

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

SPRING 2023



COURSEBOOK

Workshops ■ Seminars ■ Lectures ■ Master Classes

Updated: January 11, 2023

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WORKSHOP

FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Joshua Furst

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

Jen George

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

James Cañón

Wed., 2pm-5pm

Joanna Hershon

Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Madelaine Lucas

Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Daniel Magariel

Fri., 10am-1pm

FICTION – THESIS (9 points)*

Ben Marcus

Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Rivka Galchen

Tue., 10am-1pm

Heidi Julavits

Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Gary Shteyngart

Wed., 2pm-5pm

Anelise Chen

Thu., 10am-1pm

Paul Beatty

Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm

NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Leslie Jamison

Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Phillip Lopate

Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Lilly Dancyger

Mon., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Michelle Orange

Tue., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Cris Beam

Thu., 10am-1pm

Susan Hartman

Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Benjamin Taylor

Thu., 1:10pm-4:10pm

Nadia Owusu

Fri., 1:10pm-4:10pm

POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

Lynn Melnick

Mon., 10am-1pm

Dorothea Lasky

Tue., 10am-1pm

Hafizah Geter

Tue., 5pm-8pm

POETRY – THESIS (9 points)*

Alan Gilbert

Tue., 5:30pm-8:30pm

Dorothea Lasky

Thu., 10am-1pm

Shane McCrae

Thu., 10am-1pm

Timothy Donnelly

Thu., 4:15pm-7:15pm

*Second-years only

SEMINARS

Seminars and translation workshops
are 3 points.

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

—MONDAY—

Ruth Franklin (NF)
The Writer as Critic
Mon., 10am-12pm

Kate Zambreno (NF)
Us and Others
Mon., 10am-12pm

Catherine Lacey (FI)
Fits & Starts
Mon. 10am-12pm

Hannah Lillith Assadi
The Undiscovered Country
Mon., 11am-1pm

Brenda Wineapple (NF)
The Pursuit: Writing Research
Mon. 4:15pm-6:15pm

Asiya Wadud (PO)
Between Color, Between Scale
Mon. 4:15pm-6:15pm

Erroll McDonald (FI)
The Peripheral Writer
Mon. 4:15pm-6:15pm

—TUESDAY—

Monica Ferrell (CG)
*The Art of Lying: A Cross-Genre
Workshop in Fiction*
Tue., 10am-12pm

Shane McCrae (PO)
The Period Style
Tue., 10am-12pm

Matthew Salesses (FI)
Revision
Tue., 10am-12pm

Phillip Lopate (NF)
The American Essay
Tue., 10am-12pm

Timothy Donnelly (PO)
Shakespeare's Poetics
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Lis Harris (NF)
Profiles
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Katrine Jensen (TR, CG)
Science Fiction Poetics
Tue., 2:10pm-4:10pm

Gary Shteyngart (FI)
*Strangers in a Strange Land: Immigrant
Literature in the 20th and 21st Centuries*
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Lynn Xu (PO)
Provocations
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Lincoln Michel (FI)
*Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing
Speculative Fiction*
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

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

—WEDNESDAY—

Keri Bertino (FI)
The Art of Practice
Wed., 10:30am-12:30pm

Lara Vapnyar (FI)
Architecture of the Story
Wed., 10am-12pm

Wendy S. Walters (NF)
*FIELD: Place and the Art of
Observational Practice*
Wed., 10am-12pm

Margo Jefferson (NF)
Cultural Memoir
Wed., 2pm-4pm

Susan Bernofsky (CG, TR)
Women of the World
Wed., 2pm-4pm

Paul Beatty (FI)
*Mapping Los Angeles: Creating Place
and Space*
Wed., 2pm-4pm

Alan Ziegler (CG)
The Writer as Teacher
Wed., 2pm-5pm

Matthew Salesses (FI)
The Elements of Fiction
Wed., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Emily Skillings (PO)
Hole Theory
Wed., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Binnie Kirshenbaum (FI)
The Excruciating
Wed., 4:15pm-6:15pm

—THURSDAY—

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

Benjamin Hale (FI)
Imagining Nonhuman Consciousness
Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Alice Quinn (PO)
*Elizabeth Bishop in Her Own Time and
Our Own*
Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm

—FRIDAY—

Elisa Albert (FI)
*Female Trouble: A Multidisciplinary
Inquest*
Fri., 10am-12pm

Joshua Edwards (PO)
The End of Solitude
Fri., 10am-12pm

Kimi Traube (TR)
Literary Translation Workshop
Fri., 1:10pm-3:40pm

LECTURES

—TUESDAY—

Leslie Jamison
The Self
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

—THURSDAY—

Lee Siegel
The Picaresque Novel, Then and Now
Thu., 1:15pm-3:15pm

—NOTE—

In lieu of a Poetry lecture this semester, the program is offering an additional Poetry seminar in Spring 2023.

MASTER CLASSES

Merve Emre

Genres of Criticism (1.5 points)
6:30pm-8:30pm
Wed., 3/22 – Tue., 3/28

—MONDAY—

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer's Imagination (1.5 points)
Mon., 10:40am-12:40pm
Jan. 23 – Feb. 27

Madhu Kaza

Kitchen Table Translation (1 pt)
Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm
Apr. 10 – May 1

Jessi Jezewska Stevens

Radical Readings in Climate Literature (1 pt)
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Feb. 6 – Feb. 27

Vijay Seshadri

Transitioning (1.5 points)
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Mar. 27 – May 1

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

The Art of the Short Story: From Opening Line to Publication (1.5 points)
Mon., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Mar. 27 – May 1

Charlee Dyroff

Going Rogue: How Experimenting Can Help You Find Your Way (1.5 points)
Mon., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Mar. 27 – May 1

—TUESDAY—

Franz Nicolay

Registers of Representation (1.5 points)
Tue., 3:20pm-5:20pm
Jan. 24 – Feb. 28

Lisa Brennan-Jobs

Writing Childhood (1.5 points)
Tue., 3:20pm-5:20pm
Mar. 21 – Apr. 25

Kate Greene

The Science Essay: Attention & Experiment (1.5 points)
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Mar. 21 – Apr. 25

—WEDNESDAY—

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page (1.5 points)
Wed., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Apr. 12 – Apr. 28
(Also Fridays)

—THURSDAY—

Joseph Osmundson

Writing Across Genre (1.5 points)
Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Jan. 26 – Mar. 2

Caleb Gayle

Memories Never Die If They Are Written (1.5 points)
Thu., 4:15pm-6:15pm
Mar. 23 – Apr. 27

Jeremy Tiang

Translating for the Stage (1 pt)
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Feb. 2 – Feb. 23

Jay Deshpande

The Poem's Ending: Tactics for Closure (1.5 points)
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Mar. 23 – Apr. 27

—FRIDAY—

Gila Ashtor

The Trauma Plot (1.5 points)

Fri., 10am-12pm

Jan. 20 – Feb. 24

Dennard Dayle

Atheists in Foxholes: Satire and War (1.5 points)

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

Mar. 24 – Apr. 28

Leonard Schwartz

Ecopoetics: The Black of the Page (1.5 points)

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

Apr. 12 – Apr. 28

(Also Wednesdays)

SEMINARS

Elisa Albert

Female Trouble: A Multidisciplinary Inquest

(FICTION)

Fri., 10am-12pm

This seminar will serve as a haven for our most vexing, obsessive questions, confusions, and fascinations with the concept, narrative construction, and historical fact of “female”-ness. Via outrageously vital stories, novels, essays, and poetry spanning the past hundred and fifty years, we will weave our own understandings of where we’ve been, where we can imagine going, and how storytelling can function in service and protest. Gendered identities, roles, labors, and desires are all in play, from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Florence Nightingale’s cri de coeur *Cassandra*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s witty *Herland* and Alexandros Papadiamantis’ visionary *The Murderess*, to the contemporary work of Izumi Suzuki, Rachel Zucker and Arielle Greenberg, Pilar Quintana, Samantha Irby, Casey Plett, and more, we’ll access and engage a wide spectrum of writing across centuries and disciplines from whatever the “female” perspective can be understood to mean.

