

Advanced Poetry Workshop

CRWRI-UA 830- 002

NYU Fall 2016

Start date: 9/6

Tues. 3:30-6:15

Location: BOBS rm. 837 (Washington Sq)

Instructor: Miranda Field: mf48@nyu.edu

(before the semester starts, please also cc. me at my personal email: mirleaf@gmail.com)

Overview:

Our objective in this class is to write new poems each week, and find ways to illuminate and articulate our processes as we go along. Among the questions we'll explore: What sparks a poem? What propels it? How do risk, desire, imagination, presence, memory, and artifice (among other things) come into the writing of poems? Is there an optimal degree of interplay between enigma and clarity in a poem, and how far can we go toward that balance, as we revise, without denaturing a poem's magic?

Prompts will be given each week, intended to inspire, but also to throw hurdles in the way— to provoke ingenuity, even (creative) defiance. Students are required to hand in one poem per week *in response to the prompts*; give a short, informal presentation of a book of poetry in collaboration with others in the class; and keep a journal.

Other questions we'll explore in this class include:

- ❖ Of all art forms, why choose poetry as a channel of expression?
- ❖ What sets poetry apart from other arts/forms of expression?
- ❖ Where do poems come from? How are the raw materials of poems “processed”?
- ❖ How is thought/feeling/ perception/idea organized and presented in language?
- ❖ What is the relationship of speaker to listener (“I” –“You”; sender/receiver) in a poem?
- ❖ What role does “voice” play?
- ❖ How do are the public and private, the personal/existential and the cultural/historical realms of human experience given play— together or apart— in poems?
- ❖ What is documentary poetry? The prose poem? What other hybrid forms fall under the rubric “poetry”?

Required Reading:

Five books of contemporary poetry (To be confirmed, depending on availability):

Brenda Shaughnessy: SO MUCH SYNTH

Danez Smith: [INSERT] BOY

Tung-Hui Hu: GREENHOUSES, LIGHTHOUSES

Maggie Nelson: JANE [A Murder]

James Tate: THE ROUTE AS BRIEFED

There will be additional reading materials, in the form of handouts and online links.

Workshop:

Workshop is a crucial component of this class, and we will aim to workshop each member of the class at least every other week, exploring along the way a few alternatives or modified versions of the traditional straight workshop model. When you are up for workshop you are expected to come to class on time, with enough copies of your printed (not hand-written) poem for everyone, including the instructor, already prepared. ***It is imperative that you attend class on the day you are scheduled to workshop.***

A few ground rules:

- We will try to stay with the text on the page—please no “back-stories” requested or supplied.
- All criticism will be constructive.
- There’s no such thing as a failed draft, or a mistake; experimentation, risk-taking— even accidents— are encouraged.
- Workshop members will respect each other as colleagues and fellow poets; a legitimate workshop is never insulting, threatening or abusive.

GRADING & CREDIT REQUIREMENTS:

To complete this course and obtain a grade, a student must submit a portfolio of 20-25 pages, consisting of 5-10 fully revised, finished poems, each with an earlier version, representing a stage of work done on the poem— preferably a mid-stage draft. All poems in the portfolio must be written during the semester.

All finished poems in the portfolio must be significantly revised, and be proofread, neatly presented, and clearly labeled.

The following is an approximate breakdown of the grading system for this class:

Portfolio (c. 20-25 pages of poems & drafts): 25%
Presentations: 25%
Attempting ALL assignments/prompts throughout the semester: 25%
Creative input and contribution to class discussions: 25%

Important: You will also be asked to hand in —twice during the semester (once at mid-term, and once toward the end)— a folder containing all work written so far. The purpose of this is to give me a basis on which to assign a mid-term grade (which is for your information only, and will not be a permanent part of your record), and to assess your progress as the semester nears its conclusion. This folder doesn’t need to be carefully selected/curated, proof-read, etc.

NOTE: Regular, punctual attendance is **mandatory**. Unexplained or frequent lateness/absences **will** affect your grade negatively*.

***NYU’s Policy on Attendance:** Students who, in the judgment of the instructor, have not substantially met the requirements of the course or who have been excessively absent may be considered to have withdrawn unofficially and may be given the final grade of F.