will begin by considering words in isolation and devoid of context. What makes one stand-alone word evocative, lively, vivid, visual, and fresh? Conversely, why are some words dull, flat, hackneyed, and lazy? We'll look at the differences between words with Latinate roots and those with Germanic roots, and how English is enriched by incorporating words from other languages. Can we invent new words? We'll discover words that we'd never heretofore encountered, and that reading the dictionary is both enlightening and fun.

When a sentence successfully conveys meaning and intent, isn't that the whole of it? No, not if we want to write memorable sentences that are, unto themselves, works of art. Good sentences sharpen

detail and imagery, reveal character, enhance the narrative voice, and pop off the page. How do metaphors and similes clarify meaning, create beauty, and heighten comic and tragic effects? How does the rearrangement of syntax disrupt monotony, as well as bring order to events as they unfold? Can we break the rules of conventional grammar and style? Do our sentences make music?

Which of our sentences is best suited to open a paragraph, and which of them might end it with a punch? Have we essentially said the same thing twice, and if so, how do we decide which of the two (or more) should be eliminated, and which should we keep? Or is the repetition of words and sentences within a paragraph a deliberate stylistic choice, or is it the byproduct of not paying close attention? Do the sentences contained in a paragraph move smoothly from one to the next? We will also assess the flow of dialogue. Does it sound authentic without being authentic? Does it move the story forward and /or illuminate character?

These questions, among others, will be addressed in class discussion and put into practice with in-class exercises and homework to be shared with the group.

Books required are Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* (9th Edition Preferred) and *Roget's International Thesaurus* (7th Edition Preferred).

Joss Lake

Creating New Worlds in Writing

(FICTION)

Thu, 4:15pm-6:15pm

Creating New Worlds in Writing is a generative, exploratory fiction seminar where we will read, analyze, and experiment with the process of building new worlds. We will ask, What are the narrative possibilities that unfold within these environments? How are these worlds organized on the level of the planet, culture, and individual? What about our own world informs these literary spaces? How can the realms of anthropology and biology help us to understand the vibrant possibilities of our own world? We'll look at the work of writers including Octavia Butler, David Graeber and David Wengrow, N.K. Jemisin, Ursula Le Guin, and Merlin Sheldrake to guide us in our explorations. Each student will focus on building out one specific "world," whether slightly different from ours or a whole new civilization, and creating a piece that takes place in this world.

Dorothea Lasky

Unleashing The Poetic Demon: Seminar for 1st Year Poets

(POETRY)

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

Note: Class is not required but is strongly encouraged for 1st-year Poets.

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 and to poetry itself. 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, Kamilah Aisha Moon, Bernadette Mayer, Langston Hughes, 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.

Hilary Leichter

Elastic Realities

(FICTION)

Tue, 10am-12pm

“...I was profoundly realistic, more realistic than the realists, since the realists, like my classmate, accepted reality up to a certain point and then everything else was fantastic. I accepted a larger reality, one that was more elastic, more expansive, one where everything fit.” – Julio Cortázar, *Literature Class*

How does a writer bend reality so that it stretches to accommodate new worlds without breaking? How does realism comfortably exist in a text that also accommodates the unreal? In this seminar we will engage with fiction that makes room for both, novels and stories that bend without breaking. We will read worlds that look like our own...nearly. And worlds that sound like our own, until they don't. We will scout the edges of the universe, and accept that maybe those edges are more porous than we'd like to imagine. Perhaps it is an elasticity of narrative that not only allows for new horizons in fiction, but in life—the thing that allows for our stories to be believed, and for better futures to be imagined. Come prepared to read fiction that acknowledges a more generous and bountiful reality, one where “everything fits.” Students will turn in their own piece of elastic fiction at the end of the course. Possible texts include work by Italo Calvino, Kathryn Davis, Yukiko Motoya, and Renee Gladman.

Gideon Lewis-Kraus

Reporting Non-News

(NONFICTION)

Mon, 1:10pm-3:10pm

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.

*This course fulfills the Research Seminar requirement for Nonfiction students.

Sam Lipsyte

The Thrill of Agony, The Victory of Defeat: Sports and Contemporary Writing

(FICTION)

Wed, 2pm-4pm

Many writers have explored how sports create meaning in our lives and communities and shape how we think, talk, feel and dream. While some may see in sports a microcosm of life, and others an escape from it, a better assumption is that sports are not separate from life, and there is no escaping the ways physical games and athletic endeavor have structured our language, attitudes and beliefs. While certain coaches might tell you sports build character, and others that they reveal it, we may find it more useful to think of sports as a window onto all the forces at play on and between people, for good and for ill. As Albert Camus, a former goalkeeper in Algeria, once put it: “After many years in which the world has afforded me many experiences, what I know most surely in the long run about morality and obligations, I owe to football.”