Hannah Lillith Assadi

The Undiscovered Country

(FICTION)

Mon., 11am-1pm

In this seminar, we will examine texts which attempt to chart a territory beyond words: the afterlife. Readings will include fiction and nonfiction featuring representations of heaven and hell, ghosts, angels, demons, djinn, and other visions of the world to come. We will study the way authors ranging from Dante Alighieri to Toni Morrison imagine the ineffable, as well as read for reference from religious and spiritual texts such as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, excerpts from the gospels, Old Testament, and Quran, and traditional mythologies on the hereafter from the African continent, indigenous peoples of the Americas, Norse Paganism, and South and East Asia.

Paul Beatty

Mapping Los Angeles: Creating Place and Space

(FICTION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Writing, just like navigating L.A., is all a matter of cartography. One challenge is that the city is so fluid, ethnically and geographically, that it’s impossible to draw a complete map. Reading L.A. can be frustrating. It’s like the authors arrived in the city, after having made transcontinental drives, using only half a treasure map and an 1803 map of the Louisiana Purchase. The only landmarks are the beach, the palm trees, and the Hollywood Sign; everything else is a giant swath of unexplored urban

sprawl simply labeled “Spanish Territory.” Even the Thomas Guide, the quintessential L.A. mapping system, was intentionally sprinkled with fake streets and destinations. This class will explore L.A. in ways familiar and unfamiliar, using the city as a site of departure and cartography as a methodological opening, we will aim to map our own narratives, examine how places come to be, and investigate ways to make space. Readings will include Chester Himes, Wanda Coleman, Karen Tei Yamashita, Gina Sykes, John Fante, Christopher Isherwood, and Bret Easton Ellis. Students will have to make two short presentations and write a short paper.

Susan Bernofsky

Women of the World 2023 Edition: Notions of (Dis)order

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

A dozen years ago, the secretary of the Nobel Prize for Literature jury criticized the United States as being “too isolated, too insular,” saying we “don't translate enough and don't really participate in the big dialogue of literature.” This course is designed to investigate what the “big dialogue” of international writing looks like in 2023 by examining some of the most widely discussed and/or prize-winning international fiction by women to come out in English over the past several years. In particular, we'll consider these fictional universes in terms of the notions of order (and disorder) they propose – often in response to dystopian circumstances – and examine the relationship between these frameworks and the writers' structural and other artistic choices. In each case we will also consider both the role the translator has played as mediating subject and the reception of each book in English to get a better understanding of what happens when works are imported into a new cultural context and set of conversations. Readings variable, to be drawn from writers including Olga Tokarczuk, Yoko Tawada, Han Kang, Scholastique Mukasonga, Négar Djavadi, Samanta Schweblin, Jenny Erpenbeck, Leila Slimani, Han Yujoo, Madame Nielsen, Valeria Luiselli, Elena Ferrante, Dorte Nors, Amanda Michalopoulou, Nathalie Léger, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, Igiaba Scego, Hanne Ørstavik, Marie NDiaye, Sayaka Murata, Yoko Ogawa, Annie Ernaux, Ha Seong-nan, Hemley Boum and others.

Keri Bertino

The Art of Practice

(FICTION)

Wed., 10:30am-12:30pm

Just as musicians practice scales and études, and dancers work at the barre, fiction writers turn to writing exercises to build strength, technique, flexibility and fluency.

This course will give students the opportunity to isolate and deliberately practice a range of techniques in fiction, spanning the writing process from generation to revision.

In each two-hour meeting, students will work through a series of progressive exercises grounded in short readings and centered around a single theme. Weekly topics may include: establishing voice and point-of-view; writing beginnings and endings; playing with form; experimenting with genre;

attending to sound; and drafting the stuff that can be hard to get right, like sex and death, race and class, and jokes.

Throughout the course, writers will experience the community, guidance and encouragement that supports risk-taking. In our final classes, students will develop and facilitate their own writing exercises, addressing questions of technique that arise from their creative work. At semester's end, students will write a reflective essay, drawing on examples from their ongoing fiction projects, to demonstrate how they've applied these techniques.

Timothy Donnelly

Shakespeare's Poetics

(POETRY)

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

This course will explore all of Shakespeare's major poetry (the sonnets, Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece) and five of his plays with an emphasis on their versification, rhetoric, and semiotics. We will consider the English language's long evolution, the invention of iambic pentameter, the nature of metaphor, and the history of the sonnet form, including its transplantation into English, the sonnet craze of the 1590s, and a reading of excerpts from sequences by Drayton, Sidney, Spenser, and Wroth in addition to Shakespeare's own sonnets. We'll also examine the history of blank verse from Surrey's Aeneid through its use in the dramatic work of Marlowe and others, as well as a survey of Renaissance poetic and rhetorical theory, including such treatises as Sidney's Apology for Poetry and Wilson's The Art of Rhetoric. We will also ponder the "dynamic instability" of early modern English and Shakespeare's glorification of it at a time when the vernacular was only beginning to settle into respectability as an artistic medium. Plays will include Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, and The Tempest. Readings will be supplemented by a handful of pertinent classical and Renaissance readings (Horace, Livy, Ovid, Montaigne) as well as some of the most celebrated Shakespearean and Renaissance critical writing from the last quarter-century or so, including work by Joel Fineman, Stephen Greenblatt, Frank Kermode, Eve Sedgwick, and Helen Vendler. In the second half of the term we will engage with some exciting new Shakespeare scholarship that centers issues of race, gender, the environment, and relevance to contemporary culture by such scholars as Kate Aughterson, Gabriel Egan, Alisa Grant Ferguson, Noémie Ndiaye, James Shapiro, Ian Smith and Ayana Thompson.

Joshua Edwards

The End of Solitude

(POETRY)

Fri., 10am12pm

"Society is the cave. The way out is solitude."
- Simone Weil

In recent years we have both lost and uncovered numerous forms of security and intimacy. Our daydreams have darkened, as we despaired and leaned heavily on hope. But we have also found inspiration and new interests despite waves of hardship and banality, and some common rituals have revealed themselves to be nearly miraculous. As we arrive again at the periphery of a strange collective solitude, we are perhaps finding context and new meaning for this time of our lives, as we also discover much of what we didn't know had been hidden.

In this class, we will be reading poetry and prose that ranges from extremely solitary to exhaustingly social, from the closely observed meditations of hermit monks to the gregarious poetics of partygoers. We'll also be writing and revising poems to share with one another, with a mind to gain perspective on the relationship between thinking and poetry. We'll ask how writers create space for free thinking, while also mulling over the roles that communities, institutions, and rewards have in shaping individuals' aesthetics. We'll share daydreams, ideas, and enthusiasms, as we look to the turbulence of the immediate past to draw up plans for our new worlds. Besides the obvious, we'll also be thinking about solitudes of exile, language, heartbreak, illness, incarceration, and more, as well as societies of aesthetics, love, spirituality, family, and friendship.

Writers we'll read include Stonehouse, Montaigne, Sor Juana, Sappho, Ivan Illich, Anne Carson, Luis de Góngora, Bashō, Friedrich Hölderlin, Octavia Butler, Emily Dickinson, Nazim Hikmet, Reginald Dwayne Betts, Jalal Toufic, Emily Brontë, Lorine Niedecker, José Ortega y Gasset, Tu Fu, Eileen Myles, Dorothy Wordsworth, Paul Celan, Sei Shōnagon, Li Bai, Catullus, Miguel Hernández, and Liu Xiaobo.

