ENGL-UA 9201.SY1
Reading as a Writer
Fall 2018

Instructor Information

● Dr. Anna Westbrook
● Consultation by appointment
● aw93@nyu.edu (Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails)

Course Information

● Pre-Requisite: None
● Monday: 3:30 – 6:30pm

Consider a hypothetical Venn diagram of reading and writing; ‘Reading as a Writer’ situates itself in the intersectional middle. In this class we will interrogate reading as an activity that is seldom passive or complacent. We consider modes of reading and the various critical postures we assume whilst reading, whilst limning the relationship between reader/writer for all its fecundity.

Writing, as a way to “make sense” of reading, and what moves us to respond in kind, is integral to this course. We put ourselves into experimental dyads and constellations with other writer/readers, tracing these palimpsest telegraphs across centuries and hemispheres. ‘Reading as a Writer’ explores the diaristic impulse, love letters, language, ecologies and the non-human, queer readings, affect, visual and textual collisions, autofiction, paratexts, marginalia, intertexts, subjectivity and the lyric essay, and necromances and erotic potentials with dead authors.

Here is the space to launch your wildest speculative brainchildren from a strong theoretical foundation where creative and critical practice are enmeshed.

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

It is a course expectation that you have done the required reading and have prepared sufficiently to discuss them in class.

All required materials will be uploaded to CLASSES in the RESOURCES folder.
Course Overview and Goals

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Articulate a clear understanding of modes of reading and their literary, critical, and historical contexts.
- Strengthen creative and critical writing via regular assignments with substantial opportunity for feedback and critique.
- Deepen knowledge of the landscape and culture of Australian writing situated within a global reading list.
- Participate in poiesis “making” exercises that interleave critical theory with creative practice.
- Demonstrate an engagement with complex cultural and literary theory through deep analysis of the contemporary and historic roles of reader and writer.

Course Requirements

Class Participation, including Weekly Directed Experiments

Weekly Directed Experiments: (250-500 words per week)

These will often (but not always) be initiated from an In-Class Exercise Prompt. You are expected to then polish and refine at home and post these by Sunday 3:30pm, the day prior to class. Whilst they are recognised as experimental drafts, please make sure to edit for grammar, spelling, and general coherency. We will often begin the class by sharing these aloud to recap the theme of the last week.

Class Prep:

Everyone comes to class with all texts/materials in hand, read, and annotated. For each class, have at least 2 specific passages identified that you wish to share, discuss, comment upon, or question. In any given class, you will be asked to specify, share, and present your passage[s].

Mid-Term Analytic Essay (1500 words)

A focused, intense engagement with critical terms, writerly gambits, and reading methods. Essay prompts will be provided in class in Week 4.

Final Project: Three Tracks

A. Long Analytic Essay (4000 words): In which students mobilize syllabus materials to respond to key analytic/conceptual/formal/historical questions raised by the course & conversation. Your essay question must be submitted in Week 11 for approval. Your essay may well emerge out of one (or more) of your postings or experiments.

B. Research Paper (4000 words): Designed in concert with instructor and class, arising from the syllabus and pre-existing or emerging questions and areas of interest. Your subject of research must be submitted in Week 11 for approval.
C. Made Thing/Hybrid Composition: You propose it, and we’ll see if we can help you dispose it. Required: intellectual and artistic ambition, equivalent to tracks A and B. Otherwise format and form open. A one paragraph pitch must be submitted in Week 11 for approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation Including Weekly Directed Experiments</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Analytic Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3:30pm, Mon 22 Oct (Wk 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3:30pm, Mon 10 Dec (Wk 15)</td>
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</tbody>
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For this course, your total numerical score, calculated from the components listed above, is converted to a letter grade without rounding.

