

# CA/T Community Classes (CCC)

Creative Writing | Columbia University



Carson McCullers, Columbia Writing alum

## COURSEBOOK

Fall 2022

## INFORMATION

CA/T Community Classes are free, non-credit creative writing seminars and workshops in fiction, poetry, nonfiction and cross-genre. Taught by MFA Writing Program students at Columbia University's School of the Arts, these classes are designed to facilitate discussions of literary pieces and provide a space for feedback on student work.

These courses are open to **all** current Columbia and Barnard students, staff, and affiliates and all School of the Arts alumni.

Classes meet once weekly for five to six weeks, beginning on Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, through Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. Classes are six weeks unless otherwise specified. For the first time in over two years, this semester will offer both **IN-PERSON** and **ONLINE** courses (noted below).

Online courses will take place over Zoom. In-Person courses will take place on campus in Dodge Hall (room numbers to be provided by your instructor prior to the first day of class).

## HOW TO REGISTER:

Classes are first come, first served. You may register for up to two (2) CCC courses a semester. The registration period will close on Friday, October 21st. Classes are capped at 12 students. Those that fill up will be specified as **waitlist only**.

To choose your classes, please fill out the [Fall 2022 Registration Form](#). The CCC coordinator, Delia Cruz Kelly, will contact you by Sunday, October 23rd, only if you have been assigned a class, or later if you are moved off a waitlist.

More information is also available at our website, <https://arts.columbia.edu/cat/CCC>.

If you have any further questions about registration, please email CCC coordinator, Delia Cruz Kelly, at [soa-writing-ccc@columbia.edu](mailto:soa-writing-ccc@columbia.edu). If your question pertains to a specific course, please reach out to the instructor.

# COURSE LIST

## FICTION

**THE LANGUAGE OF FRIENDSHIPS | Evelyn Burd**

Mon. 6:00pm-8:00pm (ONLINE)

**FICTION AND FAMILIARITY | Meiwen Chen**

Mon. 6:00pm-8:00pm (IN-PERSON)

**WHO, WHAT WHERE, WHEN: THE SPECIFICS OF PERSPECTIVE**

| Elizabeth Furlong

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm (IN-PERSON)

**SHORT STORY WORKSHOP | Melita Granger**

Wed. 4:00pm-6:00pm (IN-PERSON)

**HOW TO WRITE WOMEN | Destiny Hall**

Mon. 4:00pm-6:00pm (ONLINE)

**FICTION WORKSHOP | Sofia Montrone**

Fri. 12:00pm-2:00pm (ONLINE)

**MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN FICTION | Rebecca Winterich-Knox**

Wed. 2:00pm-4:00pm (IN-PERSON)

**KEEPING TIME: TIME AS AN ELEMENT OF CRAFT | Jacqueline Wu**

Wed. 12:00pm-2:00pm (ONLINE)

## POETRY

**INTRODUCTORY POETRY WORKSHOP | Selden Cummings**

Wed. 12:00pm-2:00pm (IN-PERSON)

## CROSS-GENRE

### **PROSE PLAYGROUND | Nafisa A. Iqbal**

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm (ONLINE)

### **WRITING THE EVERYDAY: A GENERATIVE WORKSHOP | Mina Khan**

Mon. 7:00pm-9:00pm (ONLINE)

### **UNFIT AND UNSTANDARDIZED: WRITING & LANGUAGES**

| Ariel Peng

Wed. 4:15-6:15 (IN-PERSON)

### **THE PLACES WE GO | Ines Rodrigues**

Fri. 4:00pm-6:00pm (IN-PERSON)

## FICTION

### **THE LANGUAGE OF FRIENDSHIPS**

Evelyn Burd

Mon. 6:00pm-8:00pm (no class on November 7th for Academic Holiday)

Dates: October 24<sup>th</sup>—December 5<sup>th</sup>

Online

Each person speaks their own language; when two people form a relationship, they form a language together. They have spent time getting to know each other, and each can speak the language of the other, but how they speak when they're together is unique.

In this course we will investigate friendships in writing with a focus on the language that is shared between two people—how that helps the two know each other better, and how it takes them deeper into themselves.

