

UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE WRITING

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<http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate>

FALL 2022 COURSE DESCRIPTION

All students are eligible for **seminars** and **beginning workshops**, though space is limited.

If the class is full, add your name to the SSOL waitlist and attend the first day.

Students may take only one workshop per semester and two seminars per semester.

Intermediate, advanced & senior workshops require a writing sample. Please visit our 609 Kent office or our website at <http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate> for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 1100 Beginning Fiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in fiction is designed for students who have little or no previous experience writing literary texts in fiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through creative exercises and discussions, and eventually produce their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. The focus of the course is on the rudiments of voice, character, setting, point of view, plot, and the lyrical use of language. Students will begin to develop the critical skills that will allow them to read like writers and understand, on a technical level, how accomplished creative writing is produced. Outside readings of a wide range of fiction supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

Instructors

Sec 01 Benn Jeffries
Sec 02 Frances Lindemann
Sec 03 Halley McDonough
Sec 04 Cory Scarola
Sec 05 Jacob Schultz

WRIT UN 1200 Beginning Nonfiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with little or no experience in writing literary nonfiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through exercises and discussions, and they eventually submit their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

Instructors

Sec 01 Nicholas Gambini
Sec 02 Hannah Kaplan
Sec 03 Kellina Moore

WRIT UN 1300 Beginning Poetry Workshop

The beginning poetry workshop is designed for students who have a serious interest in poetry writing but who lack a significant background in the rudiments of the craft and/or have had little or no previous poetry workshop experience. Students will be assigned weekly writing exercises emphasizing such aspects of verse composition as the poetic line, the image, rhyme and other sound devices, verse forms, repetition, tone, irony, and others. Students will also read an extensive variety of exemplary work in verse, submit brief critical analyses of poems, and critique each other's original work.

Instructor

Sec 01 Rhoni Blankenhorn
Sec 02 Emmett Lewis

INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 2100 Intermediate Fiction Workshop

Intermediate workshops are for students with some experience with creative writing, and whose prior work merits admission to the class (as judged by the professor). Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops, and increased expectations to produce finished work. By the end of the semester, each student will have produced at least seventy pages of original fiction. Students are additionally expected to write extensive critiques of the work of their peers.

Instructors

Sec 01 Jared Jackson

Sec 02 Madelaine Lucas

WRIT UN 2200 Intermediate Nonfiction Workshop

The intermediate workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with some experience in writing literary nonfiction. Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops and an expectation that students will produce finished work. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects. By the end of the semester, students will have produced thirty to forty pages of original work in at least two traditions of literary nonfiction.

Instructor

Sec 01 John Vincler

WRIT UN 2300 Intermediate Poetry Workshop

Intermediate poetry workshops are for students with some prior instruction in the rudiments of poetry writing and prior poetry workshop experience. Intermediate poetry workshops pose greater challenges to students and maintain higher critical standards than beginning workshops. Students will be instructed in more complex aspects of the craft, including the poetic persona, the prose poem, the collage, open-field composition, and others. They will also be assigned more challenging verse forms such as the villanelle and also non-European verse forms such as the pantoum. They will read extensively, submit brief critical analyses, and put their instruction into regular practice by composing original work that will be critiqued by their peers. By the end of the semester each student will have assembled a substantial portfolio of finished work.

Instructor

Sec 01 Dorothea Lasky

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3100 Advanced Fiction Workshop

Building on the work of the Intermediate Workshop, Advanced Workshops are reserved for the most accomplished creative writing students. A significant body of writing must be produced and revised. Particular attention will be paid to the components of fiction: voice, perspective, characterization, and form. Students will be expected to finish several short stories, executing a total artistic vision on a piece of writing. The critical focus of the class will include an examination of endings and formal wholeness, sustaining narrative arcs, compelling a reader's interest for the duration of the text, and generating a sense of urgency and drama in the work.

