Syllabus

Section 024
Mon/Wed: 2 PM - 3:15 PM
Bobst 837
Professor Lizzie Valverde

Course Description
In this class we will be workshopping creative pieces that include two poems and one piece of short fiction. If time allows, we will also workshop an additional piece that may be a lyrical essay, hybrid/cross-genre, or creative non-fiction submission. In addition to workshopping our own work, we will discuss other works in relation to how they can help our own development and understanding of voice, tone, syntax, meter, cadence, continuity, arc, etc..

Attendance
If you are going to miss class, just give appropriate notice when possible. Try to let me know before 10 am that day… in fact the more notice you can give, the better. You will be expected to turn in assignments on time, (even if you miss class…you can email them or have a classmate turn them in for you,) unless other arrangements have been agreed upon in advance. You may miss two classes, no questions asked; after that things get dicey and your grade will drop 1/2 a grade for each additional unexcused absence. Still, try not to be absent, especially if you are being workshopped. If you miss class on a day you are scheduled to workshop without making prior arrangements, you forfeit your workshop and your grade will be affected by half a grade. Excused absences will be allowed on a case by case basis, and documentation will likely be required. Lateness is not cool, since we will all be talking/sharing and diving right into workshop… walking in late to a conversation is tough. I get it, a few minutes is no big deal, traffic and commute things happen, it’s life. More than 10 minutes late (again, unless this has been pre-arranged) counts as 1/2 an absence. Just be reasonable and honest, please.

Workshop Expectations
Please come to class prepared, having thoughtfully done your readings and assignments. For the first poetry workshop you will be asked to bring in copies of your piece for every person in the class (including the Professor) on the class BEFORE your workshop is scheduled. Students will bring home the copies, read with care, and mark upon them (preferably in pencil or any color but red). You should mark errors and suggestions for punctuation, indicate places where you were moved and/or applaud a word choice/line break/sentence etc.. Make sure to put your name on your poems, and make sure to put your name on your critiques. You will give the original with your comments back to the author, and will give a copy of your comments and marks to the professor. In addition, please either write or type up a few sentences that can say anything ranging from what you thought the piece was “about” to your emotional response, parts you praise or were confused by, etc. You can write this on the work, or attach separately, it’s up to you.
Workshop Conduct

Be considerate. That’s why I mentioned no red ink, it’s a harsh vibe to see red marks all over your art. We are all trying and it’s tough to put your creative work out there for a total dissection. Try to find at least one nice thing to say, and if you have a lot of criticisms, word them constructively and respectfully. The goal is to help the author make their piece better, not to decimate their art. A major concern here is to be careful in assuming anything about a piece. That is: do not assume the author is the speaker, unless the author tells us to; so when speaking about a piece use language such as: “The speaker of the poem seems to be_______” or, “The character in paragraph two feels ______ to me.” That you may in fact be the speaker may be important to you: you might want it known that you are the speaker and this piece is a reflection of you, and if that’s the case, please share that at the beginning of the workshop.

Something may offend you, and that’s a reality we will all encounter at some point on our creative paths. Let’s try to believe (unless it’s clearly flagrant) that it was not meant to hurt anyone; let’s ask before we attack. Calling a student racist or sexist or any other harsh indictment will probably soul-crush them, so let’s get the facts first. If you are deeply offended, say why specifically and allow the author to explain; surely it’s mortifying and was probably an honest mistake. If indeed someone is flagrantly aggressive or offensive and it proves to be a problem, let me know if it is causing you distress and I will take proper actions promptly. Any kind of hate will not be tolerated.

