Writing and Imagination (WRIT)
CTY Course Syllabus

Day 1: Welcome

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)

- Morning Journal Entry
  - Introduction to Course
  - On Writing/Reading
  - Course Objectives
  - Course Rules/Etiquette and Procedures
- Sign up for Activities; Read/Sign Honor Code and Technology Agreement
  - Each student picks a word(S) to discuss in-depth and look up in dictionary
  - Begin Word Posters (on construction paper, students illustrate their word however they see fit, considering its meaning, sound, etc.)

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- Pre-Assessment
- If students finish early:
  - Complete Word Posters and consider where to hang.
  - Divide up composition NB (50 pages for writer’s journal; then 20 pages for notes; Favorite words in back; Reading list in back)

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)

- Read “Song of Myself” (Handout) and Discuss
  - What words/IMAGES stand out to you? What is an image? What does this poem mean? How does it make us feel? What techniques does he use?
  - Tools of the Trade: Description; Abstract vs. Concrete Image (find examples of both); show don’t tell; No ideas but in things.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)

- Writing Prompt 1
  - Write your own ‘song of myself” in any form you want (song lyrics, descriptive paragraph, list poem (I am), self interview, dictionary definition)
- Share writing prompts

Homework

- Read Michael Ondaatje, “Harbour” (IS 72-3), Hogan, “Walking” (IS 229-32), and Jane Brox, “Greenhouse” (268-9). Choose one and make a list for each of concrete/abstract descriptions you find; underneath each list, write a two paragraph letter “Dear Mr. Ondaatje” or “Dear Mrs. Brox.” First, tell them which descriptions you liked best and why; then point out places you still have questions about: what does that mean, what was that like, etc. and why.
- Write an acrostic name poem and illustrate.
Day 2: Creative Nonfiction and Description

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Warm-up: list of descriptions of a favorite food from all 5 senses. Keep it secret!
- HW – Share and Discuss
- Explain Creative Non-Fiction
- Tools of the Trade: Observation / 5 Senses
- Writing Prompt - Describe the food from warm-up using all five senses. Share. Students guess what it is, why author loves it.

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
- Walk through side doorways slowly five times, each time focusing on another sense
  - Tools of the Trade: Prewriting; compile lists of observations using all five senses
- Writing Prompt: Write a description of entering or exiting the school using only one sense.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
- Journal Warm-up
- Group Work: Share doorway descriptions & discuss similarities/differences. Each group presents findings to class.
- Tools of the Trade: Metaphor/Simile

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
- Further Reading - In pairs, students analyze Santiago Baca, “Hitchhiker” (WHYL 72)
- Metaphor Exercise – Students make two piles of index cards using abstract/concrete words describing walk. Combine cards randomly to make metaphors.
- Share on board and discuss: which are most effective?

Homework
- Read for metaphor/simile: John Calderazzo, “Running Xian” (IS 168-71) and Kitchen, “Son Skating” (WHYL 17), Frankel, “Waking Up in the Morning” (WHYL 147)
- Extend your favorite food description to 3-5 pages. Add 10 metaphors while doing so.

Day 3: Memory, Setting, Diction

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Morning Journal
- Warm-up: In pairs, trade homework assignments and read, circling all metaphors/similes.
- Tools of the Trade: Memory; Setting & Mood
  - Play clips from ‘Winter Wonderland’; “I wish it would rain” (Temptations); “Bright Sunshiny Day.”
  - Discuss: how does writing about weather
- Writing Prompt - Write about a time you remember being outdoors when it was especially dry, wet, cold, or cloudy.
Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- “I Remember” Exercise’
  - Read Joe Brainard excerpts (Handout). Students make a list of ‘I remember’ details from favorite or least favorite summers they remember.
  - Students share with a partner. Partner picks one detail to serve as the first sentence to their own passage, writing on what scene/memory it brings to mind.
- Read passages back to partners. Discuss – author’s control (or lack of) over reader.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)

- Students share one exercise with class.
- Tools of the Trade: Diction
  - In pairs, students each consider a single panel on a paint sample and write a list of their most accurate names.
  - Students then guess which shade their partner picked.
  - Discuss: names; accuracy; word choice and mood.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)

- Introduction to Workshop: Model Workshop
  - How to respond to your peer’s writing?
  - Explain: reading like a writer.
  - Explain workshop procedures and etiquette.
- Model Workshop of Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky”

Homework

- Read - Norris, “Rain” (IS 221-2), Haines, “Snow” (IS 107-9) focusing on setting/mood
- Part 2 – Revise and/or extend one exercise for workshop (five senses (food), doorway description, weather/setting, I remember).

