

CENTER FOR EXPERIMENTAL HUMANITIES (CEH-GA)

CEH-GA 1012 Oral History (4 Credits)

Typically offered not typically offered

This class uses oral history to consider the role of unappreciated labor and invisible knowledge in an urban setting. Working in collaboration with current and former members of New York City's Department of Sanitation, we will explore the dynamics of a historically significant work force to consider overlooked elements of the city's past, to become acquainted with the complexities of a vital but largely hidden infrastructure, and to uncover narratives about a dynamic, culturally rich, and often unseen community. The final interviews and edited transcripts will become part of the DSNY Oral History Archive. As an academic discipline and as a research methodology, oral history serves many functions. It can be a documentary technique, a fact-finding strategy, a tool of investigation, a casual practice, or a personal reflection. It is useful to historians, anthropologists, museum curators, educators, journalists, playwrights, and novelists, among others. Some who use oral history are quite self-conscious about the larger intellectual conversations in which it fits, while others simply find it a helpful way to learn details about particular events, individuals, or moments in time. Within the academy, oral history is considered through a variety of theoretical frameworks that ask questions about truth (who claims it, who contests it), perspective (whose voice is heard, whose is ignored, by whom, in what contexts), relevance (who cares? why or why not?), bias (of everyone involved), access (to the stories, to the people telling the stories) and power (woven through the entire enterprise, but not always easy to measure). We will delve into these and related concerns throughout the semester, but we will give equal attention to practicalities such as project design, research techniques, interview skills, equipment choices, archiving systems, finding aids, and transcription software and protocols. Sanitation work is an ideal theme for oral history. It is fundamental to the city's well-being, but is ignored in most formal histories of the region. By hearing directly from individuals whose lives have been structured around labors of waste, we create the opportunity for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of how a global metropolis has been shaped, by whom, and at what cost.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1016 Special Topics (4 Credits)

Typically offered all terms

A seminar offered on a range of interdisciplinary topics within the humanities and/or social sciences.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1018 Tpcs Sem: (4 Credits)

Typically offered Fall and Spring

A seminar offered on a range of interdisciplinary topics within the humanities and/or social sciences.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: Yes

CEH-GA 1045 International Human Rights: Latin America. (4 Credits)

Typically offered Fall and Spring

In this graduate seminar, students will study international human rights standards, topical case studies in Latin America, the role of international and local NGOs in the human rights movement, popular resistance and social movements in the Latin American human rights movement, the role of media and representation in reporting and promoting human rights, educational initiatives for human rights, and the many choices society has after collective violence. Same as LATC-GA 1045

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1048 International Studies in Human Rights (4 Credits)

Typically offered Fall and Spring

Focusing on human rights as positive peace, students will study the major themes and events in the contemporary human rights movement. Students will be exposed to the international standards, how NGOs respond to violations, the role of media, and the transformative potential of human rights education.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1089 Topics: (4 Credits)

Typically offered Fall and Spring

A seminar offered on a range of interdisciplinary topics within the humanities and/or social sciences.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: Yes

CEH-GA 1137 Digital Humanities: Analysis and Visualization (4 Credits)

Typically offered Fall and Spring

The Information Age has provided us with both a flood of measurable data and a variety of new tools to analyze and present that data. This course considers how the analysis and visualization of information through digital technologies has significantly changed the way we look at our world both within the academic community and in society at large.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1219 The Information Society: The Information Paradigm (4 Credits)

This course is about information culture. The concept "information," first formalized after the Second World War, emerged slowly from the Enlightenment to the 20th century, when it invaded the sciences and the humanities alike. Information circulates unpredictably, autonomously, forming not just logistical channels but also a general aesthetics that demands critique. Beginning with debates on poetry around 1800, the course looks forward to Logical Positivism, the computing revolution, and large-scale data processing. We will analyze the aesthetics of information in authors including but not limited to Friedrich Schlegel, Sianne Ngai, Hanne Darboven, Elfriede Jelinek, Franz Kafka, Max Bense, Jacques Lacan, Friedrich Hayek, Jodi Dean, Kathrin Röggla, and Hito Steyerl.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 1813 Garbage in Gotham (4 Credits)

Typically offered not typically offered

Traces changing definitions of value and worthlessness through Enlightenment, modern, and postmodern theory. Considers these through the perspective of trash, which is read as a reflection of contemporary social mores, time/space compression, and fragmentations of cultural identity, among other themes. Uses New York City as a case study.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 2165 Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future (4 Credits)*Typically offered not typically offered*