Looking at examples from writers including Toni Morrison, Yoko Tawada, Sally Rooney, Elena Ferrante, Gabriel García Marquez, Yiyun Li, Deesha Philyaw, Carmen Maria Machado and more, we'll examine syntax, lexica, and language between two

characters across crowded and secluded settings. Then we'll create our own shared languages for a set of friends by identifying the words they use together, the sentence length, the rhythm of their conversations, the topics they discuss, how long and loud their silences are. And then, we'll write our own stories, weaving in the language of the friendship.

## **FICTION AND FAMILIARITY**

**Meiwen Chen**

**Mon. 6:00pm-8:00pm (no class November 7th for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 24<sup>th</sup>—December 5<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

One of the greatest allures of fiction is the autonomy it grants a writer. Our imagination is not restricted by facts, physics or reality. This does not imply, however, that fiction is not in essence grounded in real life—it should not be untethered. Good fiction often does, or even must, establish a sense of camaraderie with its reader, enticing them to linger, intrigued, within the space and time which you have proposed, alongside the characters and situations of your design.

But what if you're trying to write about something that is familiar to yourself but not necessarily to others? How exactly would you be able to situate your readership to the specific scenario that you propose? In this class, we explore methods utilized to familiarize an "outsider" audience to the intricacies of a place or a people that we know best. Readings will include excerpts from *Pachinko*, *Interior Chinatown*, *Beautiful Country*, *Crying in H Mart*, and more.

## **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN: THE SPECIFICS OF PERSPECTIVE**

**Elizabeth Furlong**

**Thurs. 6:30pm-8:30pm (no class November 24th for Thanksgiving Day)**

**Dates: October 27<sup>th</sup>—December 8<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

“Places are never just places in a piece of writing. If they are, the author has failed. Setting is not inert. It is activated by point of view.”

— Carmen Maria Machado, *In the Dream House*

When you sit down at the page to write, you are confronted with an immediate choice—*who* or *what* will tell the story you have begun to grow in your head? From where and when will the story be told? These first essential questions, which we sometimes respond to intuitively—we hear a voice, we reach for the pen—fundamentally shape *how* we tell our stories. For many writers and readers the joy of literature comes from inhabiting an entirely different viewpoint.

In this six-session course, we will explore and assess how point of view works in fiction. We will examine the different kinds of point of view, (first, second, close or distant or omniscient third) as well as points of view that seem to fit outside these categories. Our aim is to understand how stories manipulate and employ these perspectives to achieve varying effects. Why write from a first person point of view? What does a close third offer that a first person cannot? How can we change points of view effectively? Why do we choose to write from a point far in the future from the events of our story? Is there a style you gravitate toward?

Readings will be provided in class and may include excerpts from Roberto Bolaño, Justin Torres, Atticus Lish, Jenny Erpenbeck, Alice Sola Kim, Colette, George Eliot, Denis Johnson, Margarita Liberaki. We will also engage in short writing exercises during class to explore writing the same scene from various points of view and to help us understand the advantages, effects, and challenges of each. Our goal is to open up the possibilities of our writing, to set pen to paper in unexpected ways.

## **SHORT STORY WORKSHOP**

**Melita Granger**

**Wed. 4:00pm-6:00pm (no class November 23rd for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 26<sup>th</sup>—December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

This workshop aims to create an engaging and generative space of exploration and critique for fiction writers. In the first week before we start workshoping we will look at published story examples and non-fiction excerpts. We will read with a close attention to craft – discussing dialogue, points of view, interior monologue, character arcs, theme, and more. You will be learning, through this analysis, how to give effective, constructive, and kind feedback in a class workshop.

From Week 2 onward, you will draft and receive feedback on your work, and will participate in group discussions and in-class writing exercises. At the end of our six weeks together you will have submitted and workshopped a complete short story (between 1,000 and 5,000 words) and have more knowledge about what is working and not working in your story in order to go forth and make it the best it can be.

This is an in-person class only. Each student will get two 20 minute one-on-one consultations with me, at the beginning of the course and at the end after their workshop.