Day 4: Workshop and Conferences

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)

- Morning Journal
  - Turn in Creative Nonfiction piece to copy for workshop.
- Loofa Lob (from here on, I’ll refer to morning discussions of homework readings by this term) – Discuss Norris and Haines stories.
  - How did setting affect the mood of these stories? More, how did these authors remember so much detail?
- Read Sedaris – “Tricked”
  - Tools: Memory vs. Reflection

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- Tools: Reflection continued
  - Prompts: Write a story about a time when you did something that was selfish or bratty and how you feel about it now; or write about a unique personal/family holiday ritual and a time it went wrong.
Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
- Workshop #1
  o Review of workshop etiquette and process.
  o In pairs (switch twice), students workshop piece and create lists of suggestions for each author.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
- Individual Student Conferences about CNF.
- Consider workshop comments and write a reflection letter.
- Students complete one final CNF prompt (Handout)
- If time: finish illustrating acrostic name poems and hang; work on word bank/favorite word board.

Homework
- Read *House on Mango Street* (1-16). Write a diary entry in the voice of Esperanza detailing three things that happened to you in opening chapters and why they are important. Particularly, explain the quote: “You are a red balloon tied to an anchor.” (p 9)

Day 5: Introducing Fiction and Narrative

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Warm-up – Story Line
- Loofa Lob – Why is *House on Mango Street* fiction? How is it similar to/different than the nonfiction we’ve been reading?
- Discuss: Memory/Observation
  o Elements of Fiction: Honesty/Truth in nonfiction and fiction. What makes a story fictional? What makes it honest? What makes it believable?
  o Elements of Narrative: Conflict, Crisis, Resolution, Time.
    - Discuss: Reading as a critic vs. Reading as a writer
- Checkmark graph: Draw (Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Denouement)
  o Fill graph in as a group using plot details from Cinderella.
- Read “Powder” by Tobias Wolff.
  o Plot the major events of the story on the board.
  o Characters, setting, scenario? Conflict, climax, resolution? Honesty? What makes the father character believable?

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
- Elements of Narrative cont. - Plot & Conflict
  o Discuss 4 types of Conflict: Human v Human, Human v Self, Human vs. Society, and Human v Fate
  o List out common stories on board and have students write 1-sentence plot summaries. (Pinocchio, Wizard of Oz, Harry Potter, The 3 Little Pigs)
- Writing Exercise: Students write their own one sentence plots and share one favorite.
- Define scene: Dialogue, Action, Description
Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
- Plot and Conflict continued
  - Writing Exercise: Write a revision of Cindarella on a postcard (of the student’s own making). Notice that if the story is going manage a conflict, crisis, and resolution in this small space, the conflict must be introduced immediately.
  - Discuss story vs. plot.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
- Finish earlier exercises. If time, develop one plot sentence into a full scene.

Day 6: Building Character

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Warm up: Hot potato story line.
- Popcorn Reading - (17-34) in HOMS.
- Loofa Lob: what do we know about Esperanza and why? How does author 'show' us? What do we want to know?
- Writing Exercise: Perspective
  - Esperanza stumbles upon a stray animal while riding through town on the bicycle that she shares. What do you think she would do?
  - Students write a description of Esperanza’s response to this situation in her voice. It can be written immediately following the discovery of this animal or a few days/weeks after this event. Before writing your description, circle 3 of her characteristics that you think would most likely be displayed in this situation and be sure to demonstrate them in her response.
  - Demonstrate at least 3 character traits that she possesses.
  - Discuss. Do anyone’s ideas differ? Why? What’s authentic/not about our responses?
  - Point: the characters they create will be convincing because they have a distinct personality which they, as writers, must "honor" throughout their story.

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
- Making a Character
  - Remember, the best characters are inspired by experience! Fiction must be believable!
  - Discuss: What makes a developed character (motivation, personality, change, consistency) and what makes them surprising?
- Read about writing a character sketch. (Handout)
- Writing Exercise
  - Create three brief (5-10 sentence) character sketches.
  - Share favorite sketches with class.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
- Read “Raymond’s Run” by Toni Cade Bambara and discuss details author includes about each character and their significance.
- Discuss: how to show these character traits through action, dialogue, description.
• Students write and illustrate wanted ads for one character they’ve invented considering ways to develop that character.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
• Class Activity: “Character Sketches” in Black Box Theater
  o Meet WRIT B in theater.
  o Give students one scenario at a time. In groups of 2 or 3, students must act out that scenario each as their respective character.
  o Finally, students reveal wanted ad posters and discuss.