Monica Ferrell

The Art of Lying: A Cross-Genre Workshop in Fiction

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue., 10am-12pm

Open to Nonfiction and Poetry students only. This is a workshop-format course in the reading and writing of fiction for poets and nonfiction writers who are interested in developing their skills in a second genre. Every week we will investigate a different aspect of craft, including how to establish authority and credibility, narrative voice, vividness, recurring imagery, character and plot, and structure from a fiction writer's perspective. We will begin the semester by investigating how authors choose to open novels and stories, how one can get a story to move forward, and how sonic patterning operates in various prose works. We will read short fiction by Kate Braverman, Denis Johnson, Clarice Lispector, Carmen Maria Machado, Daniyal Mueenuddin, and George Saunders, among others, as well as two novels, the Lydia Davis translation of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station*. Along the way, we will write three of our own stories—a flash fiction, a shorter story, and a longer story—all of which will come up for workshop.

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

The Writer as Critic

(NONFICTION)

Mon., 10am-12pm

Writers sometimes privilege creative work and stigmatize criticism, calling it a lesser or derivative craft. But creative writers often also write criticism, and developing the skills of a thoughtful critic benefits our work as artists, helping us think concretely and constructively about how art works and the ways people derive meaning from it. This course will dig deeply into both the practice of criticism and the philosophies behind it, delving into its history as a genre and exploring the many forms it takes today. What should the primary role of a critic be—to build canons and define standards, to seek out the new, to advance a political argument? Should criticism strive to be objective, or should it be proudly personal? We’ll read criticism of works in many different genres—film, music, art, TV, books—and criticism written in many different forms, including review, essay, memoir, polemic, collage, profile, and quest. And of course, we’ll practice writing criticism in different forms, lengths, and styles, always with a view toward how thinking critically can help us become better writers. Readings will include works by Virginia Woolf, Susan Sontag, Teju Cole, John Berger, Zadie Smith, Hilton Als, Jenny Zhang, and many others.

Benjamin Hale

Imagining Nonhuman Consciousness

(FICTION)

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

Philosopher Thomas Nagel asked, “What is it like to be a bat?” Ultimately, he determined the question unanswerable: A bat’s experience of the world is so alien to our own that it is beyond the human understanding of subjective experience. That’s arguable. But it is true at least that a bat’s experience—or that of any other nonhuman consciousness—is not inaccessible to human *imagination*. In this course we will read and discuss a wide variety of texts, approaching the subject of nonhuman consciousness through literature, philosophy, and science. We will read works that attempt to understand the experiences of apes, panthers, rats, ticks, elephants, octopuses, lobsters, cows, bats, monsters, puppets, computers, and eventually, zombies. Course reading may include Descartes, Kafka, Rilke, Jakob von Uexküll, Heinrich von Kleist, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Patricia Highsmith, John Gardner’s *Grendel*, J.A. Baker’s *The Peregrine*, Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think*, David Foster Wallace, Temple Grandin, Frans de Waal, Jane Goodall, Thomas Nagel, John Searle, Susan Datch, E. O. Wilson, Giorgio Agamben, and Bennett Sims’s *A Questionable Shape*, among others, in addition to a viewing of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Danny Boyle’s *28 Days Later*, and possibly other films. This is also a craft class; a major component of the class will be incorporating these ideas into our creative writing.

Lis Harris

Profiles

(NONFICTION)

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

One of the few forms of literary Nonfiction available to serious writers that is still welcome in all sectors of the magazine world, the Profile form provides an opportunity to lavish attention on both the breadth of the Profile subject and on the profession, metier or culture that is always The Profile’s second subject. Extensive reporting, attention to the interaction of the factual with the imaginative and novelistic play will be emphasized. We will examine exemplary Profiles by masters of the form, including A.J. Liebling, Joe Mitchell, Kenneth Tynan and Lillian Ross as well as more recent ones, and identify the qualities the pieces have in common.

The authors we study will be used as models for one Profile submission at the end of the semester but we will also focus on the form’s complex pitfalls. The course will emphasize selection, interviewing and research techniques and affords a rare opportunity to explore an off-campus reported subject in depth. The problems and progress of each student’s work-in-progress will be discussed weekly.

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

Margo Jefferson

Cultural Memoir

(NONFICTION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

This seminar will look at works that explore the spaces between what we call the personal (which has many registers) and what we call the cultural, the social, the historical. How do we examine ourselves through events, ideologies, movements, through landscapes, media, artifacts and ephemera? How do we probe the designations “private” and “public”? How do we shift from being central narrators and personae to being observers, listeners, curators? The syllabus will include memoirs, stories, essays and a multitude of voices, styles and strategies.

Katrine Øgaard Jensen

Science Fiction Poetics

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Tue., 2:10pm-4:10pm

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

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

Topics will include astroecology and apocalyptic ecopoetics, extraterrestrial aphrodites, monstrous bodyscapes, space exploration and colonization, future creoles and the evolution of language, bio-poetics and crystalline formations, immortal texts, and global futurisms—from the European Futurists of the early 20th century to Afrofuturism, as well as recent figurations such as Gulf Futurism and Arabfuturism.

Course reading will include work by Aase Berg, Etel Adnan, Chen Qiufan, Johannes Heldén, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Velimir Khlebnikov, Hao Jingfang, Eve L. Ewing, Sun Ra, Ursula K. Le Guin, Italo Calvino, Anaïs Duplan, Ursula Andkjær Olsen, Dempow Torishima, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Octavia E. Butler, Tracy K. Smith, Cathy Park Hong, and others.

Binnie Kirshenbaum

The Excruciating

(FICTION)

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

The worst is not
so long as we can say, "This is the worst."
-- William Shakespeare, *King Lear*,

Our immediate response to physical pain is most often expressed not in language but in sound: a scream, a howl or a whimper. To comprehend the physical pain of others we can rely on familiarity with our own nerve endings and pain receptors, but how do we even begin to convey pain that has no locus? When the answer to the question, 'Where does it hurt?' is, 'Nowhere and everywhere,' or, 'What pain? I feel fine,' how do we, as writers, communicate the excruciation of despair, failure, loneliness, grief, humiliation, shame, regret, and rage? To articulate this pain requires that the reader identify with these fictional characters in the traditional definition of literary identification; that is not to see oneself reflected in the characters, but to transcend the self to get inside of them and experience what it is to *be* them, to feel what they feel. In this seminar, we will aim to determine the ways and means in which these writers give voice to lives that are lived in an infinite and silent scream, how they create the effects of bleeding when there is no evidence of blood. Along with the flaws, failings, and decency of the characters, the degree of their self-awareness or lack thereof, we will discuss such matters of authorial distance, what is illustrated through scene, and what is relayed through exposition. The words the authors have employed (often simple), the sentences, some of which are complex while others are short and blunt, will be scrutinized to determine how these choices create the effects necessary for the reader to share in the agony of the characters. We will take particular note of which moments the author has chosen to isolate, what is said, what is left unsaid, what happens when the reader is left to fill in the blanks, and how that can render the pain all the more devastating.

There is a Workshop component to this seminar.

Catherine Lacey

Fits & Starts

(FICTION)

Mon., 10am-12pm

Through a selection of short stories, novellas, and novel excerpts, this seminar will center on prose which pushes against the implied obligations of telling a story without ever pushing those obligations entirely away. These voices might behave badly (or strangely) or else the work's structure will seem inherently doomed, or maybe the prose moves with such a velocity it will be difficult to understand the mechanics of the work without playing it at half-speed. The emotional valence of each reading as well as deep dives into syntax will guide discussions. Students will give weekly presentations and turn in a story or excerpt which has been influenced or is in conversation with one

or more of the authors discussed. Writers interested in peculiar voices, nervous voices, impossible structures, and fiction that comes close to being claustrophobic without ever totally giving in, are encouraged to join.