Instructors

Sec 01 Bonnie Chau

Sec 02 Sam Lipsyte

WRIT UN 3200 Advanced Nonfiction Workshop

Advanced Nonfiction Workshop is for students with significant narrative and/or critical experience. Students will produce original literary nonfiction for the workshop, with an added focus on developing a distinctive voice and approach.

Instructor

Section 01 James Yeh

WRIT UN 3300 Advanced Poetry Workshop

This poetry workshop is reserved for accomplished poetry writers and maintains the highest level of creative and critical expectations. Students will be encouraged to develop their strengths and to cultivate a distinctive poetic vision and voice but must also demonstrate a willingness to broaden their range and experiment with new forms and notions of the poem. A portfolio of poetry will be written and revised with the critical input of the instructor and the workshop.

Instructor

Section 01 Lynn Xu

SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3101 Senior Fiction Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

Instructor

Sec 01 Halle Butler

SEMINARS

WRIT UN 2110 Approaches to the Short Story

The modern short story has gone through many transformations, and the innovations of its practitioners have often pointed the way for prose fiction as a whole. The short story has been seized upon and refreshed by diverse cultures and aesthetic affiliations, so that perhaps the only stable definition of the form remains the famous one advanced by Poe, one of its early masters, as a work of fiction that can be read in one sitting. Still, common elements of the form have emerged over the last century and this course will study them, including Point of View, Plot, Character, Setting and Theme. John Hawkes once famously called these last four elements the "enemies of the novel," and many short story writers have seen them as hindrances as well. Hawkes later recanted, though some writers would still agree with his earlier assessment, and this course will examine the successful strategies of great writers across the spectrum of short story practice, from traditional approaches to more radical solutions, keeping in mind how one period's revolution -Hemingway, for example - becomes a later era's mainstream or "common-sense" storytelling mode. By reading the work of major writers from a writer's perspective, we will examine the myriad techniques employed for what is finally a common goal: to make readers feel. Short writing exercises will help us explore the exhilarating subtleties of these elements and how the effects created by their manipulation or even outright absence power our most compelling fictions.

Instructor
Sophie Dess

WRIT UN 3125 Apocalypses Now

From ancient myths of the world's destruction to cinematic works that envision a post-apocalyptic reality, zealots of all kinds have sought an understanding of "the end of the world as we know it." But while apocalyptic predictions have, so far, failed to deliver a real glimpse of that end, in fiction they abound. In this course, we will explore the narrative mechanisms by which post-apocalyptic works create projections of our own world that are believably imperiled, realistically degraded, and designed to move us to feel differently and act differently within the world we inhabit. We will consider ways in which authors craft immersive storylines that maintain a vital allegorical relationship to the problems of the present, and discuss recent trends in contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. How has the genre responded to our changing conception of peril? Is literary apocalyptic fiction effective as a vehicle for persuasion and for showing threats in a new light? Ultimately, we will inquire into the possibility of thinking beyond our present moment and, by doing so, altering our fate.

Instructor
Molly McGhee

WRIT UN 3129 Writing Nature in the Age of Climate Change

This class aims to look seriously at how we write literature about the environment, landscape, plants, animals, and the weather in an age of worsening climate change. What genres, forms, and structures can we use to creatively respond to and depict the conditions of the anthropocene? How can we use time to capture the simultaneous tedium and terror of the emergency? Can we write about the individual as well as the collective? Is it possible to write about climate change not as something that is coming, but as a phenomenon that's already a part of our lives? In answering these questions, students will determine how best to address these issues in their own creative work. While this is a fiction class, we will take our lessons from writers working across many different formats. We will read novels and short stories, but also poetry, creative non-fiction, journalism, and theory. Through writing exercises, field journals, critical essays, and their own creative pieces, students will work through, and with, the despair and radical imaginative changes wrought on all our lives by the Anthropocene.