The readings will cover a range of genres and approaches, and may include Pindar, C.L.R. James, Eduardo Galeano, Don DeLillo, Leonard Gardner, AL Kennedy, C.E. Morgan, Tracy O’Neil, Geoff Dyer, Gene Kwak, Johan Huizinga, Thomas McGuane, Andre Agassi and Louis Edwards. Each week we will read and discuss a book or selections from a book, as well as stories, essays and poems. At a specific interval, you will hand in a 5-10 page paper in a genre of your choosing (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or a hybrid you’ve devised) which responds to one of the texts. At the end of the term you will also turn in a “training diary” -- presumably kept throughout the semester -- with critical reflections on the readings, as well as any related observations or thoughts.

Susie Luo

Imitation is the Sincerest Form

(FICTION)

Thu, 11am-1pm

What is it about a writer’s voice or style that we find so compelling, so brilliant, so uniquely theirs? And how do we begin to find and hone our own voice and style? In this course, we will read novellas and novels written by authors with distinctive styles and break down how they stitch together a sentence, construct the flow of a paragraph, and lay out a scene. But we will not only read and deconstruct—we will reconstruct. Each week, you will write a brief scene in that author’s style

(maximum two pages, single-spaced) and share it with the class. Through this practice, you will try on other styles for size, learn new rhythms and techniques, and recognize what does and doesn't work for you. Readings for this class may include, among others, Don DeLillo, Sigrid Nunez, Roberto Bolaño, Nicholson Baker, Thomas Pynchon, Arundhati Roy, James Baldwin, Zadie Smith, and Joan Didion.

Ben Marcus

The Future of the Short Story

(FICTION)

Thu, 1:10pm-3:10pm

This seminar will investigate how a mysterious, complicated, beautiful form—the literary short story—has developed over time and what those changes might suggest for its future. We will pursue this investigation in order to wonder how the changes in an art form might relate to the development of our own fiction. So our focus is as much about the progress of a literary mode as it is about the way our own writing develops and how we might direct and support that growth.

Further among our considerations will be how the short story reflects, if not the news of the day, then the literary habits and values that circulate and influence us more subtly. In speculating about 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 make this form our own?

Our readings will cover a broad range of aesthetic approaches from writers of many different backgrounds. We will look at influential short stories from the past twenty years or so, as well as lesser-known but equally resonant works, in order to take the most current pulse of the art form. We also may 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. In general, we will examine how a story operates rather than what its themes or symbolism might be (understanding that these insights cannot always be separated), focussing on the compositional choices the writer has made and how those might apply to our own literary decisions.

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

Among the writers we may read:

NoViolet Bulawayo, Miranda July, Carmen Maria Machado, Gabriel Bump, Claire Keegan, Charles Yu, Jen George, Nafissa Thompson-Spires, Ling Ma, Zadie Smith, Nicole Flattery, Mohsin Hamid, Meng Jin, Kenan Orhan, George Saunders, Bryan Washington, Senaa Ahmad, Catherine Lacey, Lyudmila Ulitskya, Tracey Rose Peyton, Olga Ravn, Brandon Taylor, Rita Chang-Eppig, Okwiri Oduor, and Sanjena Sathian.

Erroll McDonald

A Commodius Vicus of Recirculation: Readings in High Modernism

(FICTION)

Mon, 4:15pm-6:15pm

This seminar examines the affinities (and, of course, the differences) among five masters of high modernism. It is chiefly concerned with narrative strategies and procedures—and their ideological implications. We will read and analyze *Ulysses*; *Mrs. Dalloway*; *The Waves*; *The Sound and the Fury*; *Absalom, Absalom*; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; *The Autumn of the Patriarch*; *Sula*; and *Beloved*.

In addition to robust and consistent class participation, the course requires a 12–15-page final exercise, a stylistic imitation of any writer covered during the semester.

Lincoln Michel

Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing Speculative Fiction

(FICTION)

Tue, 1:10pm-3:10pm

How do we build the impossible? What scaffolding supports the surreal? This seminar will examine the forms, effects, and structures of speculative fiction. We'll look at the shapes of fairy tales with Angela Carter and Donald Barthelme. We'll study how SF worlds are built (and destroyed) with Octavia Butler, Italo Calvino, and Ursula K. Le Guin. We'll examine the psychological effects of terror and the uncanny with Sigmund Freud, Brian Evenson, and Shirley Jackson. After investigating the forms of the fantastic and the futuristic, we'll use our blueprints to create our own works in class.