The reading packet will include Bohumil Hrabal, Fleur Jaeggy, Françoise Mallet-Joris, Henry Hoke, Javier Marias, Yoko Tawada, John Edgar-Wideman, Donald Antrim, Aysegül Savas, and others.

Phillip Lopate

The American Essay

(NONFICTION)

Tue., 10am-12pm

This course will survey the American essay in both its historical and contemporary modes. We will be looking at continuities and discontinuities in the form, which is in any case intrinsically experimental (essay = attempt). We will also be examining how essayists have engaged with American history, taking up both the promises of democracy and the stubborn problems that have recurred throughout (racism, sexism, environmental pollution, poverty). The authors expected to be considered include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Randolph Bourne, John Dewey, H.L. Mencken, James Baldwin, Rachel Carson, Adrienne Rich, Annie Dillard, Nora Ephron, David Sedaris, Rebecca Solnit, Maggie Nelson, Eileen Myles, Nicholson Baker, Ander Monson, Sloane Crosley, Hilton Als, Bernard Cooper, Teju Cole, and Samantha Irby, among others.

Shane McCrae

The Period Style

(POETRY)

Tue., 10am-12pm

What makes us what we are as poets? How much do we choose, and how much is chosen for us? Is self-expression self-determined, or is each of us trammled by the period in which we express ourselves? And does what makes us what we are as poets change over time? If so, to what extent? In this seminar we will read and discuss our way through 20th century American poetry—primarily American, at least—decade by decade, starting in the 1900s and ending in the 2010s, in an effort to determine the most important aspects of the dominant poetic style of each decade. Students will be required to submit a poem each week in the style of the decade under consideration.

Erroll McDonald

The Peripheral Writer

(FICTION)

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

What is literature's global economy of prestige and what are its inequalities? Which is to say, where, how, why, and by whom is universal literary value conferred? If you are a writer from, say, Cape Verde, Romania, New Zealand, Jamaica, Algeria, Ethiopia, or even parts of the American South or Midwest—places whose literary traditions are deemed peripheral by the centers of consecration (Paris, New York, London, Barcelona, Rome, Frankfurt), what are the singular vicissitudes you must face, what literary norms at home or abroad must you either embrace or breach, to achieve international renown?

This course offers close readings of works in English or translation by 20th-century writers from around the world who were once marginalized but are now considered central to literary enterprise. The authors and books considered are likely to be: *The Loser*, Thomas Bernhard (Austria); *Pedro Paramo*, Juan Rulfo (Mexico); *Solibo Magnifique*, Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique); *The Blind Owl*, Sadegh Hedayat (Iran); *The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner (New Albany, Mississippi); *Ferdydurke*, Witold Gombrowicz (Poland); *The Passion According to G.H.*, Clarice Lispector (Ukraine, Brazil); *The Box Man*, Kobo Abe (Japan); *A Bend in the River*, V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad and Tobago); *My Name is Red*, Orhan Pamuk (Turkey); *The Ten Thousand Things*, Maria Dermout (Dutch West Indies); and *Broken Glass*, Alain Mabanckou (Republic of the Congo).

While the course aims to identify and examine their singularity of achievement by way of assimilation or differentiation, it is chiefly concerned with similarities and dissimilarities of narrative structure and strategy, language and syntax, imagery, time and place, and character development.

The course requirements are: a short (3-5 page) piece of literary criticism on a clearly defined topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor—which will be orally presented to the class—and a 12-15-page final exercise in imitation of any writer covered during the semester.

Lincoln Michel

Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing Speculative Fiction

(FICTION)

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

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, Franz Kafka, 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 includes:

The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter
Wild Seed by Octavia Butler
Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino
The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin
Revenge by Yoko Ogawa
The Woman in the Dunes by Kobo Abe
The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury
Fever Dream by Samanta Schweblin

As well as essays or short fiction from Kelly Link, Tzvetan Todorov, Kate Bernheimer, Brian Evenson, Ann Radcliffe, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Samuel Delany, Dino Buzzati, and others.

Alice Quinn

Elizabeth Bishop in Her Own Time and Our Own

(POETRY)

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

Since her death in 1979, Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979), the author of some 100 poems published in her lifetime, is widely acknowledged as one of the most beloved and important poets of the twentieth century.

In this seminar, we will follow her development from her earliest years as an orphan and passionate reader through her huge successes as a young writer and scholar at first the boarding school she attended in Natick, Massachusetts and then Vassar College, arguably the greatest school for a young woman who wanted to become a writer to attend in the 1930s.

Her early essays and poems, her journals and letters will allow us to witness the growth of the brilliant young teenager acknowledged by her classmates as a genius and the emerging writer in her 20s managing with increasing anxiety her career in New York City during the Depression, then journeying to France, Ireland, and Italy, and to Spain in the Franco years. We'll follow her to DC when she becomes Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress at the age of 39, and thence to Brazil when at forty, she falls in love with Lota de Macedo Soares, a Brazilian aristocrat and self-taught architect who will go on to become a key creative force in Flamengo Park on the Rio waterfront. The later stages of her life were marked by personal tragedy and increasing artistic triumph, also interludes of profound happiness.

The contemporary English poet Simon Armitage wrote of her, "Bishop's semi-untouchable status can be seen as something of a conundrum, because while her poetry subtly captured or even

anticipated urgent literary themes of gender politics and sexual orientation, hers is, on occasions, a traditional and orthodox art.”

Let us decide for ourselves--through our feeling for her work, her values as we intuit them, her biography, and her ever-increasing and fascinating influence on contemporary poets—how to gauge her singular achievement.

In a letter to fellow poet May Swenson—met at Yaddo, the writer’s retreat in Saratoga, New York, in 1950— Bishop articulated her conviction that “poetry is a way of thinking with one’s feelings.” For many years, I have been immersed in the challenging task of putting together an edition of Bishop’s journals. I will welcome the response of all in class to the work of this figure I revere.

Apart from our reading of her oeuvre and of select essays about it, participants will be asked to write rigorous personal responses to her work and share them with the class in several 10- minute presentations in the course of the term. Susan Howe titled her marvelous book about Dickinson, *My Emily Dickinson*. It is hoped that everyone in this class will make headway on such a path with Elizabeth Bishop.

Matthew Salesses

Revision

(FICTION)

Tue., 10am-12pm

One of the most frequent questions from emerging writers is: now that I have workshopped my story, how do I actually go about revising it? This course will demystify that process via a series of revision exercises. We're talking radical revision, not editing. We will also read published stories and speculate on how they were revised, how the author took their unconscious drafts and made conscious decisions about what ultimately appears in the final published draft, in which order, and what is purposefully omitted. Because of the arbitrary length of a semester, we will be studying only short stories, not novels, but much of our discussion will also be relevant to novel revision. Students should enter with a complete draft of a previously workshopped story, 10-20 pages in length, one that they are committed to heavily reworking every week. Expect this course to be work-intensive. Revision is a messy process, and we will, like Marie Kondo, love mess. Readings will be related to students' specific revisions. Students will be required to try many new approaches.

Matthew Salesses

The Elements of Fiction

(FICTION)

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

Workshops discuss various elements of craft, but what are they really, what do they mean, and where do they come from? How do they function and how do they reflect story’s engagement with the world? We will start with short stories and define/redefine elements like plot, characterization, arc, context, inside/outside story, *raison d’être*, etc., and then move to novels to study structure and

tone and pacing and so forth in longer works. Recommended for first year students and any who wish to rethink the basics or who just wish for more clarity and understanding around craft terms and strategies both within the Western psychological realist canon and outside of it.