Homework
• Write a 2 page opening to a story using a character you invented today focusing on development and conflicting traits.
• Finish reading “Raymond’s Run” underlining parts that particularly show Squeaky’s character.

Day 7: Writers in Dialogue

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
• Warm-up – Freewrite in journal (2 minutes, then 2 minutes, then 1 minute w/breaks)
• Collect character scene homework
• Loofah lob – “Raymond’s Run,” Character development and narrator’s voice.
• Discuss: How to “show not tell” using dialogue?
  o What characters say and don’t say; how much they say; diction; dialogue and relationships.
• Read (35-36) and discuss dialogue. What does this scene say about Esperanza? Does it line up with her character traits as we discussed them yesterday?

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
• Discuss: how do you write a script? stage directions?
• Writing exercise: Distribute Diane Arbus portraits
  o In pairs, students write a quick 5-10 sentence summary of the scenario in the scene. Who are the characters, what is their relationship, where, when.
  o Then each student picks one character from the scene. Students write a scene of just dialogue based on the photos. No talking, just passing the dialogue back and forth.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
• Review: What makes dialogue believable?
• Tools of Fiction – Speech patterns.
  o Slang, grammar, stutter, accent, short/long winded, big/small words, etc.
  o How might an accurate speech pattern help develop a character?
  o What is Esperanza’s speech pattern like? What does it tell us? Squeaky? (Raymond’s Run)
• Read: “August Light” (Handout)
• Writing Exercise: Back in pairs, students choose one positive and one negative card from two separate piles. Then, they use those traits to create a single character who enters the scenes they began earlier.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
• Students complete scripts and rehearse for dramatic reading.
• Students share extended scripts.
• If time: students take out one CNF exercise and extend.

Homework
• Read HOMS pages 38-45.
• Extend scene from previous night, 2 more pages, including at least 10 lines of dialogue. Introduce story’s conflict.

Day 8: Playing with Plot

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
• Warm-up: Reflection: how to make dialogue believable?
• Loofah lob: Discuss plot of Mango street up until now. Rising Action, character development.
• Writer’s Toolbox: Rising & Falling Action
  o How to keep action rising?
  o Discuss logical order.
  o Brainstorm ideas to extend conflict.
• Little Mermaid Sheet
  o Discuss rising action and the many “small” conflicts that delay the climax.

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
• Read “Drifts” (original writing based on Bottomy’s “Currents”) and discuss: how does it change the “rules” of a traditional story? What effect does telling the story backwards have?
• Writing Exercise: Students choose a card at random from pile. Card contains the climax (first) and the conflict (second).
• Students write one-page backwards stories filling in the logical progression of events to get from climax back to conflict.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
• Students finish backwards stories. Share and discuss.
• Writer’s Tools: Transitions
  o How do you transition between different scenes or events? (review ways to start a story – mid-action, mid-dialogue, description of setting, etc.)
• Read: “Something Borrowed” by Joyce Sweeney
  o Students flag transitions in story. Discuss.
Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
- Writing Exercise: Students take out “big” short story and read through looking for three places they can add some sort of transition.
- On a separate sheet, students write transitions.

Homework
- Write a 1 page scene that twists the plot in some way and keeps the action rising. No resolution yet.
- Choose one scene or part (2 page max) from big story to prepare for workshop.

Day 9: Point of View / Fiction Workshop

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Warm-up: Free write journal
  - Students turn in Workshop fiction
- Loofa Lob: How is narrator’s voice different in HOMS vs “Something Old, Something New”
- Tools of Fiction: Point of View/Perspective
  - How does the narrator’s perspective change the story?
  - Review: Three kinds of POV, 1st, 2nd, 3rd (close vs. omniscient)
- Read Frankenstein excerpts (from ch 5 and ch 11) and discuss differences in narrator’s point of view.

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
- In pairs, students discuss a photograph of unexpected urban wildlife, and then write about it from three different points of view. Each POV should be about a paragraph in length. After they finish writing, groups can share their favorite POV with the rest of the class.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
- In pairs, students workshop a scene from “big” short story (swap twice).
- Students have one minute each to fill their partner in on their story, express their concerns.
- Students swap and read/comment on stories for 10 minutes. Then 10 minutes to fill out end-comments worksheet and discuss.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
- Student Conferences about ‘big’ short story.
- In the meantime: Write workshop letters. Continue your story! Or finish your prompt from this morning.
- Finish one CNF piece!
- Decorate the room! (favorite words, favorite quotes, other projects).
Homework

- Considering your workshop comments, our conference, and the story up until now. Write a 2 page scene bringing the story to a climax. You may need to pre-write/brainstorm to decide what the best climax for your conflict might be.