Writing creatively can sometimes drudge up things even we ourselves are surprised by. I want you to feel free to write about anything at all, however please know that my first and foremost concern is for your well being. Just know that if your work causes me to feel a sense of real alarm for your safety or the safety of others, you may receive an email from me about the availability of counseling resources or other avenues that may be helpful for you should you choose them. What you choose to do with the outlets is your call and your privacy will of course be respected by the University. Just know I care, and am listening. But please do not feel stifled by this, or censored, as it is certainly not meant to hinder your creative process, but merely this serves as a mention that you matter to me as a writer and as a person. And if, if you feel fine but are perhaps writing about a past trauma, or writing hypothetically, just shoot me an email prior to submission to let me know you are okay, this piece is just a reflection of your creativity, and I shouldn’t worry. I’d appreciate that.

Feel free to eat and drink in class (maybe just not something that may be loud, messy, or pungent.) It’s hard to create when you’re hungry or thirsty. Be comfy, bring or do whatever you need to feel your best and most at ease. That said, laptops and cell phones should not make appearances in class… I’ll give a little break each class for you all to check your phones and have a breather.
**Plagiarism**
Don’t do it. When dealing with artistic appropriation… things get gray. We will talk about how to handle this in our art, so just ask before you borrow if you are unsure of whether citation is necessary. Please familiarize yourself with the official NYU policy on plagiarism.

**Grading**
You will be graded on effort, timeliness, and participation. Some of you will be naturally gifted poets and you may turn in a poem that’s so good it is ready for publication: that will not matter if your poem is late, marred with spelling errors, or if you skip many classes. The concern is in improving on your pieces, and in making a real effort to help one another. You should speak at least once in every class—if you find yourself going several classes without participating, your grade will seriously suffer. On the flip side, if you are a dynamic person, try to not dominate the conversation or speak over people. Be self aware. Show up with enthusiasm, care, and do your work thoughtfully and you will get an A.

**Reading List:** (This may be subject to change)
Many pieces will be made available to you as PDF’s or photocopies to keep the reading light, and the costs few. These include but are not limited to works by: Timothy Donnelly, Ezra Pound, Warsan Shire, Dorothea Lasky, Rupi Kaur, Clementine von Radics, John Berryman, Ocean Vuong, Lucille Clifton, Frank Bidart, ee cummings, Gwendolyn Brooks, Claudia Rankine, Maggie Nelson, John Ashbery, Louise Gluck, and Chris Adrian. You will be asked to read two very short collections of short fiction in their entirety. Please look at the syllabus, in many cases there are several weeks of workshop before a reading is due, so plan ahead: check what is expected to be read when, and read accordingly.

Please Purchase:

Jesus’ Son: Denis Johnson

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love: Raymond Carver

Love Poems (New Directions Paperback): Pablo Neruda

If The Tabloids are True What Are You: Matthea Harvey

Crush: Richard Siken

Please Don’t Leave Me Scarlett Johanssen: Thomas Patrick Levy (pending availability)

So Much Synth: Brenda Shaugnessy
Citizen: Claudia Rankine

**Schedule** (open to change pending workshop timeliness)

Mon 1/23 Introductions and review of the course expectations and syllabus. Students will be assigned individual terms to each define for the next class. In addition, you will be asked to bring in an example of an established author’s poem (to be read aloud, so the poem should be no longer than a page or two) that represents or includes the term (depending on term, some students will be given the example that they will be asked to read.)

Wed 1/25 Assignment: Now that all the terms have been shared, turn in a complete glossary. Please email your fellow students by 12:00 noon Friday 1/27 a link or a PDF with the example you offered for your term. We will have some in class writing exercises and will talk about what to “avoid” in our poetry.

Mon 1/30: We will discuss some of the possible goals/focus’s of poetry, and the importance of tone or audience. We will have a mock workshop (workshopping a love poem, that will be handed out in class) to get us used to the process, and we will also talk in general about prompts or activities that may help us to be generative as writers. A prompt will be given for in class writing.

Wed 2/1: You will come to class having read Neruda, prepared to discuss. We will read Cummings in class, as well as Clementine Von Radics. We will be talking about writing about love. We will do some in class writing exercises and watch a video of Neil Hillburn performing a love poem.