Tentative reading list:

The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter

Cosmicomics by Italo Calvino

The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson

Exhalation by Ted Chiang

Piranesi by Susanna Clarke

The Glassy Burning Floor of Hell by Brian Evenson

Fever Dream by Samanta Schweblin

Dawn by Octavia Butler

As well as essays or short fiction from Kelly Link, Tzvetan Todorov, Kate Bernheimer, Sofia Samatar, Ann Radcliffe, Samuel Delany, and others.

Lynn Steger Strong

Friendship

(FICTION)

Wed, 10am-12pm

Romance and the family can often feel like the most common purview of the novel: the intensity, the yearning, the impossibility of escape, but friendship holds a different sort of narrative complexity: what do we owe the people we have chosen to move through life with, that we can (maybe?) choose to leave at any point? How and when do we make these choices? How and when can we know or trust that our friends have too? What happens when we make other, different choices, and our lives diverge again? What of envy? What of jealousy? What of love (and hate) that has no specific shape?

There's a particular murkiness to friendship that's well suited to narrative: if there are no rules, no clearly defined obligations, or roles, how do we know we're doing it well or right? How do we know if and when there might be new and different costs? What do we give up in the act of loving people who maybe do not owe us anything? What are the risks, the costs, the unforeseen threats? What is so rich, so thrilling and complex about love outside of the boundaries of marriage or blood?

In this class, we'll read about friendships that sustain and destroy, of found families, intense obsessive bonds that dissolve and re-form; friendships built across generations, class divides; that haunt and disrupt, devour and bring back to life.

Selected Readings:

Passing, Nella Larsen

Captains of the Sands, Jorge Amado

Mrs Palfrey at The Claremont, Elizabeth Taylor

Sula, Toni Morrison

So Long, See You Tomorrow, William Maxwell

Crossing to Safety, Wallace Stegner

Who Will Run the Frog Hospital, Lorrie Moore

Never Let Me Go, Kazuo Ishiguro

Molly Fox's Birthday, Deirdre Madden

My Brilliant Friend, Elena Ferrante

The Spare Room, Helen Garner

The Book of Goose, Yiyun Li

Benjamin Taylor

The Fingerprint of Style

(NONFICTION, FICTION)

Thu, 4:15pm-6:15pm

Your inner life is yours alone. No one before you has been you; no one coming after will be you. Literature is the arena where this irreducible uniqueness gets fullest play. Such is the glory of writing -- also its peril, as what seems fresh and original to you may in fact be tired and hackneyed and derivative. Our theme in this course will be literary style, all the ways in which writers struggle with what they have at heart to say; all the ways in which impulse gets transmuted into words on a page; all the ways in which we escape the habitual and seize on a new liveliness. The following unrepeatable feats of style will be our study:

Father and Son (Edmund Gosse)

Speak, Memory (Vladimir Nabokov)

Pnin (Vladimir Nabokov)

A Passage to India (E. M. Forster)

The Professor's House (Willa Cather)

Collected Fictions (Jorge Luis Borges)

In My Father's Court (Isaac Bashevis Singer)

Satan in Goray (Isaac Bashevis Singer)

The Price of the Ticket (James Baldwin)

The Journalist and the Murderer (Janet Malcolm)

Carried Away (Alice Munro)

Students are asked to read *Father and Son* prior to the first class.

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, Bolaño, Proulx, Munro, Waters, and Wallace.

Wendy S. Walters

The Brilliant Voice

(NONFICTION)

Tue, 1:10pm-3:10pm

A writer's voice is their signature. It helps define their body of work while modulating to accommodate a variety of formal ambitions. While the writer's voice is not fixed, its evolution over time can help to affirm the relationship between diverse critical and creative investments. Through

reading and writing exercises, we will attempt to decipher the way that voice represents (or fails to represent) an identity or persona. We will also consider the way a writer's voice makes visible a unique world of possible intersections. Over the course of the semester, students will practice techniques to help to develop their comfort and trust in their own voice. Readings will engage works from a variety of genres including creative nonfiction, fiction, history and poetry and may include writing by John McPhee, Emily Bernard, Jorge Luis Borges, John Milton, Margo Jefferson, Alexander Chee, Lydia Davis, William Hazlitt, Natalie Diaz, and Maria Tumarkin.

Rosanna Warren

Translating Lyric: Making and Breaking Form

(TRANSLATION, POETRY)

Thu, 10am-12pm

Passion, obscenity, prayer, melancholy, longing, aggression, blasphemy: over millennia and across languages poets have found song-shapes for their meanings, and have found their meanings in song-shapes. In this course, we will consider how poets draw on their traditions and invent new forms by breaking old ones. By extension, poetic translators have to devise their own arts for giving those forms new life in the new language. As we move into poetic modernity with French poetry of the 19th century, we will ponder the key formal revolutions of free verse (*vers libre*) and the prose poem. In a further extension, we will play with the idea of translation as invention, and students are invited to invent translations of imaginary poems by the poets we study, and even to invent a foreign poet, providing translations of the fictive texts.