## **HOW TO WRITE WOMEN**

**Destiny Hall**

**Mon. 4:00pm-6:00pm (no class November 7th for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 24<sup>th</sup>—December 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Online**

Whether it's describing a woman's body only as an object of lust, centering a female character's life around a man, or casting a strong woman as someone who vehemently detests femininity, there's a surplus of tropes that produce badly written women in literature. Throughout this class, students will examine how women have been historically portrayed in literature, how modern writers overcorrected these depictions, and how to write realistic women within their own works. In class we'll look at commonly used tropes authors use while writing women including, but not limited to, the "strong female character" and how her description negatively affects historically marginalized women, patterned depictions of women in dystopias, and the Madonna-whore complex. These intersectional discussions will be supported by scholarly articles centering feminist theory, critical race theory and LGBTQ+ theory.

## **FICTION WORKSHOP**

**Sofia Montrone**

**Fri. 12:00pm-2:00pm (no class November 25th for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 28<sup>th</sup>—December 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Online**

This workshop aims to create an engaging, generative space of exploration and

experimentation for writers at all levels. Each week 2-3 students will submit a short piece (no more than 12 pages) for workshop. While class time will be focused on a discussion of students' original writings, we may also incorporate exercises and short in-class readings to help focus our conversations about craft.

## **MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN FICTION**

**Rebecca Winterich-Knox**

**Wed. 2:00pm-4:00pm (no class November 23rd for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 26<sup>th</sup>—December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

In this six-session course, we will explore the narrative strategies that writers use to depict compelling mother and daughter relationships. We'll seek to answer the question: How can these fictional relationships corroborate and complicate our ideas about identity, kinship, and belonging? Many of our readings will explore non-normative mother-daughter dynamics, as well as themes of bereavement, estrangement, and alienation.

The first half of each class will be spent reading and discussing short stories and excerpts from novels. Readings will be provided in-class and may include readings from Alice Munro, Toni Morrison, Elena Ferrante, Julie Otsuka, Sigrid Nunez, Sheila Heti, and Jacqueline Woodson. The second half of each class will be devoted to generating and workshopping student writing. No previous workshop experience is required; all backgrounds and levels of comfort with creative writing are welcome.

## **KEEPING TIME: TIME AS AN ELEMENT OF CRAFT**

**Jaqueline Wu**

**Wed. 12:00pm-2:00pm (no class November 23rd for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 26<sup>th</sup>—December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Online**

“It is as if I could dip my hand down



into time and scoop up  
blue and green lozenges of April heat  
a year ago in another country.

I can feel that other day running underneath this one  
like an old videotape—”  
- Anne Carson

What is the role of time in fiction? How do writers play with time, creating multiple timelines and nonlinear story structures? How are flashbacks and jumps in time smoothly juxtaposed into the narrative, moving readers into memories, context, and backstory? How do writers create a profound sense of nostalgia, and what are the effects of the retrospective gaze? In this 5-week course, students will read excerpts from Virginia Woolf, Jenny Erpenbeck, Kazuo Ishiguro, Alice Munro, and Ted Chiang in order to identify and explore time as an element of craft. Together, we will look at tense, syntax, structure, and more; our aim will be not only to understand how to manipulate time but also to use it in our own work.

## POETRY

### INTRODUCTORY POETRY WORKSHOP

Selden Cummings

**Wed. 12:00pm-2:00pm (no class on November 23rd for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 26<sup>th</sup>—December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

Are you a fiction or non-fiction writer interested in flirting with the enigmatic “third genre” of poetry? Maybe you’re a poet, but you’ve never participated in a workshop? Or maybe you’ve never written a word of poetry, but you’ve always wanted to try?

Whether you fall into one of these categories or a different one altogether, this workshop is for you! We will foster a safe space to read and discuss each other’s poems with the goal of improving them overall (and we will certainly discuss what we

mean when we talk about “improving” poetry in the first place). We will also spend time covering poetry basics, including rhyme and meter, metaphor, imagery, alliteration, assonance, metonymy, and more. In addition to the workshop, each week we will read one or two poems by well-known poets, exploring how poetry has evolved over the past century (you will be welcome to attempt formal imitations of the poets we read in your own work).