Gary Shteyngart

Strangers in a Strange Land: Immigrant Literature in the 20th and 21st Centuries

(FICTION)

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

This class will survey 20th- and early 21st-century immigrant literature in the United States. We will begin with Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, a brutal tale of one boy's assimilation in the Yiddish-speaking New York of the early 1900s, to be followed with Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*, a novel chronicling the comic misadventures of a high-born but disaster-prone Russian émigré in the 1950s. The class will then focus on the incredible explosion of hyphenated literature in the past fifteen years, including writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Imbolo Mbue, Akhil Sharma, and Chang-rae Lee, with special attention paid to the way native and foreign cultures are blended together in language and description. We will also read Sigrid Nuñez's recent novel *The Last of Her Kind*, and consider the ways in which working class and immigrant narratives both differ and complement one another. A paper, at least five pages in length, either analytical or a work of fiction related to the material covered, will be due at the end of the class.

Emily Skillings

Hole Theory

(POETRY)

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

"I saw you asleep beside a hole / Your skull inside a hole / Your eyes blankened by the sound" – Cat Power

"Hole, the heart of all things." – Kim Hyesoon, "Manhole Humanity"

"A way of happening, a mouth." – W.H. Auden

The grave, the pit, the aperture or lens, the orifice, the wormhole, the eye, the portal through which one descends into another world, the throat, the mine, the socket, the opening, the pause, the lacuna, the peephole or keyhole, the mouth of hell, the void. How do writers and artists use these spaces in order to access the unspeakable, absent, or that which has been repressed? How can we sink our writing and thinking into the unknown?

In this seminar—open to writers of all genres—we will encounter and discuss the works of novelists, poets, essayists, theorists, philosophers, filmmakers, and visual artists whose work utilizes

the hole as image, object, passageway, or formal device. Enrolled writers will present and submit their own brief critical and creative writings in response to writers and artists, including: Georges Bataille, Roland Barthes, Samuel Beckett, Walter Benjamin, Jorge Luis Borges, Amina Cain, Lewis Carroll, Jean Cocteau, C.A. Conrad, Dante, Emily Dickinson, Lee Edelman, Manny Farber, Renee Gladman, Kim Hyesoon, Lucy Ives, Bhanu Kapil, William Pope L., Trinh T Minh-ha, Lara Mimoso Montes, Harryette Mullen, Alice Notley, Wilfred Owen, Hiroko Oyamada, Hilary Plum, Sappho, Solmaz Sharif, Sophocles, and Arthur Rimbaud.

Lara Vapnyar

Architecture of a Story

(FICTION)

Wed., 10am-12pm

We will start the class with the analysis of this famous quote by Alice Munro: “A story is not like a road to follow... it’s more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows.”

We will discuss what it is about a story that makes it “more like a house,” and which elements of the story could be considered windows, rooms, or corridors. Then we will examine all the significant types of structure, from traditional to experimental, and study how to determine which structure to choose for a particular type of a narrative.

The readings will include short stories and novels by Alice Munro, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, James Baldwin, Margaret Atwood, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Jennifer Egan, and Elena Ferrante.

Asiya Wadud

Between Color, Between Scale

(POETRY)

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

In this experimental, generative ekphrasis seminar, we will sit with the work of painters, choreographers and cinematographers in order to create adjacent works. Some of the artists we will study include Okwui Okpokwasili, Marcus Leslie Singleton, Etel Adnan, and Laure Prouvost. We will also read work written in the ekphrastic lineage. All the while, you will have the chance to experiment, freely interpret each week’s prompt, and workshop your new pieces.

Wendy S. Walters

FIELD: Place and the Art of Observational Practice

(NONFICTION)

Wed., 10am-12pm

A “field” is a parcel of open land. The word also refers to a viewpoint from which a perspective is shaped. Likewise, it denotes a mode of play, often in a game, where one engages in whatever action is at hand. These definitions align with the beliefs that ideas are rooted both in space and time and that they must be accessed through site-specific interactions. In this class, we will focus on the broad possibilities that *the field/a field* offers us as a subject of inquiry and locus of attention. Beyond the social sphere of engagement, there is much to know about the material composition of a space and how elements in it comprise a discernible past.

The act of observation influences that which is being observed, and for that reason, depicting place requires that the writer express conviction about what it means to observe the world from where they stand. An observer in the field must be present at times and able to fade back into the field alongside others. Students should come prepared to develop a point of view based on a growing understanding of locations we will observe together, as well as a location they will attempt to decipher and represent on their own. **This course will include at least three sessions that take place off-campus in the “field”—out in the city—where, no matter if in rain or shine, we will cultivate skills for drawing space through language.**

In addition to observing persons, animals (when present), flora and fauna, we will develop research practices to account for how the field/a field may be realized in relation to the larger environmental systems it is a part of—we will also attempt to account for it in relation to our planet and climate. The final project will be a closely researched study of a location of your choice. With works drawn primarily from nonfiction, poetry, and political geography, some of the authors we may read include: Michel de Certeau, Garnette Cadogan, John McPhee, Aisha Sabatini Sloan, Lauren Elkin, Byung-Chu Han, Alexandra Horowitz, Mike Davis, Joan Didion, among others.

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

Brenda Wineapple

The Pursuit: Writing Research

(NONFICTION)

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

This hybrid seminar (seminar/workshop) provides an introduction to the research methods practiced by nonfiction, fiction, and poetry writers who incorporate historical, documentary, or other primary and secondary materials into their work. We discuss public, archival and electronic sources (where to find them, what to do with them) as well as reportorial and other techniques for gathering, organizing, filing, synthesizing, and ultimately using our discoveries and making our writing the better for them. We begin with an overview of method and technique, to figure out how we determine or imagine what materials or sources we need, how we go about locating them, how to

evaluate the material we've found, and whether our handling of it actually raises any ethical issues. After reading such authors as Janet Malcolm, Arlette Farge, Robert Caro, and others, we apply their means and methods directly to our work, which we'll be discussing in workshop format to see how best to integrate our findings and our response to these findings into our stories, memoirs, poetry or other writing.

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

Lynn Xu

Provocations

(POETRY)

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

This is a class about poetry and revolt. In a century of wars, unchecked proliferation of industrial and market systems in the continued legacy of settler-colonialism and the consolidation of state powers, does language still conduct with revolutionary possibilities? In this class, we will read manifestos, philosophical treatises, political tracts, literary polemics, poems, scores, and so on, as we consider poetry's long-standing commitment to visionary practices that seek to liberate consciousness from the many and various structures of oppression. The term "poetry" is not limited to itself but becomes, in our readings, an open invitation to all adjacent experiments with and in the language arts. As such, we will look at the emergence of the international avant-gardes as well as peasant, worker, student movements that populate and complicate the explorations of radical politics in the twentieth-century.

Kate Zambreno

Us and Others

(NONFICTION)

Mon., 10am-12pm

Often writing from a nonfiction space can be read as synonymous with first-person narrative or memoir, suggesting that the first-person point of view is self-oriented, isolated and individualistic (and with that a means of commodifying the self). What if we troubled that perspective, bringing in generosity to ideas of genre? The writer and photographer Moyra Davey regularly quotes the filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder: "The more honestly you put yourself into the story, the more the story will concern others as well." This seminar will think through the collaborative or communal, letting in other voices into the space of a work, or using a first-person in order to pay tribute to others. We will read first-person works that think through ideas of community, friendship and family, as well as first-person plural and other experiments in pluralities. Writers, artists, and thinkers we might read and consider include Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, Annie Ernaux, Bhanu Kapil, Valeria Luiselli, WG Sebald, Moyra Davey, Marie NDiaye, T. Fleischmann, Heike Geissler, Chris Marker, Lisa Robertson, Aisha Sabatini Sloan, Mark Fisher, Sofia Samatar, Yoko Tawada and Renee Gladman. We will be reading all genres and open to those writing in all genres, especially those interested in troubling these borders and boundaries.

The class will keep a weekly communal Google Docs thinking through the readings and process, and will be responsible for a final project that deals in some way with the communal or collaborative.