No knowledge of a language other than English required.

Natasha Wimmer

Landscapes Across Time: Latin American Fiction in Translation

(TRANSLATION, FICTION)

Mon, 10am-12pm

One of the curious things about reading fiction in translation is that it doesn't necessarily arrive in chronological order. In this class, we'll read current fiction in translation, recent retranslations of Latin American classics, and older books now available for the first time in English. How do these works speak to each other across the years? How do new translations shape the Latin American literary landscape in our imagination? What is the role of translator, editor, and critic in this process? And how do we create our own personal literary landscapes across time? Topics will include memory and testimony, the neo-baroque, and humor and the absurd. Writers will likely include: César Aira, Alejo Carpentier, Antonio di Benedetto, Juan Emar, Mariana Enríquez, Álvaro Enríquez, Nona Fernández, Mario Levrero, Fernanda Melchor, Juan Rulfo, Samanta Schweblin, and Alejandro Zambra.

Alan Ziegler

Short Prose Forms

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wed, 5:15pm-7:15pm

Prose poem, short-short story, brief essay, and fragment are wild cards in the writer's deck. How they are defined depends on the dealer and can change from hand to hand. Many prose poems are indistinguishable from short-short stories or flash fiction; brief essays from prose poems; and fragments from prose poems and brief essays. And there are short pieces that the author declines to label with a genre. What these works have in common is that they all belong in this cross-genre seminar with a workshop component.

Class-time will be devoted mainly to examinations of published pieces, workshop-discussions of student work, and conversations about the multiplicity of approaches to short forms. We will consider a wide range of forms, approaches, and styles, spanning the last 175 years (with some precursors). The approach for most of the seminars will be to consider clusters of pieces from a variety of authors, languages, and time periods dealing with similar subject matter. In addition to works in English, we will read translations from the French, German, Italian, Spanish, and other languages. Many of the pieces will be from *Short: An International Anthology of 500 Years of Short-Short Stories, Prose Poems, Brief Essays, and Other Short Prose Forms* (edited by me), which will be available as PDFs (no need to buy the book).

The authors whose work will be considered may include: Charles Baudelaire, Aimee Bender, Thomas Bernhard, Jorge Luis Borges, John Cage, Italo Calvino, Anne Carson, Gianni Celati, Luis Cernuda, Bernard Cooper, Lydia Davis, Russell Edson, Eduardo Galeano, Ray Gonzalez, Kimiko Hahn, Joy Harjo, Lyn Hejinian, Amy Hempel, David Ignatow, Laura (Riding) Jackson, Max Jacob, Juan Ramon Jimenez, Joseph Joubert, Franz Kafka, Bob Kaufman, Yasunari Kawabata, Etgar Keret, Jamaica Kincaid, Yusef Komunyakaa, Ada Limón, Clarice Lispector, Stéphane Mallarmé, Czeslaw Milosz, Harryette Mullen, Ron Padgett, Jayne Anne Phillips, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Renard, Arthur Rimbaud, Sonia Sanchez, Nathalie Sarraute, Sharan Strange, Ana María Shua, Charles Simic, Mark Strand, Deb Olin Unferth, Luisa Valenzuela, John Edgar Wideman, Diane Williams, and Mikhail Zoshchenko.

LITERARY TRANSLATION WORKSHOPS

Literary Translation Workshop

Susan Bernofsky

Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Michael Moore

Wed., 2pm-4:30pm

Yasmine Seale

Thu., 4:15pm-6:45pm

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

Joshua Cohen

Story, Plot, Narrative

(FICTION)

Mon, 1:10pm-3:10pm

What are you trying to tell the reader? A story. How are you going to tell it? Through plot. And how is that telling accomplished? Through narrative. At least those will be our working definitions for this class, which will explore a few of the many +1 ways a book can be written. No effort will be spared to make our assigned reading speak to your own work and to your own concerns about, for example, personhood (first and third), POV, tense, and pace, with the ultimate hope of relating the medium of words to the medium in which we all write and read, which is time.

Anna Karenina, Tolstoy (trans. Pevear/Volokhonsky)

Middlemarch, Eliot

Madame Bovary, Flaubert (trans. Davis)

Lord Jim, Conrad

Chloé Cooper Jones

Foundational Approaches to Narrative Structure

(NONFICTION)

Wed, 10am-12pm

In this lecture, we will spend the term looking at the mechanics of narrative structure through a multidisciplinary lens. We will lean on lessons from philosophy, sociology, psychology, art history, and world religion in order to gain insight into how storytelling shapes human understanding, shapes collective identity, mirrors and informs societal values and norms, constructs social hierarchies and power dynamics, etc.