Instructor
Madeleine Watts

WRIT UN 3130 The Punchline

Levity's worth taking seriously. This seminar examines satire in several forms, including polemics from the late Roman Empire, stand-up from the late British Empire, and novels from the healthy and indestructible American Empire. We'll explore satirical reactions to historic disasters, and how to apply those techniques during the next one. We'll see satire flourish on bathroom walls and street signs (my specialty, admittedly). We'll learn why every subculture has their own version of The Onion. Finally, we'll apply lessons from the above to develop our own writing with creative responses, in-class exercises, and a final project. Anyone can be a satirist. Dealing with reality is the hard part

Instructor

Dennard Dayle

WRIT UN 2211 Traditions In Nonfiction

The seminar provides exposure to the varieties of nonfiction with readings in its principal genres: reportage, criticism and commentary, biography and history, and memoir and the personal essay. A highly plastic medium, nonfiction allows authors to portray real events and experiences through narrative, analysis, polemic or any combination thereof. Free to invent everything but the facts, great practitioners of nonfiction are faithful to reality while writing with a voice and a vision distinctively their own. To show how nonfiction is conceived and constructed, class discussions will emphasize the relationship of content to form and style, techniques for creating plot and character under the factual constraints imposed by nonfiction, the defining characteristics of each author's voice, the author's subjectivity and presence, the role of imagination and emotion, the uses of humor, and the importance of speculation and attitude. Written assignments will be opportunities to experiment in several nonfiction genres and styles.

Instructor

Kayla Heisler

WRIT UN 3214 Hybrid Nonfiction Forms

Creative nonfiction is a frustratingly vague term. How do we give it real literary meaning; examine its compositional aims and techniques, its achievements and especially its aspirations? This course will focus on works that we might call visionary – works that combine art forms, genres and styles in striking ways. Works in which image and text combine to create a third interactive language for the reader. Works still termed “fiction” “history” or “journalism” that join fact and fiction to interrogate their uses and implications. Certain memoirs that are deliberately anti-autobiographical, turning from personal narrative to the sounds, sight, impressions and ideas of the writer's milieu. Certain essays that join personal reflection to arts and cultural criticism, drawing on research and imagination, the vernacular and the formal, even prose and poetry. The assemblage or collage that, created from notebook entries, lists, quotations, footnotes and indexes achieves its coherence through fragments and associations, found and original texts.

Instructor

Margo Jefferson

WRIT UN 3224 Writing The Sixties

In this seminar, we will target nonfiction from the 1960s—the decade that saw an avalanche of new forms, new awareness, new freedoms, and new conflicts, as well as the beginnings of social movements and cultural preoccupations that continue to frame our lives, as writers and as citizens, in the 21st century: civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, LGBTQ rights, pop culture, and the rise of mass media. We will look back more than a half century to examine the development of modern criticism, memoir, reporting, and profile-writing, and the ways they entwine. Along the way, we will ask questions about these classic nonfiction forms: How do reporters, essayists, and critics make sense of the new? How do they create work as rich as the best novels and short stories? Can criticism rise to the level of art? What

roles do voice, point-of-view, character, dialogue, and plot—the traditional elements of fiction—play? As we go, we will witness the unfolding of arguably the most transitional decade in American history—with such events as the Kennedy assassination, the Watts Riots, the Human Be In, and the Vietnam War, along with the rise of Pop art, rock ‘n’ roll, and a new era of moviemaking—as it was documented in real time by writers at *The New Yorker*, *New Journalists* at *Esquire*, and critics at *Partisan Review* and *Harper’s*, among other publications. Some writers we will consider: James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Susan Sontag, Rachel Carson, Dwight Macdonald, Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Pauline Kael, Nik Cohn, Joseph Mitchell, Lillian Ross, Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, John Updike, Michael Herr, Martha Gellhorn, John McPhee, and Betty Friedan. We will be joined by guest speakers.