Alan Ziegler

Writer as Teacher

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wednesday, 2pm-5pm

Writer as Teacher is a hybrid course: part seminar and part practicum. We will discuss the role of the writer in the classroom and address the pedagogical and editorial skills utilized in eliciting and responding to creative writing, including: creating and presenting writing assignments; designing and running workshops; presiding over group critiques and individual conferences. We will discuss the teaching of creative writing at all levels (primary and secondary schools, undergraduate and graduate programs), and there will be one or two visits from exemplary practitioners of the art and craft of teaching. In the third class-hour, we will replicate classroom situations in small groups; on any given Wednesday, we may use none, some, or all of the third hour. A wide variety of reading material will be handed out, much of which will be used as “background” material and not discussed specifically in class. There will be several short, practical written assignments and presentations. Each student will design (with the option to teach) a mini-course (4-6 sessions) as part of the CA/T Community Classes (CCC) offering.

TRANSLATION WORKSHOPS

Word for Word Workshop

Susan Bernofsky

Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Word for Word is an initiative in collaborative translation housed within the Writing Program's joint course of study Literary Translation at Columbia (LTAC). The program pairs School of the Arts students with peer writers in foreign-language MFA programs to translate one another's work. Its purpose is not only to provide emerging translators with experience and a global network, but also to encourage writers to engage with their own language in a new and deeper way through the medium of literary translation and the experience of cross-cultural collaboration. An application is required for acceptance into this workshop.

Literary Translation Workshop

Kimi Traube

Fri., 1:10pm-3:40pm

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

Leslie Jamison

The Self

(NONFICTION)

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

This will be a lecture course focused on the craft of constructing a self on the page. We'll discuss how to create an autobiographical "I" who feels plural (as we all do). Who navigates the built worlds of prose in surprising and dynamic ways, through break-ups and bus rides and breastfeeding sessions, through the haunted hallways of memory and desire. We'll talk about the shame that can attach to writing from personal experience—or gets projected onto this task—and the rigorous work of turning this personal experience into art.

For everyone who has ever told me, "I am *just* not that interested in myself," and meant it sincerely, God bless you. (I mean that sincerely.) But I am interested in myself. And I'm interested in people who are interested in themselves. I can already imagine a critic mocking these statements, which is also a form of self-regard—imagining the reactions of others.

This is all to say: I feel the shame of self-interest. But the fact remains—many of my favorite books were written by people who were interested in themselves, too. I'm interested in the idea that being interested in yourself deepens your capacity to be interested in the lives of others.

Over the course of the semester, we'll discuss the constructed self as multiple and simultaneous, hungry and changing, restless and tender, built from scenes and fragments and breakfast preferences and half-smoked cigarettes and curt words papering-over unspoken vulnerabilities. We'll talk about writing ordinary life—the everyday, the unextraordinary, the mundane—and excavating its sharp glimmers of resonance and truth. We'll talk about writing relationships, illness, grief, pleasure, and joy. We'll talk about using personal archives—emails, photographs, text chains, scribbled diaries, cell-phone videos—in the archeological work required to build the self as a complicated and surprising character. We'll also talk about the role of the first-person in writing criticism and reportage, operating from the premise that the self can be an illuminating rather than obstructive presence.

Classes will consist of roughly an hour of lecture and an hour of discussion. We'll be reading and discussing authors including Saint Augustine, Annie Ernaux, Audre Lord, Mary Gaitskill, Charles D'Ambrosio, Jesmyn Ward, Kristin Dombek, Terese Marie Mailhot, Dodie Bellamy, Claudia Rankine, Chris Kraus, James Baldwin, James Agee, Vauhini Vara, Sei Shonagon, Cathy Park Hong, Ross Gay, Nathalie Leger, and Saidiya Hartman. Though the bulk of our readings will consist of creative nonfiction, our discussions will run to fiction and poetry as well. Students from all concentrations welcome.

Lee Siegel

The Picaresque Novel, Then and Now

(FICTION)

Thu., 1:15pm-3:15pm

The traditional picaresque novel consists of a protagonist who passes through a series of episodes, or adventures, that expose the nature of his or her society, as well as the social and psychological nature of the people he or she encounters. Originating in Spain in the 16th century, the picaresque style has become a dominant mode of cultural expression--from fiction, to memoir, to our episodic posting on social media. In this class we will study how various writers use the self as a delicate probing instrument to anatomize and expose the encircling world. We will talk about how these writers invented ways to wind action into psychology, and to fuse investigations of human psychology with explorations of how society works. How, in other words, did they tell stories that are, at the same time, intensely individualistic and intensely social? Jean-Paul Sartre once said that the fundamental dilemma facing writers is that you cannot reflect on an event and live through it at the same time. The picaresque style presents heroes who, with a little help from their creators, attempt to do exactly that.

NOTE: In lieu of a Poetry lecture this semester, the program is offering an additional Poetry seminar in Spring 2023.

SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP

Edwin Torres

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

Gila Ashtor

The Trauma Plot

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Friday, 10am-12pm – Jan. 20 to Feb. 24

In a 2021 New Yorker essay that has since sparked significant critical debate, Parul Sehgal assails the “trauma plot” for flattening contemporary narrative and turning characters into a collection of pathological symptoms. According to Sehgal, the problem is that, “trauma trumps all other identities, evacuates personality, remakes it in its own image,” and has increasingly “become synonymous with backstory” itself. While some writers share Sehgal’s exasperation with the “trauma plot’s” conventions and others defend the special value of these narratives, the increasing popularity of this debate means that narrative depictions of trauma require renewed thoughtfulness, subtlety, and creativity. Drawing on concepts and language developed in psychoanalysis and critical theory, this course provides tools for writing boldly, carefully, and with precision, about intense psychological and interpersonal experiences.

As a writer who is also a practicing clinician and theorist, I will introduce topics that are central to understanding complex psychological phenomena, such as: dissociation, trauma, attachment theory and regulation. In addition to immersing ourselves in clinical material, we will also read work in queer and critical race theory that questions certain assumptions of the “trauma plot.” In essays by Saidiya Hartman, Frantz Fanon and David Eng, we will explore how Western and patriarchal ideas about self-sufficiency shape the stories we tell about survival and resilience. These engagements with clinical and critical theory will be further grounded in contemporary writing. Roxane Gay’s *Hunger: A Memoir of (my) Body*, Myriam Gurba’s, *Mean*, Ocean Vuong’s, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* and Stephanie Foo’s, *What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma* offer bracing and sophisticated attempts to represent trauma in new and unusual ways. Bringing a clinical perspective to bear on these texts will provide students with an enriched vocabulary for understanding themselves and their experiences.

Students will be encouraged to choose a particular emotional experience or incident they would like to focus on for the duration of the course. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the vulnerabilities it provokes, the class will primarily focus on facilitating connection to the material at hand; through the use of small groups and multidisciplinary materials, students will be encouraged to discover what angle of the problem interests them most, and to practice techniques that deepen their grasp of psychological and narrative complexity.

Lisa Brennan-Jobs

Writing Childhood

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Tuesday, 3:20pm-5:20pm – Mar. 21 to Apr. 25

Mavis Gallant wrote, “Perhaps a writer is, in fact, a child in disguise.”

We will read stories about real and fictional children in order to learn more about childhood and how to write about it. In fiction, essays, and memoir by Alice Munro, Leonard Michaels, George Orwell, Mavis Gallant, Jhumpa Lahiri, Tobias Wolf, Paula Fox, Alice Miller and Phillip Lopate, among others, the adult writer and the child bring each other into relief.

The principal goal of the course will be to use the essays, stories and book excerpts as laboratories for learning what is particular about writing childhood. To what extent can this kind of time travel reshuffle our perception of ourselves as adults? How do we discover surprising stories from childhood, even when the terrain seems at first either too hard to remember or too well-known?