Most importantly, this class will break down and examine a wide range of narrative structures in literature—from the ‘traditional’ to the experimental—with the explicit aim of enhancing our abilities to use pacing, narrative structure, and storytelling techniques in our own writing.

Alice Quinn

Poets on Poets

(POETRY)

Mon, 4:15pm-6:15pm

I have always found it mesmerizing listening to poets extol the virtues (or analyze the drawbacks!) of a predecessor’s or a contemporary’s work. And nearly all my favorite literature about poetry has been written by poets.

My favorite essay on Emily Dickinson is by the English poet Ted Hughes, and several superb poets—Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, and Joseph Brodsky and before them Randall Jarrell—have written brilliantly about Robert Frost. Louise Glück’s essay on the poems of George Oppen is the best I know on his work, the most instructive and feeling because she drew such consequential lessons from her study of his temperament, style, and aesthetic convictions. Terrance Hayes’ *To Float in the Space Between: A Life and Work in Conversation with the Life and Work of Etheridge Knight* is one of the most dazzling books about the art I have ever read.

This class will launch with Ted Hughes’ penetrating exploration of Emily Dickinson’s poems, and then we’ll tackle Robert Frost in two classes devoted to his poetry and the poetry of those mentioned above who revered his work and understood its tragic and sublime dimensions. We’ll have a class on Oppen and Glück and one on Etheridge Knight and Terrance Hayes, too.

And we’ll have eight distinguished contemporary poets joining us who will introduce us to favorite predecessors and contemporaries of theirs.

For each class, participants will prepare a short paragraph on the work of each poet whose work we’ve read for class not as a précis or anything definitive about your thinking but as preparation for your own involvement in class and engagement with our guests.

Our guests:

1) Rick Barot has published three books of poetry with Sarabande Press: *The Darker Fall* (2002), which received the Kathryn A. Morton Prize; *Want*, which was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award; and *Chord*, a finalist for the *L.A. Times* Book Prize and winner of the PEN Open Book Award and the Thom Gunn Award. In 2020, he received the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America.

2) Linda Gregerson is the author of numerous collections—among them *Prodigal: New and Selected Poems, 1976-2014*; *The Selvage* (2012); *Waterbourne* (2002); and *The Woman Who Died in Her Sleep* (1996). She is the recipient of the Kingsley Tufts Award, an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Levinson Prize from *Poetry Magazine*. She is also a scholar of Renaissance literature and the author of several distinguished books of literary criticism.

3) Richie Hofmann’s two collections are *A Hundred Lovers* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2022) and *Second Empire* (Alice James Books, 2015). His poems have been published widely in journals and magazines including *The New Yorker*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Poetry*, and his honors include the Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship and an Academy of American Poets Prize. A Wallace Stegner Fellow, he is currently a Jones Lecturer at Stanford

4) Maureen N. McLane’s most recent book—part of her ongoing experiment in criticism—is *My Poetics* (University of Chicago, 2024). Her book *My Poets*, a hybrid of memoir and criticism, was a *New York Times* Notable Book and a finalist for the 2012 National Book Critics Circle Award in Autobiography. She has published eight books of poetry including *Same Life* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), *World Enough* (2010) *This Blue* (2016) and *Some Say* (2017), and her poems appear regularly in *Bomb*, *Granta*, the *London Review of Books*, and *The New Yorker*.

5) Dante Micheaux is the author of the début collection *Amorous Shepherd* (Sheepmeadow Press) and *Circus*, the winner of the 2019 Four Quartets Prize sponsored by the Poetry Society of America and the T.S. Eliot Foundation. His other honors include the 2020 Ambit Poetry Prize and fellowships from Cave Canem where he is currently Programs Director and the *New York Times* Foundation.

6) Tomás Q. Morin is the author of the collection of poems *Machete* and the memoir *Let Me Count the Ways*, as well as the poetry collections *Patient Zero* and *A Larger Country*. He is also the translator of *The Heights of Macchu Picchu* by Pablo Neruda, and his new books are a novel and a new collection, *My Favorite Things*, both forthcoming from Knopf. He is the recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

7) Jana Prikryl was born in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia. Her family fled the country when she was five years old settling in Canada. Her two books of poems—*No Matter* (Tim Duggan Books, 2019) and *The After Party* (2016) were both among *The New York Times*' Best Poetry Books of the Year. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *London Review of Books*, *Harper's*, and *Granta* and is anthologized in *The Best American Poetry 2020* and *The Unprofessionals, New American Writing from The Paris Review*. She also writes essays on film and photography and is a senior editor and the poetry editor at *The New York Review of Books*.