Instructor

Mark Rozzo

WRIT UN 2311 Traditions in Poetry

"Any fool can get into an ocean/ But it takes a Goddess/ To get out of one." --Jack Spicer

Lyric poetry in contemporary practice continues to draw upon and modify its ancient sources, as well as Renaissance, Romantic and Modernist traditions. In this seminar, we will explore the creation of the voice of the poem, the wild lyrical I, through closely reading female poets from antiquity to present day, beginning with Anne Carson’s translations of Sappho, *If Not Winter*, all the way up to present avatars and noted stylists such as Mary Jo Bang (*Elegy*), Tracy K. Smith (*Life on Mars*), Bernadette Mayer (*New Directions Reader*), Eileen Myles (*Not Me*), Maggie Nelson (*Bluets*) and others. The identity of the poetic speaker remains a tension of revelation and concealment, the inescapable ties to memory and experience as one mode of the lyric, the dramatic tropes of mask and persona as another, though not a necessarily contradictory tendency. Students will be asked to hear a range of current and classic women poets deploying, constructing and annihilating the self: the sonnets of Queen Elizabeth and the American beginnings of Anne Bradstreet; the emergence in the 19th century of iconic and radicalizing female presences: Emily Bronte, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning; and the predominance of 20th century masters who re-invented the English-language lyric as much as they inherited: Louise Bogan, Gwendolyn Brooks, H.D., Marianne Moore, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Laura Riding, and Gertrude Stein.

As background, students will read prose works (epistolary writing, journals and diaries, classic essays as well as prose poetry), which may contextualize women’s desire and its reception in public and private space: the religious mysticism of Sor Juana and Catherine di Sienna, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, Emily Dickinson’s letters, and select passages from Virginia Woolf’s criticism and novels. Students will be expected to keep their own reading diary or write letters in response to class readings, as well as select a classic and contemporary female poet for semester-long research. Additional course handouts will be organized by particular groupings of interest to our study of desire & identity, voice & witness: Confessional poetry (Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton), Cave Canem poets (Harryette Mullen and Natasha Tretheway), New York School (Alice Notley and Hannah Weiner), as well as additional contemporary poets (Lynn Melnick and Matthea Harvey).

Instructor

Ashley Porras

WRIT UN 3316 West To East

This course examines two central movements in post World War II American poetry, The San Francisco Renaissance and The New York School, and uncovers their aesthetic impacts on language and cultural production, as well as their relationship to “the city” as a defining agent in the poetic imagination. We will use this living term of “the city” in both of these coastal iterations as a way to guide our discussions and the genesis of new poetry written under the themes of the course. Beginning with the Berkeley poets of the 1940s (Kenneth Rexroth, Madeline Gleason, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, and others) and extending to the 1960s poetry scene in Manhattan (John Ashbery, Frank O’Hara, Barbara Guest, James Schuyler, and others), we will examine how these movements intersect with the Beats, the Abstract

Expressionist painters, the Black Mountain poets, and the countercultural attitudes and forces beginning to take shape in America between World War II and the Vietnam War. We will also study how the geographic regions of the west and east coasts have given rise to specific sensibilities in American poetry that continue to be meaningful and influential today. Finally, we will use these sensibilities as inspiration for our own creative work, with culminating projects in the course including a manuscript of new poems and a smaller critical essay delving into course themes.

Instructor

Alexander Dimitrov

WRIT UN 3319 Poetics of Place: American Landscapes, Voices, & Inheritance

When the American Poet Larry Levis left his home in California's San Joaquin Valley, "all [he] needed to do," he wrote, "was to describe [home] exactly as it had been. That [he] could not do, for that [is] impossible. And that is where poetry might begin." This course will consider how place shapes a poet's self and work. Together we will consider a diverse range of poets and the places they write out of and into: from Philip Levine's Detroit to Whitman's Manhattan, from Robert Lowell's New England to James Wright's Ohio, from the Kentucky of Joe Bolton and Crystal Wilkinson to the California of Robin Blaser and Allen Ginsberg, from the Ozarks of Frank Stanford to the New Jersey of Amiri Baraka, from the Pacific Northwest of Robinson Jeffers to the Alaska of Mary Tallmountain. We will consider the debate between T. S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams about global versus local approaches to the poem, and together we will ask complex questions: Why is it, for example, that Jack Gilbert finds his Pittsburgh when he leaves it, while Gerald Stern finds his Pittsburgh when he keeps it close? Does something sing because you leave it or because you hold it close? Do you come to a place to find where you belong in it? Do you leave a place to find where it belongs in you? As Carolyn Kizer writes in "Running Away from Home," "It's never over, old church of our claustrophobia!" And of course home can give us the first freedom of wanting to leave, the first prison and freedom of want. In our reflections on each "place," we will reflect on its varied histories, its native peoples, and its inheritance of violent conquest.

