**CWL 500: Introduction to Graduate Writing**

Class: Mondays, 5:20 – 8:10  
Lecture Series: 7:00 – 8:30  
Faculty: Robert Reeves, Carla Caglioti and Guest Faculty  
Fall 2016: August 31 – Dec. 14  
Email: Carla.caglioti@stonybrook.edu  
Office: CH 239  
Phone: 632-5028  
**NOTE:** Plan on being in class Dec. 14 (this is Finals week and we may need this extra time)

*A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.*  
– Thomas Mann

*I think all writing is a disease. You can’t stop it.*  
– William Carlos Williams

We’ll begin with *The Triggering Town* and conclude with *The Elephants Teach*. In between, members of the class will read a selection of essays on topics of special interest to contemporary writers, complete short weekly assignments designed to promote discussion of the readings, and toward the end of term prepare reports on a wide range of issues not addressed in class. Every other week or so we’ll meet faculty in the program and hear from poets, novelists and other authors through our reading series, Writers Speak. In addition, students will sign up in pairs for “Writers Speak” to write author introductions and questions. The particulars of these and other requirements will be discussed at the first meeting. Active class participation is a requirement.

**Objectives:**

- To introduce students to one another, the faculty and the program in Creative Writing and Literature  
- To survey and deepen understanding of issues in contemporary writing, generated from seminar discussions, the lecture series, and assigned readings, and demonstrated through essays and a presentation.  
- To orient one’s own work in relation to contemporary practices, trends and issues.  
- To interrogate and articulate one’s own creative process in relation to those covered in the course

**Required Texts:**  
Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town*  
D. G. Myers, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*

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**I. Introduction with Robert Reeves & Carla Caglioti: MFAs and The Creative Process (Wednesday, August 31)**

**Week 1:** Hugo, *The Triggering Town*  
Introductions  
Writing Exercise  
Degree Audit  

➢ Assignment **Due 08/31:** Create a nameplate. The nameplate should include your first name (or the name you want to be called in class). The nameplate should be designed so that it can be placed in front of you on the workshop table.  

**The ground rules:**  
1. You cannot buy or have a nameplate made.  
2. You cannot use any common writing instruments (no pens, pencils, word processing programs or white paper)  
3. The nameplate must be large enough to be easily legible across a conference table, but not so large as to block your face.
4. Have some fun solving the problem of writing something without using writing instruments.

➢ Assignment Due 08/31: Write a short essay (2-3 pages) on some topic “triggered” by Hugo’s The Triggering Town. No need to write a book report or attempt to be comprehensive – you can’t in such a short space. Do try to be interesting and, if possible, have fun. Bring 14 copies to our first class.

II. The Workshop Model with Julie Sheehan and Melissa Bank (September 7)

Week 2 (9/07): Read the PDFs in Blackboard (MFA Blog, HTML Giant and Poem) including the comments.

In class, we will talk about spontaneous writing vs. prepared submissions. Then, using the assigned poem as our guinea pig, we will work on:
1) descriptive vs. evaluative writing, separating our observations of the text from our inferences about it;
2) "about" vs. "how," identifying the difference between what material the writer is tackling (and whether it's worthy, and whether worthiness is a valid topic in workshop) and how the writer executes the material (i.e., issues of craft).

[09/07 MFA MIXER]

III. The MFA, the Workshop and After the Workshop with Robert Reeves & Carla Caglioti (September 14)

Boswell, “After the Workshop: Transitional Drafts”
Earnshaw, “The Writer as Artist”
Can Writing be Taught?
1. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/books/review/can-writing-be-taught.html?_r=0
3. http://www.pw.org/content/the_teachable_talent_whyCreative_writing_can_be_taught_0?cmnt_all=1

Diversity
1. http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/mfa-vs-poc
2. http://www.pw.org/content/degrees_of_diversity

➢ Assignment Due 09/14: Write a short essay (2-3 pages) on some topic “triggered” by one or more of the articles or on the reading assignment from 09/07.

IV. Fiction with Susan Merrell (September 21)


https://books.google.com/books?id=J_LspS4jMPAC&pg=PA44&lpg=PA44&dq=do+stay+giraffe&source=bl&ots=TPLWI_oQp5&sig=jkN3PoVLP18HsnOic-3GFmbc1F0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjU6Njc9qL0AhUCWj4KHR0JAxwQ6AEILzAD#v=onepage&q=do%20stay%20giraffe&f=false

➢ Assignment Due 09/21: Pick a sentence at random from a short story you are currently writing. If you are not currently writing fiction, create a short story opening. Recast the sentence so that you have the same sentence in past, present, future, 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, from the limited POV of a main character, an omniscient POV and from the limited POV of a secondary character. You should have 9 versions of the same sentence.