Day 10: Author's Voice / Introducing Poetry

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)

- Quote: “Good writer’s borrow, great writer’s steal.”
- Tools: Author’s Voice
  - Discuss: How tone, attitude, and diction contribute to an author’s characteristic style
  - Discuss Cisneros’s voice in HOMS
- Read: Excerpt from “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” (Handout)
- Group work: In pairs students work to determine at least three elements of Harry Potter that are unique to J.K. Rowling’s voice.

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- Writing: Scenes from a Fantasy Story
  - Prompt: Students choose from a list of well-known first lines (Handout). (i.e., “It was a dark and dreary night.”)
  - Students write one-page fantasy stories using three voice elements from J.K. Rowling.
  - Students share their writing with a partner.
- Discuss: As a group, decide why writer’s “steal” from each other. How can we grow as writers by letting our original voices be influenced by those books and authors we love?

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)

- Brainstorm: What is poetry? Write a list on board.
- Students read through WHYL for 10 minutes quietly thinking about their own personal taste. Students then write a one sentence personal definition for poetry. Share.
  - Continue listing poetic techniques/terms on board.

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)

- Read Williams, “This Is Just to Say” and Koch, “Variations on a Theme By William Carlos Williams” (Handout)
- Students write their own imitations of “This Is Just to Say” and share. Discuss: what elements did we “steal” from Williams? And how did we make his style our own?
Day 11: (Further) Introducing Poetry!

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)

- Sound Warm Up: Write down I, He, Say, Cat, No (15 minutes)
  - Have them write all rhyming words they can for 30 seconds each
  - Have them write three lines of poetry, minimum 7 words each using only those words (cheat a little if they have to!)
- Writer’s Toolbox: Sound
  - Pass around poetic terms handout.
  - Quote: “Free verse is like playing tennis without a net.”
  - Sources: Imitation and now sound.
  - What is end rhyme? What is near rhyme?
  - Poet’s Tools: Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance
- Read: Frost, “The Road Not Taken” (Handout)
  - Class identifies rhyme scheme. Discuss: what does end rhyme add to poem?
- Read in WHYL: Abunimah, “Regrets on the Way to an Airport” (149; exact end rhyme); Vernon, “Barns Collapsing” (104; consonance, alliteration); Browne, “Stranded” (78; metaphor, assonance, near rhyme); Sears, “Silence” (61; alliteration towards the end”)
  - Questions: what does more or less near rhyme do to a poem?
- Pass around Free Verse Prompts (Handout); students pick one and write a 10 line poem using at least one kind of near rhyme

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- Rahsaan’s Hip Hop Exercise
- Birth of contemporary rap (handout)
  - Students analyze photograph of construction near South Bronx Expressway
- Elements of Hip Hop – Graffit, Breakdancing, Deejaying, Rapping
- Watch: Afrika Bambaata – “Planet Rock” (youtube)
- Students choose and “graffiti” their own hip hop names on paper

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)

- Warm up: Rhyme circle. Learning the beat (16 bars in 4/4 time).
- In pairs, students write their own 16 bar hip hop poems.
- Students perform.
- Discuss: How is it different to work in a form than in free verse? End rhyme vs. near rhyme?

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)

- Students complete free verse prompts from the morning. Share with class.
- Students begin working on “big” short stories.

Homework

- Students revise, type or extend final copy of “big” short story for portfolio.
Day 12: Haiku / Translation

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)

- Warm up – Rhyme Circle
- Transition: Line/Enjambment, another “net” in free verse
  - Discuss tools: Line breaks and line length
- Read in WHYL: Shulman, “Orange Juice” (3; varied line lengths, enjambment); McCauley, “Wren” (4; enjambment); Sirowitz (12; Longer lines. Endstopped); Spoon (69, all enjambed)
  - Discuss: why does that work for this poem? does it affect the poems feel?
- Whitman vs. Hughes (Handout)
  - Read Whitman, “I Hear America Singing” and Hughes, “I, Too, Sing America”
  - How does enjambment and line length, here, add to the tone of each?
- Williams Lineation Exercise
  - Read Williams, “To a Poor Old Woman” in prose form (Handout)
  - Students write the poem two different ways, considering enjambment and line length.
  - THEN, hand out actual poem (Handout). Read and discuss differences between their versions and his. How does line affect a poem?