Our syllabus will consist, in addition to poems, of manifestos and prose writings about place, from Richard Hugo's "Triggering Town" to Sandra Beasley's "Prioritizing Place." You will be encouraged to think about everything from dialect to economics, from collectivism to individualism in poems that root themselves in particular places, and you will be encouraged to consider how those poems "transcend" their origins. You will write response papers, analytical papers, and creative pieces, and you will complete a final project that reflects on your own relationship to place.

Instructor

Joseph Fasano

WRIT UN 3321 Ecopoetics

"here is where it was dry/when it rained/... all this used to be a/place once/all this/was a nice place/once"
—Lucille Clifton

In this class we will read poetry like writers that inhabit an imperiled planet, understanding our poems as being in direct conversation both with the Earth as well as writers past and present with similar concerns and techniques. Given the imminent ecological crises we are facing, the poems we read will center themes of place, ecology, interspecies dependence, the role of people (specifically as related to colonialism and capitalism) in the destruction of the planet, and the "necropastoral" (to borrow a term from Joyelle McSweeney), among others. We will read works by poets and writers such as (but not limited to) Lucie Brock-Broido, Harryette Mullen, Asiya Wadud, Wendy Xu, Ross Gay, Simone Kearney, Kim Hyesoon, Marcella Durand, Arthur Rimbaud, Nicanor Parra, Camille T. Dungy, Terrance Hayes, Juliana Spahr, and W.S. Merwin—reading several full collections as well as individual poems and essays by scholars in the field.

Through close readings, in-class exercises, discussions, and creative/critical writings, we will invest in and investigate facets of the dynamic lyric that is aware of its environs (sound, image, line), while also exploring traditional poetic forms like the Haibun, ode, prose poem, and elegy. Additionally, we will seek inspiration in outside mediums such as film, visual art, and music, as well as, of course, the natural world. As a class, we will explore the highly individualized nature of writing processes and talk about building writing practices that are generative as well as sustainable.

Instructor

Samantha Zighelboim

WRIT UN 3010 Short Prose Forms

The prose poem and its siblings the short short story and the brief personal essay are the wild cards in the writer's deck; their identities change according to the dealer. We will consider a wide range of forms, approaches, and styles, spanning centuries. In addition to works in English, we will read translations from the French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese. Seminar discussions will be complemented by frequent writing exercises (inside and outside of class) and some abbreviated workshopping of student pieces. Each student will make one brief classroom presentation.

Instructor

Alan Ziegler

WRIT UN 3016 Walking

As Walter Benjamin notes in *The Arcades Project*: "Basic to flâneurie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labor. The flâneur, as is well known, makes 'studies'." This course will encourage you to make "studies" – poems, essays, stories, or multimedia pieces – based on your walks. We will read depictions of walking from multiple disciplines, including philosophy, poetry, history, religion, visual art, and urban planning. Occasionally we will walk together. An important point of the course is to develop mobile forms of writing. How can writing emerge from, and document, a walk's encounters, observations, and reflections? What advantages does mobility bring to our work? Each week you will write a short piece (1-3 pages) that engages your walks while responding to close readings of the assigned material.

Instructor

Sec 01 Jon Cotner

WRIT UN 3027 Science Fiction Poetics

"If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe." —Carl Sagan
"Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming." —David Bowie

"I grew up reading science fiction." —Jeff Bezos
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.

Instructor

Katrine Øgaard Jensen