Resources/Quick Hints

Limited POV of Secondary Character
For the limited POV of a secondary character think of Nick Carraway in the Great Gatsby -- he's on the outside looking in.

Limited POV of Main Character
For the limited POV of a main character think of Jane in Jane Eyre. She's fairly reliable describing external events, but leaves a bit out when it comes to her own thoughts.

Omniscient Narrator
Remember back to high school and Lord of the Flies. The narrator seems to know everything and moves easily among character's internal thoughts as well as external scenes.

If you need a quick refresher on verb tenses and/or more examples of point of view (POV), there are many online guides. Following are a few.

Verb Tenses:

POV
http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/read/pov2.html

IV. Topics in Fiction with Carla Caglioti and Robert Reeves (September 28)

Week 5 (9/28):
Dubus, Andre. “The Habit of Writing,” “A Father's Story”
Baxter, “Against Epiphanies”
Myers, B. R. “A Reader’s Manifesto”
O’Rouke, Meghan. “Unfair Sentence”
Miller, Laura. “Sentenced to Death”

➢ Assignment Due 09/28:
Write a short essay (2-3 pages) on some topic “triggered” by one or more of the articles or on the writing assignment from 09/21.

V. Topics in Poetry: Haikus with Star Black (October 5)

Week 6 (10/05):
Three Island Haikus

A "haiku", a traditional form of Japanese poetry, consists of 3 lines. The first and last lines have five syllables. The middle line has seven syllables. The lines rarely rhyme. The three-line haiku form in English is also defined as syllabic verse. Read up on haiku on the internet. Start with poets.org and see where your search takes you.
Begin reading texts assigned for 10/12

➢ Assignment Due 10/05:
Using your cell phone camera, take three photographs of three distinct Long Island scenes: 1. a road or freeway, 2. the ocean or beach, 3. a view, close-up or standard, of a town street. Print your three photos out in color and include your own original haiku about each photo on the print-out sheet with the photo. Each of your haikus should have its own title. Bring in your original Three Island Haikus with your photographs to go with them to share with the class.

[WRITERS SPEAK: 10/05 KIM ADDONIZIO]

V. Topics in Poetry with Carla Caglioti and Robert Reeves (October 12)

Week 7 (10/12):
Trethewey, Natasha, “On Poetry as a Cultural Force”
http://nyti.ms/1lKRqO0
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anis-shivani/state-of-american-poetry_b_706734.html
Gioia, Dana. “Can Poetry Matter?”
Epstein, Joseph. “Who Killed Poetry?”
Hall, Donald, “Death to the Death of Poetry”
Barr, John. “American Poetry in the New Century”

➢ Assignment Due 10/12: Bring in 14 copies of a favorite short poem or a short poem that resonates with you. Be prepared to discuss why it is a favorite or why it is important.
NOTE: For this assignment, a short poem is one that can be read aloud in a minute or less.

➢ Assignment Due 10/12: Write a short essay (2-3 pages) on some topic “triggered” by one or more of the articles, essays, or poems. There will be a general continuation of our procedure thus far (a short essay triggered by the readings) but we will look for essays to discuss topics that are more forcefully tied to the ideas generated by the readings. We will begin to start to take more risks.* We will discuss the details of risk-taking in class.

VI. Topics in Nonfiction with Lou Ann Walker (October 19)

Week 8 (10/19): Roz Chast, Can’t we talk about something more Pleasant?
Ann Patchett, The Getaway Car
Begin Reading works for 10/26.

➢ Assignment Due 10/12: An argument. Could be one you had. One you overheard. One that’s family legend. No more than three pages. As you’re working on this assignment, think about any issues that arise as a result of writing your story. In addition to storytelling strategies, we’ll be discussing the nature of truth in memoir; as well as central moral conflicts the memoirist faces.

[WRITERS SPEAK: 10/12 DANI SHAPIRO]

VI. Topics in Creative Nonfiction with Robert Reeves & Carla Caglioti (October 26)

Week 9 (10/26): Reeves, Robert, “The Eulogist”
“Mendelsohn, Daniel. “But Enough About Me”
Milburn, Michael. “By Fact Alone: Sensationalism in Contemporary Nonfiction”
McCutchen, D.K. “The Art of Lying—Or Risking the Wrath of Oprah”
Gutkind, Lee. “What is Creative Nonfiction?”

➢ Assignment Due 10/26: In light of the Memoir session with Lou Ann Walker and the assigned readings, write a short essay (personal or familiar or literary or lyric) on some aspect related to memoir and/or creative nonfiction.

VII. Topics in Publishing with Leslie Schnur (November 2)

Week 10 (11/02):


Justin Kramon Query Letter and editor response, http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/guide-to-literary-agents/successful-queries-agent-ayesha-pande-and-justin-kramons-finny (Note: Justin Kramon is an alum of the Southampton Writers Conference and has participated in workshops, readings, and many other events at Southampton).

