“Throw into the little box
A stone
You’ll take out a bird

Throw in your shadow
You’ll take out the shirt of happiness”
Vasko Popa

“Pardon this frontal offensive,
dear chum. Forgive my word-
churn, my drift. The ways this
text message has gotten all frothy.
How was it you became holy
to me? Should I resist furiously?”
Any Gerstler

Course Description

The goal of this course is first and foremost, to get you to write a lot of great new poems. It is also designed to help you develop an increased awareness of your poetics. In order to do this, each class will focus on three things.

Reading

It is impossible to write poetry without reading lots of it. Everyone will bring their own past history of poetry reading to this class. Everyone has their own tool-kit of references and allusions to draw from. It is also important, however, to create a common ground of reading both for discussions and inspiration.

This semester I’ve chosen four books: Another Republic edited by Charles Simic and Mark Strand; Scattered at Sea by Amy Gerstler; Pacific Standard Time by Kevin Opstedal; and Poems in the Manner of ... by David Lehman. This combination of classic and contemporary poets should provide us with a lavish banquet of styles, attitudes, and ideas to explore. Each week, I’ll ask one of you to choose a poem from Another Republic to read aloud and lead a short discussion on it. I’ll also regularly assign a certain number of pages from the other collections and ask that you keep a journal of your responses.
In addition, our reading will be supplemented with handouts of poems that illustrate a specific topic or technique. We’ll cover forms, both traditional and invented, as well as approaches to content and idea generation. Possible assignments include prose poems, lyrics, letters, dreams, poems about popular culture, the mundane, and the supernatural.

**Writing**

You MUST turn in one poem per week. Lengths will vary, but let’s say 1-2 pages each. Throughout the semester, I’ll be giving “suggested” assignments. I ask that you try them, but do feel free to add whatever innovations, departures or distortions you wish. Also, you may want to take a few weeks to think about a particular assignment. The poems you turn in should be the ones you’re most excited about.

**Critiquing**

Each week we’ll spend most of our class-time listening to and talking about each other’s work. Therefore, it’s imperative you come prepared to participate and get involved. You can expect to read your poems aloud at least every other week during the semester. And on weeks when your work is not read aloud, you will receive it back with written comments from everyone in the class. Feedback should be generous, creative, constructive, and honest. Each poem offers us the chance to become more aware of our own poetic values, debate the merit of different techniques, and appreciate a wider variety of styles. We’re not here to “fix” anything, or to insist that any one way is best.

**Attendance**

Anyone missing more than three classes will seriously jeopardize their grade.

**Assigned Text** (available at NYU bookstore)


*Poems in the Manner of …*, by David Lehman, Scribner Books, 2017

**Requirements**

Besides turning in one poem per week and doing an oral presentation, you will be expected to create a chapbook of 12-15 pages reflecting the best of your work from this semester.