This class uses science fiction to explore how we understand ourselves in a perpetually shifting present and to look closely at how and why we cast ourselves into the future, into alternative contemporary realities, into variations on being. These conjurings suggest vastly different possibilities of what it means to be human – indeed, what it means to be sentient.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** No**CEH-GA 2223 Topics: (2 Credits)**

In this seminar we will explore temporality as the backbone of history, but not in the traditional, chronological way. Instead, we will examine the possibilities of a temporality that is not linear but moves in different directions, starting from the present. During the four weeks we will closely read selected chapters from three novels, in view of their potential for transmediation into visual, or audio-visual texts: -Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* 1856 -Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote* (part 1) 1605 -Domnica Radulescu, *Train to Trieste* 2008 Each novel lends itself to reading with a contemporary slant that we will take as primary in view of making a “pre-posterous” connection between present and past. Each has been or will be audio-visualized: the first one into a feature film, alternatively shown with photographs as installations; the second consists of installations only, and the third will be a feature film only. For the latter we will be able to read the script based on the novel, written by someone else (not connected to my own projects). The question of time will be studied in view of order (sequence, chronology, preposterousness); duration; and rhythm. This 2-credit course will be conducted in English.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 2917 Topics in Modern Lit & Culture II (4 Credits)**

Topics may include the formal properties of literary modernism, its social and political contexts, or particular modernist authors.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 3000 Independent Study (1-4 Credits)***Typically offered not typically offered*

An Independent Study offers students an opportunity to do advanced work on a topic about which they have already taken a course during their time in XE, and about which no advanced courses are being offered.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 3001 Independent Study (1-4 Credits)***Typically offered not typically offered*

An Independent Study offers students an opportunity to do advanced work on a topic about which they have already taken a course during their time in XE, and about which no advanced courses are being offered.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 3002 Independent Study (1-2 Credits)***Typically offered not typically offered*

An Independent Study offers students an opportunity to do advanced work on a topic about which they have already taken a course during their time in XE, and about which no advanced courses are being offered.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** No**CEH-GA 3003 Topics in The City (4 Credits)***Typically offered not typically offered*

A seminar offered on a range of interdisciplinary topics within urban studies.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 3004 Topics in Gender and Sexuality (4 Credits)***Typically offered not typically offered*

Topics in Gender Politics seminars examine particularly focused subject matter and themes, which change frequently.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** Yes**CEH-GA 3005 XE Master's Project (1 Credit)**

The final academic research paper and/or creative project that serves as a culmination of the master's degree.

Grading: GSAS Pass/Fail**Repeatable for additional credit:** No**CEH-GA 3012 The Curatorial (4 Credits)**

What is the role of a curator? What is a curator's relationship to artists, objects, texts, and exhibition sites? This seminar is intended to introduce students to the history, theory, and practice of selecting, displaying, and installing objects. The course begins with an overview of the role of the curator in a traditional museum setting before examining curatorial practices in non-profit spaces as well as curating public art, participatory art, and digital art to determine what the role of a curator is in an ever-expanding globalized art world characterized by new media, an expanding art market, and large-scale international exhibitions, biennials, and art fairs. We will read texts by curators such as Helen Molesworth, Nato Thompson, Kellie Jones, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, and critics such as Svetlana Alpers, Bruce Althuler, Brian O'Doherty, and Elena Filipovic, and examine work by artists who curate such as Fred Wilson, Hans Haacke, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, as well as both domestic and international group shows such as the Whitney Biennial and Documenta. Our classes will feature guest speakers from New York-area museums, galleries, and non-profits and will include site visits to artist studios. Students will be asked to write a variety of assignments—wall texts, exhibition catalogue essays, acquisition forms, and art reviews—and the seminar will culminate in a final in-depth exhibition proposal.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** No**CEH-GA 3013 American Hardcore Punk (4 Credits)**

Sensing a commercialization of the music they loved, the originators of Hardcore Punk rebelled against and provided a commentary on both the music scene and culture at large in the early 1980s. This course follows the growth of this underground culture throughout the country and shows Hardcore's enduring cultural impact on culture and society as a whole.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** No**CEH-GA 3015 Interdisciplinarity (3 Credits)**

This course introduces the historical contexts, theoretical backgrounds, and analytical frameworks central to the production of interdisciplinary humanistic inquiry. As an introduction to interdisciplinary studies, the goal of this course is to interrogate the existing categories of and approaches to knowledge production.