➢ Assignment Due 11/02: Write a sample query letter and/or elevator pitch.

[Writers Speak: 11/02 Emily Gilbert in Conversation with John Knight, Agent]

VII. Topics in Publishing and Authorship with Robert Reeves and Carla Caglioti (November 9)

Week 11 (11/09):

  Vinjamuri, David. “Publishing is Broken, We’re Drowning in Indie Books – And that’s a Good Thing” http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidvinjamuri/2012/08/15/publishing-is-broken-were-drowning-in-indie-books-and-thats-a-good-thing/#63f5f704679d
  Lethem, Jonathan “The Ecstasy of Influence: A plagiarism”
  Lehman, David. Poem: These Fragments I Have Shored
  Hansen, Ron. “The Ethics of Fiction Writing”
  New York Times Article on Appropriation, Helen Hegemann & David Shields
  Salon article on David Shields book, “Reality Hunger: A Manifesto”
  Boston Globe article on David Shields

➢ Assignment Due 11/09: Write a one or two page piece about authorship or publishing that directly borrows (or appropriates) from another source. Centos, mash-ups and other re-purposing techniques (forms) are encouraged. Be prepared to talk about your process.

VIII. Topics in New Media and Podcasts with Robert Reeves & Kathie Russo (11/16)

Week 12 (11/16): LISTEN: Familiarize yourself with following podcasts. It’s okay to multitask and have them playing in the background, listen to the first 5-10 minutes and switch to the next. IF YOU HAVE NEVER LISTED BEFORE, you should also “tune” into Serial (http://serialpodcast.org/) and This American Life (http://www.thisamericanlife.org/).

  WTF with Mac Maron (strongly suggest the one with Louie CK, Obama or David Sedaris) http://www.wtfpod.com/
  Terry Gross: Fresh Air (Mary Karr interview) http://www.npr.org/2015/09/19/441440067/fresh-air-weekend-mary-karr-on-writing-memoirs-a-minister-who-embraces-outsiders
READ: Read the following articles available online.


*The last 10 years of podcasting:* [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/ten_years_in_your_ears/2014/12/podcast_10th_anniversary_slate_s_executive_producer_andy_bowers_on_the_state.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/ten_years_in_your_ears/2014/12/podcast_10th_anniversary_slate_s_executive_producer_andy_bowers_on_the_state.html)


*Podcasts for every niche* [http://www.wsj.com/articles/all-podcasts-considered-1440975070](http://www.wsj.com/articles/all-podcasts-considered-1440975070)

*Comcast and Verizon* [http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2489574,00.asp](http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2489574,00.asp)

➢ **ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/16:** Download the Kathleen Russo pitch for Meg Wolitzer's show. Using that pitch as a rough guideline or template, write a paragraph (no more than ½ page) for an idea of your own. Be prepared to read and discuss your pitch.

[WRITERS SPEAK: 11/16 LIA PURPURA]

**THANKSGIVING BREAK: Wednesday, Nov. 23 – Sunday, Nov. 27**

IX. Presentations: Writers on Writing (November 30, December 7 & 14)

Weeks 13-15: Special topics of interest to writers. Self-directed readings.

[WRITERS SPEAK: 11/30 RUTH FRANKLIN]

➢ Assignment **Due 11/30-12/14:** Students will present on topics of interest to writers

SPECIAL TOPICS FOR WRITERS
- Alternative Writing Programs (Writers in the Schools, Writers in Prison, etc.)
- MFA Programs
- The Arts and Government
- Censorship
X. The MFA in Creative Writing (December 14)
[WRITERS SPEAK NIGHT: 12/07, MFA STUDENT READINGS]

NOTE: Because we have final presentations and book report instead of final exams, we use final exam week for the final presentations. Wednesday, December 14 is our final class meeting.

Week 15: Myers, The Elephants Teach

➢ Assignment Due 12/14: Write a slightly longer essay on some topic or chapter covered in Elephants Teach. This paper should be a slightly longer paper in which you engage in one topic about the birth and rise of MFA programs.
Americans with Disabilities Act:  
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity:  
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person’s work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Critical Incident Management:  
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students’ ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

Absences/Late Arrivals/Early Departures:  
Class participation is required and attendance (including late arrival/early departure) is factored into the final grade. If you must miss class because of an illness, please email or leave a message with the office (632-5028).

Grades:  
Your grade will be determined by your class participation, completion of all assignments, and your class presentation. Use of the course Blackboard site is required.

STONY BROOK MANHATTAN – Writers Speak Series – Spring 2016

09/09 MFA MIXER
10/05 KIM ADDONIZIO
10/19 DANI SHAPIRO
11/02 EMILY GILBERT IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN KNIGHT
11/16 LIA PURPURA
11/30 RUTH FRANKLIN
12/07 MFA READING