INTERMEDIATE FICTION WORKSHOP
Instructor: Mira Jacob, mj97@nyu.edu
Office Hours: By appointment (please email me)

In this intermediate fiction writing workshop, we will focus on your writing through the lens of craft, looking at what works and what needs strengthening in terms of plot, dialogue, character development, pacing, tone and structure. In addition to your own work, which you will workshop twice over the semester, you will be reading and responding to short stories by George Saunders, Junot Diaz, Sherman Alexie, Alice Munro, and James David Poissant, among others, as well as essays on writing by Tim O’Brien and Charles Baxter. We will also start every class with a writing exercise, so come promptly and have a pen and paper. (We will not write on computers during class.)

Important details:

1) ATTENDANCE: It is absolutely critical that you show up for every class. If you must miss a class, you need to notify me ahead of time via email and provide a doctor’s note or a note from the dean that excuses your absence. Any unexcused absence counts against your grade. If you do miss a class, it’s up to you to get the notes and homework assignment from NYU Classes for any missed homework assignments.

2) REQUIRED READING/ CRITICAL WRITING: Come to class prepared to talk about what you’ve read each week, which will include 2-3 student pieces and one short story or essay that I will provide. You will be expected to complete the reading portion for each class before class, not during. Everything you read will also require one written response. For student work, you should write your comments directly on the manuscripts, in the margins, and also include a typed response (at least one page, double-spaced, 12-point font; make sure your name is at the top and please staple this page to the front of the student’s story). For short
stories or essays, the written responses will vary. I will give you specific instructions for each handout.

3) REQUIRED CREATIVE WRITING: You will be expected to write and workshop two original stories during the semester. When it’s your turn (schedule to be discussed), you can either hand the story out during the previous week’s class, or email it to everyone via NYU Classes by the previous Friday at 2pm. There is a five-page minimum and a twenty-page maximum for each workshop. There is a twenty-five-page minimum for the entire course. (Please note that all stories should be double-spaced, 12-point font, with page numbers and saved as a PDF with a filename of your last and first name and the number of your submission; for example, if this is your first time sending work to the class, it should be: “jones.mary.1.pdf”) At the end of the semester, one of these stories must be thoroughly and thoughtfully revised and turned into me. In addition, I will give a creative writing assignment at the end of every class—a prompt for you to write a short, 2-page assignment. You will need to complete a total of five of these assignments for the semester, giving them to me the week after they have been assigned (no waiting until the last minute and turning in all of them at once).

4) WORKSHOP ETIQUETTE: A successful workshop depends greatly on thoughtful, constructive, and engaged discussion of each other’s work. A workshop is a place where writers not only hope to improve their own work, but also to help other participants do the same. Please be very mindful of treating your colleagues and their work as you would like yours to be treated. Don’t deride someone’s work for the sake of establishing your own authority, don’t read someone’s work for the first time in class and expect them to take you seriously.

5) OFFICE HOURS: Feel free to make an appointment to see me if/when you have questions or concerns about your work and/or the class. In addition, I strongly suggest that we meet the week following your workshop so we can talk about
your work, clear up any areas of confusion, and come up with what should be tackled in your end of semester revision.

6) ATTENDANCE OF LITERARY EVENTS: You will be required to attend two readings and/or literary events throughout the semester. One should be an NYU event. (The programming for that series can be found here: http://cwp.fas.nyu.edu/page/readingseries). Please write a one-page response to each event and turn it in at the next class after the event. (Topics to cover: what kind of work was read, what you learned, how you can apply it to your own work.)

7) GRADES: Can be broken down as follows: 30% class participation, 30% timely completion of assignments, 30% for your commitment to your own development as a writer, and 10% for the final revision. I will not put letter grades on your work throughout the semester. Your creative work will be graded on how well you utilize the tools discussed in class and by the degree of effort you have put into your work and your revisions.