Grading: GSAS Graded**Repeatable for additional credit:** No

CEH-GA 3019 Master's Project Workshop (2 Credits)

This course is for all students in their last semester in the program who are prepared to finish their master's project. The semester blends bi-weekly class meetings, one-on-one consultations with the professor, in-class presentations, readings from various texts, regular structured writing assignments, collaborative peer support, and project presentations.

Grading: GSAS Pass/Fail

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3026 Memory Palaces: A Workshop on Experiments in Fiction and Nonfiction (4 Credits)

At a time when digital techniques for saving and indexing allow us to consolidate endless memory in pocket-sized devices, what memorial power remains in a sentence or paragraph? More than a course on memoir, this is an intensive introduction to the work of art as mnemonic device, or system to aid and deepen memory. Over the course of the semester, we will explore strategies by means of which memory may be housed in and recovered via writing. Following Frances Yates's description of visual and literary technologies for encoding information in *The Art of Memory*, we will develop our own "memory palaces." And we will consider other texts and works of art that both act as memory palaces and describe tactics for seeking, containing, inscribing, preserving, overwriting, and reimagining memory, including writings by Henri Bergson, Teju Cole, Samuel Delany, and Susan Howe, and works of art by Hanne Darboven and Walid Raad, among others. We will examine the ways in which various forms, genres, occasions, and materials provide diverse kinds of support for the memories we wish to retain or narrate. Nor will we overlook the dynamics of forgetting. || This course aims to familiarize students with varied creative texts that at once describe the art of memory and engage in acts of recollection and memorialization. Readings and artworks selected for the syllabus frequently defy straightforward generic classification. They offer examples of the ways in which works of literature—along with sculpture, installations, film, and other forms of visual art—emerge out of authors' careful thinking through of relationships between language and memory, as well as between images and memory, even before or beyond disciplinary categorization. The course will permit participants to examine, for example, works of memoir by fiction writers, a work of fiction by a poet, poems by a lawyer, a film by a visual artist, and numerous other works whose genre (among other professional affiliations) is either ambiguous or less relevant to our study than their other features and qualities. || Through two short writing exercises and a longer final exploration, students will test, recover, conserve, and refashion memory in writing, completing a publishable piece by the end of the course. Regular workshop sessions will allow students to receive feedback on their own endeavors as well as to respond to the writing of their peers.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3027 Nothing: The Aesthetics of Absence (4 Credits)

Blank books. Empty canvases. Silence, waiting, boredom, refusal. These choices in art, literature, music, and film over the past century have reconfigured the boundaries between aesthetic practice and philosophical thought. This class will examine how modern and contemporary art and literature have engaged with absence in its manifest forms.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3028 Magazines, Art, and Public Culture (4 Credits)

This course examines magazines as collaborative sites for artists and writers internationally, leading the way to a global, networked cultural sphere. We will consider periodicals as both commercial and artist-driven enterprises and as material objects to be studied through the lens of the history of photography, journalism, and design.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3029 Critical Theory and Everyday Life (4 Credits)

Everyday life is typically thought to be comprised of the bland, boring and repetitive activities that fill our days, rather than the locus of the miraculous and the exceptional. At the same time, it is also the source of inspiration for disparate aesthetic movements like realism, surrealism, and modernism, as well as a crucial category for philosophy and theory associated with Marxism, postcolonial studies, feminism and gender. This course will study theories of the everyday through a range of critical perspectives, literature, and media. We will consider how everyday life produces notions of identity, normativity, and power, and assess its relations to the production of social space, the experience of urban life, and to notions of time and modernity. In addition to reading key texts of critical theory, we will look to a range of examples from literature, cinema, and commercial advertisements to explore the rhetoric of everyday life in action. Readings include but are not limited to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre, Franz Fanon, Stuart Hall, Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Claudia Rankine. Students will develop projects that explore the relations between assigned theoretical texts and their individual research interests.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3030 Internship (1-4 Credits)

Internships offer students an opportunity to gain experience in a professional setting in a field of their choosing.