In addition to the readings, we'll write several short pieces, and one longer childhood story, about five pages of fiction or non-fiction, and borrow craft ideas to discover/create more.

Dennard Dayle

Atheists in Foxholes: Satire and War

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Friday, 1:10pm-3:10pm – Mar. 24 to Apr. 28

Warfare combines mass death, nationalist fervor, and dense politics into a dangerous subject for any satirist. Making it one of best. This master class will explore satirical responses to everything from ancient Greek sieges to the eternal War on Terror. Each week we'll discuss the piece itself, popular responses, and what makes different styles of comedy tick in the most extreme setting possible. Discussions will be supplemented with in-class exercises integrating the techniques found in the text. These lessons may prove useful when the next World War comes around.

Jay Deshpande

The Poem's Ending: Tactics for Closure

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Thursday, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Mar. 23 to Apr. 27

In workshop and in conversation, the endings of poems get a great deal of attention. We admire something ineluctable in a landing, or we can't fix a jangly close, or we know it's working but we can't put a finger on why. How should poems end, and how do you pull off an ending that feels both unexpected and inevitable? In this master class, we'll develop our ear for landings that can pleasurably shock the reader and reinform the poem overall. Rilke's edict ("You must change your life") will provide us with a starting point as we look at work by Louise Glück, Thomas James, Philip Larkin, Rachel Zucker, James Wright, Stanley Kunitz, and Phillip B. Williams, among others. Each week students will read and then imitate various styles of poetic ending, sharpening their tools. We'll consider the music of a great last line; how to end on an image without embellishment; what the place of surprise is in the lyric poem; how to earn the ending without being manipulative; and more.

Charlee Dyroff

Going Rogue: How Experimenting Can Help You Find Your Way

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Monday, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Mar. 27 to May 1

If there are no shortcuts to great writing, why are so many of us afraid to take the long scenic route? Long and scenic may not sound enticing when you have goals to achieve and projects to finish. But what if trying out new, unfamiliar paths that seem to curve away from your destination are actually the ones that get you where you need to go?

Throughout this course, we'll do just that: learn how to play with purpose. Students will try a new experiment each week and — by the end of our short course — think about how the ideas or tactics from them could affect major projects and/or their understanding of themselves as writers.

What would your writing look like if no one knew you were the author? How would drafting an act in a play affect your ability to write dialogue in a scene of a novel? If you had to turn your short story into a poem, what major smells, touches, images would last?

Gabrielle Zevin started as a music critic and now writes screenplays and best-selling novels. Ta-Nehisi Coates is well-known for journalism but also writes comics. Anne Carson produces beautiful poetry and novels. John Updike is all over the board as well with poems, novels, short stories, and art criticism. What can we learn from writers who play in multiple forms? Why shouldn't you, too, also dabble?

Readings vary by genre and form, sometimes blending — or denying — them completely. We'll extract strategies from them to fill our writing toolbox not just for the projects at hand, but for years to come.

Merve Emre

Genres of Criticism

5 sessions, 1.5 points – Wednesday, Mar. 22, to Tuesday, Mar. 28 – 6:30pm-8:30pm

"Genres of Criticism" is an intensive tour through five genres of criticism: the straight-up review essay, the biographical essay, the profile essay, the anniversary essay, and the themed essay. Through your readings and our classroom discussion, we will elaborate how one reads, writes, and conducts research for each of these genres and their distinct audiences. We will also explore how certain techniques of reading and writing cultivated in graduate education can cross over into writing for non-scholarly audiences. The final assignment will be a 4,000 word essay in any of these five genres.

PLEASE NOTE: This class will run 5 sessions, over the course of 5 consecutive school days, Wednesday, 3/22 through Tuesday, 3/28 (no class Saturday or Sunday).

Caleb Gayle

Memories Never Die If They Are Written

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Thursday, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Mar. 23 to Apr. 27

Dr. Saidiya Hartman once wrote, "Every generation confronts the task of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on. The past depends less on 'what happened then' than on the desires and discontents of the present." In this masterclass, we will work on how to reexamine our own memories and reconsider the memories of others to reconstruct realities on the page. Special consideration and attention will be paid to the stories of the marginalized--the historically unheard and intentionally quieted. Students in this masterclass should anticipate leaving this experience with a greater sense of what tools, skills, voices, and sentiments can better render memories that, if not written, may die--some slowly and others quickly. Students should be prepared to enter this class with at least one memory (either their own or one that another person has carried and shared with them) with which to apply those capabilities we hope to strengthen in this course. We will, together, confront the task of choosing our past(s) together and will work to build greater capacity to render the past we choose on the page.

Kate Greene

The Science Essay: Attention & Experiment

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Tuesday, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Mar. 21 to Apr. 25

It's easy to say that writers and artists have much in common with scientists. Both revel in discovery, make use of play, structures, methods, intuition, and operate via socializations, lineages, and conventional wisdoms. But where do these commonalities converge and diverge in practice? In society at large? How can writers write about science--its history, its processes, its personalities, its findings as well as its systemic and cultural limitations--in ways that reveal deeper meaning and that resonate with readers? How can we write honestly about science and ourselves, to not only elucidate and awe, but to empower and spur collective action?

This course will explore the science essay by examining both the practice of science and the practice of writing, with an eye toward the obvious and nonobvious power structures operating therein. You will develop your own formulation of structures that integrate intuitive and directed discovery, personal and received experience: the known and the mysterious, the mundane and the cosmic.

Texts will span genre and media. We will be guided by the voices of Robin Wall Kimmerer, Bernadette Mayer, Annie Dillard, Carl Zimmer, Herman Melville, John Hershey, Ursula K. LeGuin, Ainissa Ramirez, J.A. Baker, Émilie du Châtelet, n1x, Pascal, Michael Collins, Christopher Isherwood, Montaigne, Virginia Woolf, Sabrina Imbler, Barry Lopez, Sarah Stewart Johnson, and others. There will be in-class writing prompts and discussion, weekly reading assignments and a final essay in response to texts and/or discussions from the class, up to 5k words.

Madhu Kaza

Kitchen Table Translation

4 sessions, 1 point – Monday, 1:10pm-3:10pm – Apr. 10 to May 1

Quiet as it's kept, translation is always already with us. Regardless of our identification as multilingual, bilingual, monolingual, or something in between, as writers we access multiple languages whether it be through reading texts in translation, through navigation of the different languages of home, community, public and professional life, or through the different registers of multiple Englishes that surround us. Some writers actively work in literary translation and some experience translation all the time in the cultural difference of their names, bodies, accents, movements and daily lives.

This class invites writers to read and write across languages to think through how we might channel translation through our own particular locations and dislocations in language to serve our stories, poems, essays and our selves. We'll pay particular attention to how immigrant and BIPOC writers have used translation and cross-language experimentation to claim space for new kinds of stories and ideas, and to sharpen their sensitivities to language. We will read translations and original writing by writers including Lina Mounzer, Don Mee Choi, John Keene, Eiko Otake and others. We'll also collaborate on cross-language experiments of our own. Note: Knowledge of a second language is not required for this class.

Franz Nicolay

Registers of Representation

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Tuesday, 3:20pm-5:20pm – Jan. 24 to Feb. 28

Current understanding is clear on the perils—literary and ethical—of writing about a culture or place to which the writer does not “belong.” But insider/outsider identities are not always so clear-cut; and writers being who we are, sometimes we can't resist trying. So, in this class, we look at three “registers” of representation—writing about a particular country (understanding that multicultural state borders are already a problematic circumscription) by a local writer; by a writer from a diaspora community; and by a travelling visitor: for example, we might read Ivo Andric, Aleksandar Hemon, and Rebecca West on the former Yugoslavia; or Daniachew Worku, Dinaw Mengestu, and Ryszard Kapuściński on Ethiopia. Is there a distinction between speaking for others and speaking about them? What can an “outsider” perspective, done thoughtfully, offer? Supplemented by readings from anthropological and philosophical literature, we will attempt to trouble the insider/outsider binary, and work towards a theory of literary representation and its complications which includes elements common to fiction, journalism, travel writing, and ethnography.