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)

- Read Bishop “The Fish” and then Silverstein, “Unfair” (Handout)
  - Students write a paragraph describing an imaginary pet a “landlord” wouldn’t allow in the apt focusing on sound and concrete details.
- Students lineate “pet” paragraph
- Students swap their lineated versions with a partner and discuss.

Session 3 (12:30-1:30)

- Tools: Stanza
  - Stanza length; open vs. closed.
- Read: Rutsala, “Other Lives” (70; Quatrain); Meyers, “Cannon Beach” (154; couplets); Overfield (44; closed sestets); Funge, “Valencia Street” (168; no stanza breaks!)
  - Discuss: difference between different stanzas. Tone, pace, etc.
- Quickly Introduce Ode
  - Students read Mora, “Ode to Dandelions” and Simic, “Miracle Glass Co.”
  - Discuss: What is an ode?

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)

- Students brainstorm details for their own odes, based on a prompt (ode to: a color, a season, or a favorite time of day).
- Students write odes with five stanzas, considering stanza length.
- Students share work and discuss.

Homework

- Students type, edit, or extend 4 pages of creative nonfiction for final portfolio.
Day 13: Haiku

Session 1 (8:45-10:20)
- Warm up – Free verse journal prompt
  - Collect Nonfiction work
  - Present class ode poster to Rahsaan (PA appreciation day)
- Tools: Diction in poetry
  - Why does it matter more?
- Introduce Haiku
  - Write Haiku examples on board
    - Students write down and consider: what do they all have in common?
  - Discuss basic elements of Haiku
- Haiku Warm-ups (Handout)
  - Seasonal word activity
  - Students write two word poems
  - Students write three-word sandwich poems
  - Students punctuate blank haikus
    - Write poems on board and take suggestions from students. Discuss. How does changing punctuation affect meaning in haiku?

Session 2 (10:30-11:30)
- Class haiku, final warm-up
  - First line: “Halloween night—“
  - Students brainstorm for 3 minutes, writing out as many phrases that come to mind as possible
  - Make list on board. Students write their own haiku using two details from board
    - Examples: Halloween night--/the giant mouse/shadow
- Students brainstorm details for three different haiku themes (moon, rain, night, etc.)
- Students write three haiku and share.

Session 3
- Introduce Translation
- Read: WHYL (62-63), Reid, “What Gets Lost”
  - Quote: “Lost in Translation”
- Writing Exercise
  - Students consider literal translation of Wang Wei’s “Deer Park” (Handout)
  - Students write their own versions of the poems, consider word choice, word order, punctuation, tone.

Session 4
- Students read their translations. Discuss differences.
- Students read translations of the same poem selected from “19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei” (Handout).
- Hand out portfolio requirements and discuss.
Homework
- Write one poem focusing on diction and punctuation using prompt sheet (Handout).
- Begin selecting work for portfolio.

**Day 14: Post Assessment and Poetry Wrap Up**

**Session 1 (8:45-10:20)**
- Warm up journals
- Students read their poems from previous night.
- Review for Post Assessment: Concrete vs. Abstract Description; Metaphor; POV/Perspective; Dialogue and Narrator’s Voice.

**Session 2 (10:30-11:30)**
- Post Assessment

**Session 3 (12:30-1:30)**
- Wrap up: Poetry. Discuss what students have learned about poetry.
- Students read poem “Where Do Poems Hide” (Handout)
- Students write their own list poems using example as a guide.
- Read student poems. Discuss: where does poetry hide?

**Session 4 (1:40-2:30)**
- Administer Student Program Evaluations (SPEs).
- Students organize portfolios.

Homework
- Complete course reflection (Handout)
- Finish organizing portfolios.
- Revise and/or retype selected poems (optional)

**Day 15: WRAP-UP & OPEN HOUSE**

**Session 1 (8:45-10:20)**
- Students share reflection letters with class
  - How can we move forward and revise our work?
- Closing remarks of course
- Students organize and illustrate portfolios.

**Session 2 (10:30-11:30)**
- Invention Convention
- Performance Workshop
- Students Rehearse for Reading
Session 3 (12:30-1:30)
  • 40 Words Poetry Exercise
  • Blues Poetry Exercise

Session 4 (1:40-2:30)
  • Selected Poetry Exercises Cont.
    o Coin Toss Group Poems
    o Exquisite Corpse Poems
  • Class writes an Encomium to Writing / Reading
  • Set up classroom for parents.

Final (2:30-3:00)
  • Students read (3 minutes each) with parents present.