Grading: GSAS Pass/Fail

Repeatable for additional credit: Yes

CEH-GA 3031 Correspondences: Letter Writing, Literature, and Art (4 Credits)

From love letters to letters to the editor, letters have been fundamental to recording public and private life for centuries. They also constitute part of our material culture, whose mark making transforms them into visual objects of interest. This class revisits this so-called lost art of letter writing and its role in novels, visual culture, and our daily lives. Considering the roles of privacy, surveillance, censorship, this class begins with a history of the postal service and then examines epistolary novels, postcards, mail art, and other literary and artistic responses to letter writing. Readings include: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter" (1844), Franz Kafka, "Letter to my Father" (1919), Emily Dickinson's envelope poems, Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe's love letters, Derrida's *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, and artworks ranging from mail art by Ray Johnson and On Kawara, Fluxus postage stamps, Yves Klein's "mail scandals," postal works by Yayoi Kusama, Alighiero Boetti, and Eugenio Dittborn, and Moyra Davey's series *Mary, Marie*, 2011 on Mary Wollstonecraft's letters. The class will visit archives to consider correspondence between historical figures and students will be asked to reflect on letters found in the archive, write three short comparative papers, pen their own letters to the editor, and produce a final research paper or project.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3032 Citizenship in the Digital Age (4 Credits)

Each passing election makes more apparent how new technologies, changes in our approaches to data, new forms of social communication, and shifts in the practice of reporting have fundamentally altered the experience of being a citizen. The course engages students with their own sense of citizenship through research into the relevant electoral and political trends of the day.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3033 Image Culture: Interdisciplinary Histories of Photography (4 Credits)

This class historicizes and theorizes photography and the political, commercial, and aesthetic discourses that shaped it. We consider photography in relation to identity, to other media, and explore its status as an artifact, document, and digital file, to determine how photography evolved in both the public imagination and in practice

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3035 Global Modernisms (4 Credits)

The course considers the global expansion of modernism by both analyzing various means of conceptualizing of the period—the construction of modernism, modernity, and the avant-garde across the arts—and by theorizing the politics of race, gender, nationalism and anti-colonial movements that were constitutive of the time.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3036 Global Surrealisms: Revolutionizing Art and Life (4 Credits)

Typically offered not typically offered

Surrealism was decidedly an international phenomenon. The class considers its manifestations in Spain, Mexico, North America, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, and critically reexamines the movement through the lens of ethnography, gender, and psychoanalysis across the writing, photographs, magazines, and artwork that emerged from it.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3037 Natureculture: Theorizing the More-Than-Human (4 Credits)

This course examines theories of "natureculture", a conceptual innovation that has emerged from feminist science studies, multispecies ethnography, and the environmental/digital humanities to understand history, language, and power as more-than-human capacities. Students engage with an unruly spectrum of transdisciplinary approaches that call for expanded and decolonized modes of scholarship.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3038 Participation: Activating the Spectator in Contemporary Art (4 Credits)

From the 1960s through the present much art has relied on the active involvement of the spectator—from Brazilian neo-concrete art that required audience participation to contemporary debates over relational aesthetics and social practice—and in this class we will look at the development of theories and histories of contemporary art through the lens of what constitutes "activating" artwork. Fluxus, happenings, Gutai, conceptual art, public art, performance art, activist art—all model the interaction of the artist and the public very differently. We will examine how these different movements and artists stage the interaction between art and the public, and the relationship that they propose between gender, racial, and national identities through the politics of participation. Together we will reflect on the evolving debates surrounding theories of spectatorship, art and activism, performance art, the politics of public art, recent curatorial practices, and the rise of new media. Readings will include artists' writings by Hélio Oiticica, Allan Kaprow, Guy Debord, Sol LeWitt, Cildo Meireles, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, and work by critics such as Mari Carmen Ramirez, Nicolas Bourriard, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. The class incorporates site visits to museums, visiting guest lectures, and assignments include art criticism, short analytical papers, and a final conference paper, which students will present to the class.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3039 The Copy: Media and the Culture of Replication (4 Credits)

Copies, reproductions, replicas, facsimiles, fakes, forgeries, reissues. What is the status of the copy in our culture? This class will look at modern and contemporary copying in fiction and in art, as well as considering zines, appropriation art, sampling, and artists remaking their own or others' work.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3040 Art and/as Direct Action (4 Credits)

This course examines a series of aesthetic strategies that have placed art at the center of political interventionism. Topics include the art strike, anti-art, ritual iconoclasm, art activism, détournement, participation, improvisation, public art and community video. How do such strategies attest to, intervene in, or complicate claims for art's critical capacities?