Mon 2/6 You will come to class having read “Crush” and two poems by Kaur and Nelson. You will each be asked to write a love poem, to be workshopped, and the first group should have their poems ready to handout. This poem can be about heartache, self love, familial love, lust, or any manifestation of human love. It can be in any style or form. It however may not directly be about love of nature, place, or animals. An exception may be if this is a clear metaphor or a persona poem but this should speak to the human condition of “Love,” (whatever that means!)

Wed 2/8 Workshop  Group One: Love poems

Mon 2/13 Workshop Group Two: Love poems

Wed 2/15 Workshop Group Three: Love poems

Mon 2/20: No Class: President’s Day
Wed 2/22: Please come to class having read Carver and Johnson, as well as “A Tiny Feast” (available online) by Chris Adrian. We will discuss short fiction and also speak about how our poetry readings and discussions thus far may help to enhance our prose. You will be asked to write a short story, 3-10 pages for the fiction workshop portion of the course. This may not be an excerpt from a larger piece, it must be a complete work on its own. While you may choose to write with a more experimental tone or structure, it must be prose. This will be workshopped as fiction, so please do not turn in non-fiction (though of course you may base your piece very much from your reality.) Workshop Group One will hand out their fiction pieces.

Mon 2/27 Workshop One Fiction

Wed 3/1 Workshop Two Fiction

Mon 3/6 Workshop Three Fiction

Wed 3/8 Workshop Four Fiction

Mon 3/13 No Class: Spring Break

Wed 3/15 No Class: Spring Break

Mon 3/20 We will discuss the ways in which other art forms or entities may enhance our own writing. We will watch a short film entitled “Menilmontant” as well as some videos of dance, and look at some fine art images and listen to some music. We will do an in class writing exercise. You should come to this class prepared to speak about Mathhea Harvey’s book. You will turn in a piece for next class that responds directly to anything we engaged in class.

Wed 3/22 We will discuss avant garde and experimental poetry and prose, and talk about appropriation. We will do an in class exercise on collage, so come to class with scissors, blank paper, and a glue stick. For workshop your next poems should all borrow at least one phrase or line from another source: this can be music, poetry, conversation, film, etc. For the next round of workshops you DO NOT need to provide copies of your poem in advance, but will bring them in the day of your workshop for a cold read.

Mon 3/27 Workshop One: Borrowing

Wed 3/29 Workshop Two: Borrowing

Mon 4/3 Workshop Three: Borrowing

Mon 4/10 We will watch some performance readings and discuss what our writing means when we consider reading it aloud. We will talk about sensory writing and collaboration, and do in class writing in groups or pairs.
Wed 4/12 Please come to class having read Rankine, Shaugnessey, and a short piece I will provide by Megan Goss. We will discuss hybrid forms and lyrical essays. Your workshop assignment is to write a creative nonfiction piece, lyrical essay, or prose poem not to exceed two pages.

Mon 4/17 Workshop One: CNF

Wed 4/19 Workshop Two: CNF

Mon 4/24 Workshop Three: CNF

Wed 4/26 We will discuss nostalgia and works geared toward children, and do in class writing. You will be asked to write a piece to turn for next class that deals with childhood or childhood themes (you will not be required to read it, but may do so if you choose.)

Mon 5/1 We will discuss pop culture and humor in poetry, and will read Lasky and you should have read Levy. You will be asked to write a poem to turn in the following class that has at least one pop culture reference and/or one moment of humor (they can be the same moment, and can be subtle, ironic, gross, etc.)

Wed 5/3 We will read aloud our poems from the previous assignment, but not workshop them. Then… lets talk about what makes us uncomfortable as artists. Ethics. Controversy. How to handle being uncomfortable. We will not be debating, this is more to just bring up some things we may want to consider or wade through as we mature as writers.

Mon 5/8 Last Class. Final Projects due: your four workshop pieces must be turned in in their original form, and then in their edited final form. You will be asked to read one of your edited works and also share a piece that you love. Reading suaree!