8) Farnoosh Fathi is the author of the debut collection *Great Guns* (2013) and the editor of *Joan Murray: Drafts, Fragments, Poems* (New York Review of Books, 2018). She is the founder of the Young Artist Language and Devotion Alliance and the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship to Brazil and a Ruth Lilly Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation.

SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP

Thom Donovan

Tue., 6:30pm-9:30pm

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.

MASTER CLASSES

Matthew Burgess

Serious Play: Teaching Imaginative Writing to Young People

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Thu, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Oct. 24 to Dec. 5

This master class is designed for writers of all genres who are interested in sharing their love of writing with young people. Children understand that writing is a magical power, and they take pleasure in learning how to do it. But by the time they turn up in high school or college-level classes, many have decided that writing is a chore. One of the aims of the writer-teacher is to reverse this trend by creating classroom environments in which students (re)discover the creative, expressive, and intellectual power of language. The point is not to follow rules, avoid mistakes, and fill pages with sentences that hold little or no personal meaning. On the contrary, writing is an act of the mind and the imagination, and it can draw us out of ourselves in ways that are surprising, challenging, even fun.

In addition to studying pedagogical theories, we will explore concrete strategies for designing and leading imaginative writing workshops with students. Play is a central theme, one we will regard as a *serious* pedagogical tool and guiding principle, and class meetings will involve frequent low-stakes, in-class writing experiments. One of the goals for this six-week course is that participants will feel equipped and excited to adapt what they've learned and apply it in a variety of educational contexts.

Emmeline Clein

Writing Through Illness: Manifesto, Memoir, Myth

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Tue, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Sep. 10 to Oct. 15

While “the sickbed is the incubator for almost all genius and nearly most revolution,” as Anne Boyer observed, it is also a misunderstood and maligned site, a space so much literature sanitizes, oversimplifies, and silences. This course takes Boyer’s revelation seriously, situating the sickbed as the best seat in the house for seeing our sick society clearly, fertile soil for prose play and theoretical inquiry. Nonfiction that renders illness honestly often takes on fugitive forms, instead of existing within the conventional genre strictures that mimic our similarly constrictive diagnostic paradigms. Rather than traditional illness memoirs, narrative nonfiction, or medical reportage, we will read memoirs-cum-manifestos, book-length critical essays, theoretical autobiographies, oral histories, scene reports from the field, communal memoirs, and art and literary criticism that delves into the chasm between ill and well.

In these texts, we will see mental illness understood structurally and societally rather than as an individual affliction, physical diseases considered through the lenses of class, race, and gender, field reports from conventions of those suffering from stigmatized illnesses, and work that combines these approaches. We will read writing on illness that lives between and across genres, from authors including Anne Boyer, Audre Lorde, Ann Cvetkovich, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Jordan Kisner, Madeline Gressel, Rachel Aviv, Alice Hattrick, and Caroline Knapp. Over the course of our class,

students will find new forms through which to write into their own medical histories or report on a medical problem they find fascinating, ending the course with the beginnings of a prose project thinking through a medical issue of their choice.

Lilly Dancyger

From Thesis to Book: The Path to Publication

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Tue, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Oct. 22 to Dec. 3

By the time you graduate you will have completed a manuscript (or most of one), but... then what? This master class, designed for second-year fiction and nonfiction students, will help you lay the groundwork to go from thesis to published book—from the submission materials you'll need (a query letter, synopsis, and book proposal) and a plan for which path to publication is best suited to you and your work (an agent and a Big 5 publisher? A small press or contest? A university press?), to strategically publishing shorter pieces and establishing yourself as part of the literary community.

Omer Friedlander

Open-Heart Surgery on the Sentence Level

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Fri, 11am-1pm – Oct. 25 to Dec. 6

In this class, we will do a live edit of students' work in progress. We will get down to the difficult business of tearing open your story, moving things around, discovering how the internal mechanisms work, and then patching it up again. We will talk about how to begin a story and how to end one. We will discuss the kind of feedback you get in workshop and how to tackle it. You've been told the setting of your story is vague. Well, how do you bring a place to life on the page? You've been told that the story lacks tension or the pacing is too slow. How do you create conflict or speed things up? We will focus on the prose: the paragraph, the sentence, the word, the letter, the phoneme. We will explore the sound, rhythm, and texture of language. We will also study and learn from the revision processes of great writers such as Zadie Smith, Colm Toibin, and Sigrid Nunez.

Nicola Maye Goldberg

The Art of the Sentence

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Mon, 11am-1pm – Sep. 9 to Oct. 14

What distinguishes great prose from the merely excellent? This master class will focus on building a story at the sentence level. We will examine sentences on a word-by-word basis to understand what makes one "perfect." Some elements we will examine are word choice, syntax, structure, tone, and imagery. Through readings and in-class exercises, we will learn to elevate our own sentences. By the end of the course, participants should develop a heightened sensitivity to the nuances of language and a refined ability to create compelling prose. Readings may include Amy Hempel, Barry Hannah, Garielle Lutz, Joan Didion, James Baldwin, Vladimir Nabokov, and Mary Robison.