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3041 EXIT!: The Politics of Escape (4 Credits)

What might a critical politics of escape look like? Social movement strategies have often been framed as struggles for visibility, recognition, or representation. While mindful of such important arguments, recent critical theory has sought to destabilize the emphasis on representational strategies in its theorization of resistance and social struggle. Such accounts underscore the fact that recognition by the state—especially for minoritarian subjects—can often translate to categorization, policing, regulation, criminalization, and other violent forms of governance. Following recent critiques of rights-based movement strategies (arising in particular from within queer studies, critical race theory, and critical trans politics), we will look toward practices of escape as potentially resistant to dominant structures of power. Taking our cue from Paolo Virno, whose theory of exodus refers to “the collective defection from the state bond, from certain forms of waged work, from consumerism,” we will look at the way a politics of escape might require a critique of normative identity categories, the nation-state, or the commodity-form. We will ask how we might see modes of exit such as withdrawal, desertion, refusal, anonymity, obfuscation, or even methods of escapism like daydreaming as critical engagements with the present. Looking in particular towards the minoritarian politics of escape, our readings will include literature on the politics of mobility and fugitivity, strategies of dis-identification, becoming minor, work refusal, the human strike, gender abolitionism, and the politics of opacity. Alongside our theoretical readings we will look at aesthetic strategies of escape—from methods of abstraction to digital art practices—that have presented alternatives to representational paradigms. Finally, we will ask after the utopian or speculative element of such a politics. How do such practices critique the political possibilities of the present and imagine another possible future?

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3042 On Method: Research and Revision for Creative Writing (4 Credits)

This is a course on method and writing. In other words, it is a course on how we can develop working strategies that will allow us to produce fluent, complex texts—and how we can return to pieces we have already written in order to see them anew and, perhaps, to alter them.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3043 Design: Concepts, Histories, and Digital Contexts (4 Credits)

Sometimes hidden, sometimes explicit, design is an ever-present feature of almost every aspect of daily life. This course considers design as both a field of study and of practice by investigating both how design influences daily experience and how we can develop prowess in understanding and working within the field of design.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3046 Queer Commons (4 Credits)

This course explores the recent history of queer culture, theory, and activism through the lens of “the commons,” a concept mobilized to reimagine alternatives to late capitalism. Topics include queer approaches to questions of sexual freedom, privacy and access, climate change, land dispossession, care labor, knowledge production, and the politics of enclosure and land dispossession.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3047 Space, Place and Data (4 Credits)

As the digital medium has exploded over the last forty or so years, devices, data, networks, and new modes of visual expression have changed our perception of and ability to express our sense of where we are and how we perceive landscapes of experience. As a result, notions of space and place, and a desire to express the situatedness of lived experience and historical narratives, have come increasingly to the fore in humanities and the social sciences. At the same time, interdisciplinary fields such as geography and digital humanities have looked to provide new lenses on the worlds around us (both physical and virtual) and new tools with which to share our stories of traveling through different places. These changes reflect our increasing capacity to capture and express geographical information through new tools for doing work in what has come to be called the “spatial humanities.” This course will explore our new perceptions of space and place relative to data and data structures both creatively and critically, including questioning how the epistemological tendencies of specific tools—and geographic information systems (GIS) as a whole—impact our perception of the world. Immersing ourselves in contemporary geographical thought, including discussions of space and place in everyday life, and experimentation with new tools and practices, this course will teach students to frame narratives through maps and other spatial visualization tools with a critical understanding that allows them properly situate facts and stories in the digital landscape.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3048 Do It Yourself: The Theory and Practice of Art and Social Engagement (4 Credits)

The course will engage students in a critical discussion of alternative organizational models, social justice, and feminism in the context of nonprofit organizations. Some questions this course poses include: how do you start and run your own independent initiative, whether it's a publication, an art gallery, a music venue, or a filmmaker's co-op? What are the ideas that inspire such initiatives and how are they channeled or reflected in practice? Throughout the course we will look at models of such organizations, and discuss the challenges they face, both theoretically and practically, ranging from strategic planning and project management, to enacting activist politics and feminist principles. The course features guest lectures by leading figures in various creative industries who will reflect on their own experiences. By the end of the term, students will have a basic framework for starting their own initiative, as well of a sense of the broader creative landscape in which they might engage. || Note: This course is intended as a general overview of issues involved in starting your own project, and is not intended to provide you with specific legal advice. This course should not be construed as all-inclusive nor as the provision of legal services to any individual or entity.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3051 The Contemporary Short Story: An Anatomy and Intensive Introduction (4 Credits)