Joseph Osmundson

Writing Across Genre

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Thursday, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Jan. 26 to Mar. 2

Many writers, no matter the era, do not confine themselves to one literary genre. From critic/philosopher Aristotle to novelist/essayist James Baldwin, many great writers bend genre to their forms, ideas, characters, and needs. Contemporary writers, from Roxane Gay and Alexander Chee to academics like Anne Carson, Marcos Gonzalez, and Maggie Nelson, are formally inventive and write directly into the queer intersections of genre. What does it mean to write scholarship that also feels, lyric essays about writing fiction, or epic poems that take on the plot and character conventions of the novel?

This course considers writers who explicitly, in form and in content, refuse the traditional confines of genre to make work that is unclassifiable and transcendent. We will examine writing including autofiction/memoir, autotheory, lyric prose poems, book length poems, personae versus the speaker versus the writer in nonfiction and poetry. Students will carefully consider the craft choices that render these works successful (or not). Our texts will include *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson (a lyric memoir), *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson (a scholarly “novel in verse”), *The Lover* by Duras (autofiction), “A Strange Loop,” the Pulitzer Prize winning musical by Michael R Jackson (autofiction), Tommy Picos “Teebs” poems IRL and JUNK (personae poetry and book length poems), autotheory including Testo Junkie Paul B. Preciado and essays by Audre Lorde, experimental science writing by Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, Lacy M Johnson, and Tory Dent. Together, we will have a generative project that builds a nucleation point for each student to create, outside of the class, a cross-genre book project.

Sarah Rothenberg

Music and the Writer’s Imagination

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Monday, 10:40am-12:40pm – Jan. 23 to Feb. 27

When and why do writers evoke music? How does music evoke ideas? What does music reveal about character? This course offers writers a chance to focus on music as inspiration. With an emphasis on purely instrumental music –music without words -- Marcel Proust’s writing on the elusive experience of listening gives us a place to begin. We take an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on Charles Baudelaire’s idea of “correspondences”: specific readings are matched with close listenings of music. Genres of fiction, poetry and nonfiction merge in excerpted readings: Thomas Mann and Beethoven, James Baldwin and Thelonius Monk, Anna Akhmatova and Shostakovich; as well as R.M. Rilke, Virginia Woolf, Adam Zagajewski. What emotions does a musical work elicit and why? How can one make the leap from music to words? We tackle the challenges of listening and observing, developing creative approaches to capturing and using musical experience in writing.

Students will have weekly listening and short reading and/or writing assignments, with some writings shared in class. Sarah Rothenberg is a concert pianist and essayist; she leads class sessions from the piano.

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

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

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Monday, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Mar. 27 to May 1

This six-week master class will cover some of the essential techniques of the short story like dialogue, detail, compression, and, of course, opening line. 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.

Class discussion may also include excerpts from film, songs, plays, poems, memoirs, newspaper articles and anything else that can inform us 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: The Black of the Page

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Wednesday, 5:15pm-7:15pm, & Friday, 1:10pm-3:10pm – Apr. 12 to Apr. 28

It can be argued that we can only write a Nature Poetry worthy of the ecological imperative when we realize we are inside both nature and language, vulnerable to the encounter, able to surrender a certain control... in other words, not outside Nature, positioned so as to write about it, but speaking from inside it, as if Nature were the Unconscious. Given these affinities, what do literary texts and ecosystems hold in common? Certainly they are both complex systems, in which all elements are interrelated. In language, a single word added or removed to a text can potentially alter the balance of rhythm, image, and meaning in that text. Languages and eco-systems are both polyvalent hybrids, capable of happening in multiple directions simultaneously; how 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 great Chilean poet Raul Zurita, Camille Dungy's anthology *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, S. Yizhar's novel *Khirbet Khizeh*, Brenda Iijima's *The Eco Language Reader* and Jed Rasula's *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives In American Poetry*. The class will address these issues as they relate to poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction.

PLEASE NOTE: This class will run 3 weeks, 2 sessions per week, on Wednesdays and Fridays at different times. Please make sure you do not have conflicts on either day before registering for the course.

Vijay Seshadri

Transitioning

6 sessions, 1.5 points – Monday, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Mar. 27 to May 1

Poetry, and the energy of poetry, can be found in the transitions effected in a verbal artifact from one state to another, from one condition of being to another. (In certain poets—John Ashbery, for example—transitional energy creates a poetic fluidity that borders on the absolute.) We will look over the course of six weeks at the many ways—rhetorical, metrical, musical—poets effect convincing transitions on the page by reading some prose and a lot of poems (mostly canonical but also contemporary or near contemporary) very, very closely. Assigned reading will be fairly light: some essays on prosody; some excerpts on rhetoric; some packets of lyric poems.

Jessi Jezewska Stevens

Radical Readings in Climate Literature

4 sessions, 1 point – Monday, 4:15pm-6:15pm – Feb. 6 to Feb. 27

Over the past decade, and in the wake of Amitav Ghosh's 2016 call-to-arms *The Great Derangement*, global literature has made exciting shifts toward a new environmental consciousness. This course seeks to expand on recent progress by pushing the boundaries of what we now think of as “climate literature.” Picking up the thread from Ghosh, we'll embark on fresh investigations of the novel's capacity to embody and engender climate consciousness.

A fundamental assumption of this course will be that climate change is the product of social, economic, and political paradigms—dramatic contexts that have long been the domain of literature. Breaking free from familiar blueprints of dystopia/utopia and anxiety/alarm, we will seek to radically redefine “cli-fi” by applying this assumption to beloved works of literature that haven't historically been read through an environmental lens. A tentative reading list includes *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by DH Lawrence, *The Years* by Annie Ernaux, and *The Leopard* by Tomasi di Lampedusa. These novels will enable conversations about energy, capitalism, consumerism, population growth, inequality, gendered conceptions of nature, revolution, and more, as well as about the formal strategies these writers use to incorporate these themes. Additional excerpts from prominent economists, environmental historians, and activists (e.g. Amitav Ghosh, Wangari Maathai, Rachel Carson, Joachim Radkau) will bolster our discussions.

Our approach will be inquisitive, open to discovery and experimentation: How might a broader awareness of gender, post-colonial history, market theory, and economics influence the ways in which we contextualize environmental distress in fiction and creative nonfiction? How might learning to read existing literature - and through it, the world - as environmental history illuminate the political and economic patterns that underpin climate catastrophe—and/or enable new environmental and literary paradigms? What if, in many ways, we’ve been writing “climate literature” all along?

At the end of the course, students should be equipped to define what “climate literature” means to them within their own sociopolitical contexts and writing practices. In addition, students will gain experience in drawing cross-disciplinary inspiration from philosophy, history, and economics.

Jeremy Tiang

Radical Readings in Climate Literature

4 sessions, 1 point – Thursday, 6:30pm-8:30pm – Feb. 2 to Feb. 23

Despite the growing conversation about diversity in the US theatre ecosystem, this diversity has tended to stop at the borders of the English-speaking world. What does it mean to reach beyond that through translation? This master class will investigate the various aspects of theatrical translation: dialogue, setting, cultural context, collaboration. We will work together on translating excerpts of a play, using a crib from the original language, then contrast previous productions of the script in both languages. In addition, participants will bring in their own translation of a short play excerpt for workshopping. Jointly run by Writing/LTAC and the Theatre Program, this class will draw from the strengths of both programs, exploring play translation both on the page and on the stage, at the intersection of text and performance.