If you’ve ever wondered how others might respond to your poetry, but never felt comfortable enough to share it, then I highly encourage you to join. Creative writing workshops are blessings, and if nothing else, this course will provide you with a community of like-minded writers with whom to exchange ideas.

## **CROSS-GENRE**

### **PROSE PLAYGROUND**

**Nafisa A. Iqbal**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm (no class November 10th and no class on November 24th for Thanksgiving)**

**Dates: October 27<sup>th</sup>—December 8<sup>th</sup> \*5 Class Sessions!\***

**Online**

This generative prose workshop is designed to break us out of our creative funk using experimentation and a sense of play. We will spark new material through a series of dynamic in-class writing prompts and read examples of inventive prose. All our writing exercises will be done in class.

We will look through a kaleidoscope of perspectives to change how we see our narratives. How does our story transform when written from non-human perspectives? We will rearrange the forms of our stories like moving around building blocks. How do we use the format of a recipe or a real estate listing to write a compelling character portrait? We will swing from the monkey bars of genre expectations. What does it mean to use the conventions of horror or fairytales to write

about our own mundane lives? Remember: the blank page is your playground. You need only bring yourself, your writing tools, and an open mind ready to rise to this buoyant challenge.

## **WRITING THE EVERY DAY: A GENERATIVE WORKSHOP**

**Mina Khan**

**Mon. 7:00pm-9:00pm (no class November 7th for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 24<sup>th</sup>—December 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Online**

How do we make the mundane sparkle? In this generative course, we learn from poets, authors, and artists that turn the everyday into something fresh and unfamiliar. Students will develop the tools and practices to draw inspiration from their day-to-day experiences, transform observations into captivating narratives, and learn how to confront and ultimately overcome writer's block. Students will choose a singular topic, personal to them, to explore for the duration of the workshop.

The course's tentative reading list includes, but is not limited to, works by Sharon Olds, Jennifer Chang, Emma Cline, Salvator Dali, and Fiona Apple. Some outside work will be required.

## **UNFIT AND UNSTANDARDIZED: LANGUAGES AND WRITING**

**Ariel Peng**

**Wed. 4:15pm-6:15pm (no class November 23rd for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 26<sup>th</sup>—December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

Why write? Why write in English? Language is what we use to express ourselves, privately and aloud. However, for students from bi/multilingual backgrounds, it can

often feel limiting when we are asked to fit ourselves into the box that is standard English. Writing shouldn't be one-dimensional, nor should reading be.

In this six-session course, we will focus on how language is used in writing. We will look at works in translation and brainstorm the influences language has on us as readers. In each class, we will have a free-write session that helps students invent their own linguistic expressions. We will also have group activities such as translating each other. As a result of this course, students will be able to take home ideas and use them to develop their own unique storytelling. The authors we will read include but are not limited to Sei Shonagon, Joan Didion, Akwaeke Emezi, Bian Zhilin, Zadie Smith, and Haruki Murakami. You do not need to know another language to enroll in this course. All readings will be distributed electronically.

## **THE PLACES WE GO**

**Ines Rodrigues**

**Fri. 4:00pm-6:00pm (no class November 25th for Academic Holiday)**

**Dates: October 28<sup>th</sup>—December 9<sup>th</sup>**

**In-Person**

*"I could only write about my homeland [Peru] after I was living as an exiled writer in Europe."  
(Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel Prize Winner – 2010)*

If a writer calls more than one place home, how does it translate into his or her work? How do the places you travel or choose to live have an imprint in your personality and your identity as an artist? What's the meaning of home in your writing?

This course explores writing that's inspired and shaped by travels, displacement, immigration, and their connections to literature.

We will read and examine works from writers whose work and identity are shaped by a deep sense of place. We will write stories shaped by the relationship between people, history, and geography.

Syllabus will include excerpts from Jhumpa Lahiri, Francesca Marciano, Claudio Magris, Olga Tokarczuk and Alain de Botton.