The short story is a ubiquitous and beloved literary form. Long a staple of magazines, particularly in the United States during the twentieth century, it is also the frequent subject of workshops in creative writing. We often hear of “the workshop story,” which is to say, a style of writing that has developed in the context of academic attempts to perfect what was originally a popular, “pulpy” mode. When we discuss short stories, particularly in the classroom, we are apt to consider questions about characterization, pacing, arc, and themes. While such terms can be useful, this course will not treat them as absolutely indispensable; rather, we will be exploring our preconceptions about what makes a given short story “work,” even as we will examine the recent history of the form and, most importantly, develop our own stories. || We will read an array of recently published short stories, drawn from anthologies and collections, as well as a number of theoretical and critical texts not normally considered in the context of short-story workshops. We will investigate narrative and, more specifically, what makes a given piece of writing narrative (as opposed to non-narrative). How do we recognize and construct narratives? Are they always, or ever, perfectly linear? Does narrative emerge from a specific temporal form or style? Could it emerge from some other source or context (a person speaking, for example)? If narrative is not primarily or unconditionally linear in nature, how or where is it? In addition to questions related to narrative, we will be exploring affect, economics and politics of description, theories of mind, and even a bit of game theory—as these relate to the short form. Why, after all, have we constantly been told to “show not tell” in our prose? Participants should be prepared to write and revise a new story during the class. We will learn how to line edit our work and how to engage in thoughtful and productive critique through a series of exercises and workshops. There will also be time for in-depth discussion of the readings and exploration of ways in which we might apply them to our own work. Participants will conclude the course with a polished draft of a story and a better understanding of contemporary trends in fiction, as well as a critical toolkit for pursuing and unpacking these trends and more, going forward. Students interested in registering for the course should submit a writing sample of five to ten pages of prose; any genre (fiction, nonfiction, critical essay, other, etc.) to xe@nyu.edu.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3053 Genre Trouble: Monsterous Texts and Experiments in Writing (2 Credits)

Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres. I repeat: genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix them. So begins Jacques Derrida’s 1979 lecture, “The Law of Genre,” in which he argues that systems of generic taxonomy depend on principals of exclusion and reveal anxieties about “mixing,” “crossing,” and “hybridity.” Derrida’s argument becomes even more significant when we consider the fact that the French word “genre” also means “gender.” In this course, we will get messy and examine what happens when we play with genre. We will undertake this exploration by analyzing the relations between genre and identity through figures of monstrosity and experimentation. How do works of literature exploit and violate the “law of genre?” How do disparate forms of writing negotiate meanings around gender and racial identity? How do figures of the “monstrous” invite us to analyze the definition of the “human,” as well who is included and excluded from this category? We will read literary and critical texts by authors such as Mary Shelley, Toni Morrison, Marie de France, Judith Butler, Susan Stryker, Hélène Cixous, Assata Shakur, Jacques Derrida, and Frank Wilderson. Writing assignments will encourage students to experiment with their creative and critical voices.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No

CEH-GA 3055 Trans Narrative as Method (4 Credits)

In this course, we will study and compose autofictions, making use of three lenses or methodologies. We will ask what it may mean—and what use it may be—to write fiction that discusses the very nature of fiction-writing and authorship (metapragmatics). We will explore the ways in which autofiction may allow the writer to experience vulnerability or discuss their own life and identity, perhaps under the sheltering pretext of fiction (vulnerability). And we will investigate the stylishness of autofiction, its relevance to the present moment and contemporary media, as well as its (frequently innate) wit and aplomb. We will read such authors as Roland Barthes, Percival Everett, Renee Gladman, Chris Kraus, and Tan Lin, among others, and we will devise and workshop our own autofictions. Participants will conclude the course with an expanded knowledge of contemporary and historical trends in experimental fiction, as well as a polished short story or excerpt from a longer work of prose.

Grading: GSAS Graded

Repeatable for additional credit: No