Jack Lowery

Living Subjects: A Dilemma

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Tue, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Sep. 10 to Oct. 15

Most writers who know their subjects intimately—whether it be their own friends and family, or a person they’ve developed a relationship with through extensive research or reporting—would prefer to ignore the question of how their writing will affect their subject and their relationship to them. In this masterclass, we will study how different writers of both fiction and nonfiction have confronted the dilemma of writing about living people with whom they have (or had) a relationship—subjects who will, in all likelihood, read what has been written about them. What considerations do our living subjects deserve? How do we write the truth, as we see it, while also acknowledging our own subjectivity, differences of perspective, and differences in memory? What accommodations, if any, do we make when rendering our living subjects on the page? All of these questions are complicated by the particulars of the relationship at hand. Do those with a platform, power, or who will have a chance to respond publicly deserve to be written about differently than those who don’t have this access or opportunity? How do we write about a living subject who has caused harm, either to us or to others, or who we have harmed? How do we write about a living subject whose identity and experiences differ from our own, especially when that subject has a marginalized identity that we don’t share? And what does it look like to do all of this ethically? To better understand these questions, we will study examples of both writers who have written about living people with whom they already have a relationship, and instances in which the writer has come to develop a profound and lasting relationship with their subject through either research or reporting. The ultimate goal of the course is not to develop a rote or standardized course of action, but to embrace these questions as generative fodder for writing, rather than seeing this dilemma as a barrier or hurdle.

Amy Grace Loyd

The Editing Cycle

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Wed, 5:15pm-7:15pm – Oct. 23 to Dec. 4

“We edit to let the fire show through the smoke”—Arthur Plotnik

This course will help writers become more conversant in and comfortable with the revision and editing process.

We will embrace the necessity and inevitability — and the real benefits — of rewriting and lay out strategies to give the writer the distance needed to look at his/her/their work as a reader and/or editor might and to assess the writer’s intentions (from point of view, style, and character development to the way in which a given work breaks or conforms to established rules) and how these are – or are not yet – achieved on the page.

Students will be asked to bring in a short piece or part of a longer piece to share and submit to editing for the purposes of revision.

We’ll read and refer to pieces on writing, revision, and editing; cover common writing errors and editing basics; and discuss published work (excerpts and finished pieces) and how each piece succeeds or fails in conveying its intentions — to let the fire show through the smoke.

We'll also discuss the realities of collaborating with professionals who edit for a range of venues/audiences and how these variables impact their expectations of a writer's work from a work-in-progress to a publishable product.

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer's Imagination

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Mon, 10am-12pm – Oct. 7 to Nov. 25

When and why do writers evoke music? How can an attentive musical ear strengthen your writing? This course offers writers a chance to focus on the expressive power of music and to explore musical form from a writerly perspective. With an emphasis on purely instrumental music – music without words – we tackle the challenges of listening and observing, developing creative approaches to capturing and using musical experience. Marcel Proust on the elusive experience of listening gives us a place to begin. Genres of fiction, poetry and nonfiction merge in excerpted readings of key works in which music serves as inspiration: Thomas Mann and Beethoven; Proust's fictional *Vinteuil* Sonata; James Baldwin's blues; Milan Kundera on the art of the novel; poetry of Anna Akhmatova and Rilke. Music of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Satie, Debussy, Charlie Parker and others.

I lead much of this class from the piano; live performances interweave with discussion. Students will have weekly assignments of at-home listening, as well as short readings and/or writing, with some writings shared in class.

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

The Art of the Short Story: From Opening Line to Publication

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Mon, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Sep. 9 to Oct. 14

This six-week master class will cover some of the essential techniques of the short story, including tension, dialogue, compression, and, of course, openings and endings. We'll examine "narrative clarity" in Ha Jin's stories, the plot structure in Helen Oyeyemi, how A. M. Homes establishes tension, and why Marjane Satrapi "draws" her scenes the way she does in her graphic memoir, *Persepolis*.

Our class discussions may also include excerpts from film, songs, plays, poems, memoirs, newspaper articles, and anything else that can inform us on how stories are told. We'll put what we're learning into practice, by writing and discussing our own short story, approximately 4 pages, and seeing what elements are coming to life and what might need a little more breath.

And finally, what should a writer do with a story once it's done—does it stay inside a drawer? Or does it get published? In other words, how exactly does one end up in, say, *The New Yorker*? This class will be able to come up with a roadmap.

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics Master Class: The Black of the Page

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Mon & Wed, 5:15pm-7:15pm – Sep. 9 to Sep. 25

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. Languages and eco-systems are both polyvalent hybrids, capable of happening in multiple directions simultaneously; how 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 eco-poetics can respond. Readings will be drawn from the Chilean poet Raul Zurita, Camille Dungy's anthology *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, S. Yizhar's novel *Khirbet Khizeh*, 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.

Salvatore Scibona

Two Novels by Don DeLillo

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Mon, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Sep. 9 to Oct. 21

In the 1970s, after quitting a career in advertising, Don DeLillo published seven novels in ten years. They were fast, devious, often hilarious. Nevertheless, he would later say of this period, "I knew I wasn't doing utterly serious work." One of the novels, written under a pseudonym, he seems never to have acknowledged having written.

Then something changed. He slowed down and began writing the more formally disciplined novels culminating with *Underworld* (1997) that have defined his career. We will read two of them: *Libra* (1988), both a thriller and a polyphonic oratorio of the assassination of John F. Kennedy largely from the point of view of Lee Harvey Oswald; and *Mao II* (1991), a novel of terrorism, crowds, and the transcendent power of language in one artist's life.

The class will be a close reading of all these novels contain—including his vision of the absurdity and violence beneath the surface of American life—and a study of the formal and stylistic choices that hold the novels together and make them sing. No one writes quite like DeLillo. No one writes dialogue like him or has his ear for what he calls "the uninventable poetry, inside the pain, of what people say."

Students will write one brief critical or creative piece in response.

Mychal Denzel Smith

Un/Familiar Territory

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Tue, 10am-12pm – Sep. 10 to Oct. 15

A writer with access to brand new, untouched, or scarcely covered subject matter has hit a conditional jackpot. On the one hand, the writer is set to assume full authority, narrative control, and set the precedent for how the subject will be written about in the future. But such authority comes with a question that could cloud the project: how do you make this unfamiliar subject matter appealing to potential readers? Most of us, however, are going to spend the majority of our time as writers traversing well-worn subjects and ideas, as we learn that very little is out there that has not been broached in some way. This shouldn't be discouraging, but rather prompt a different question: how do you make this oft-explored territory feel new? This course will examine the tools a writer has at their disposal, on and off the page, in and out of prose, to assist in answering questions about what it means to make the unfamiliar familiar, and vice versa.

Edwin Torres

Room to Roam: Writing the Voice of the Body

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Fri, 11am-1pm – Oct. 25 to Dec. 6

Where are we located in our writer's world, and how does alignment affirm new openings? As creatures of awareness, writers are receptive beings that embody transition. Part of allowing the creative process its room to roam, is to encourage that search into amazement — to align our natural tri-lingual voice, our *speaking-seeing-hearing* voice, with the human complexities that define us. These six weeks will be structured as a creative laboratory, integrating poetry with movement, sound, and visual art, to expand our communication by exercising the languages inside us. Tectonic fractures, Arvo Part, Anne Hamilton, and realm-building are some of the practices we'll cover. Work will be created, discarded, renewed to explore the sensory edges that embody transformative writing, where the creative process can begin.

James Wood

Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short Stories

4 Sessions, 1 point – Wed, 5:10pm-7:10pm – Oct. 2 to Oct. 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*

Matvei Yankelevich

Creative (Mis)translation & Radical Derivation

6 Sessions, 1.5 points – Tue, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Oct. 22 to Dec. 3

Leave fidelity, originality, and translatability at the door, as we enter a world where literature is turned upside-down. Here the chaste vow to respect the inviolable authority of the author and the sacred belief in the hierarchical order of original and translation will be hung out to dry. In this short course we'll explore the generative possibilities of bad translation, scandalous paraphrase, treacherous imitation, and further misdeeds of the translator's pen. We'll examine inspired approaches of transgressive translation practices that destabilize "original" texts and conquer canonic works to question the limits imposed by "the task of the translator." Through radical rewritings and abject deviations we will recuperate our agency in the encounter with the original.

Texts we'll use for inspiration may include homophonic translations from the Zukofskys' Catullus to Melnick's *Iliad*; the bad-boy Baudelaire in David Cameron's *Flowers of Bad* and Brandon Brown's *Flowering Mall*; Sawako Nakayasu's "collaboration" with Chika Sagawa; the limit-case of translation in Pierre Menard's *Quixote*; Christian Hawkey's seances with Trakl; and Mónica de la Torre's "repetitions." We'll compare these radical departures to prevalent theories of translation, gleaned from essays by Walter Benjamin, Gayatri Spivak, Édouard Glissant, and others. Come prepared to play and experiment toward the creation of derivative works.

This course is for writers of all concentrations and descriptions.

Knowledge of a foreign language is not required.