Extra credit: Site policy does not allow grading of work outside of the assignments included in the syllabus. The final grade will only be calculated from the assessment components listed here and no other work, whether additional or substituted, is permitted.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Letter Grades**

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Explanation of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Work is unfinished or unsubmitted.</td>
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</table>
Grade Conversions

For this course your total numerical score, calculated from the components listed above, correspond to the following letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 to &lt; 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 to &lt; 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 to &lt; 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 to &lt; 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 to &lt; 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74 to &lt; 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 to &lt; 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 to &lt; 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65 to &lt; 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 to &lt; 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Schedule

Week 1: 3-Sep-18
Introduction: Orientations in Reading & Writing
To be read before first class meeting:
Required Reading:
- ‘The Library as Home’ – Alberto Manguel (in A Reader on Reading, Yale University Press, 2010)

Week 2: 10-Sep-18
The Diaristic Impulse, or, Whose Record?
Required reading:
- Excerpt from The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas – Gertrude Stein (Harcourt, 1933)
- ‘Goodbye to All That’ – Joan Didion (in Slouching Towards Bethlehem, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1968)
- Excerpt from Just Kids – Patti Smith (Bloomsbury, 2010)

Week 3: 17-Sep-18
Writing as Ludic Experiment
Required reading:
- Excerpt from Eunoia - Christian Bök (Canongate, 2009)
- ‘To Scratch, Claw, or Grope Clumsily or Frantically’ – Roxanne Gay (in Bad Feminist, Corsair, 2014)
- Excerpt from Codex Seraphinianus – Luigi Serafini (Franco Maria Ricci, 1981)

Week 4: 24-Sep-18
The Reading Imperative
Required reading:
- ‘On Reading’ – Siri Hustvedt (in Living, Thinking, Looking, Sceptre, 2012)
• ‘Theory as Liberatory Practice’ – bell hooks (in Teaching to Transgress, Routledge, 1994)
• ‘To the Reader at Parting’ – Edward Hirsch (in How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry, Mariner, 1999)

Week 5: 5-Oct-18
MAKE-UP DAY FOR LABOUR DAY PUBLIC HOLIDAY (NO CLASS ON MON 1 OCT)

Numinous Epistles, or, ‘Every Letter is a Love Letter’

Required reading:

• Excerpt from Why I Love Barthes – Alain Robbe-Grillet (Polity Press, 2011)
• Excerpt from My Emily Dickinson – Susan Howe (New Directions, 2007)
• Excerpt from When Breath Becomes Air – Paul Kalanithi (Vintage, 2017)

Week 6: 8-Oct-18

Reading as an Annotator: Paratexts, Marginalia, Intertexts

Required reading:

• Excerpt from A Lover’s Discourse – Roland Barthes (Vintage, 2002)
• Excerpt from Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books - from H. J. Jackson, (Yale University Press, 2002)
• Excerpt from Working Hot – Mary Fallon (Sybylla, 1989)
• ‘Octet’ – David Foster Wallace (in Brief Interviews with Hideous Men, Little, Brown, 1999)

Week 7: 15 – 19 Oct

SEMESTER BREAK – No Class

Week 8: 22-Oct-18

Language and Ecologies

Required reading:

• ‘The Desert is a State of Mind Cast Over the Earth’ – Michael Marder (available online)
• Excerpt from The Plant Contract: Art’s Return to Vegetal Life – Prudence Gibson (Brill, 2018)
• Excerpt from *The Spell of the Sensuous* – David Abram (Vintage, 2017)
• Excerpt from *In Catastrophic Times* – Isabelle Stengers (available online)

**Week 9: 29-Oct-18**

**Touching Feelings**

**Required reading:**

• Excerpt from *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race* – Reni Eddo-Lodge (Bloomsbury, 2017)
• Excerpt from *H is for Hawk* – Helen Macdonald (Vintage, 2014)

**Week 10: 5-Nov-18**

**Visual/Textual Intersections**

**Required reading:**

• Excerpt from *The Australian Ugliness* – Robin Boyd (Text, 2010)
• Excerpt from *Citizen* – Claudia Rankine (Graywolf, 2014)
• Excerpt from *Rawshock* – Toby Fitch (Puncher and Wattmann, 2012)
• Excerpt from *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* – Ocean Vuong (Copper Canyon, 2016)

**Week 11: 12-Nov-18**

**Autofictions / Authorship and Late Capitalism**

**Required reading:**

• Excerpt from *Between the World and Me* – Ta-Nehisi Coates (Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
• Excerpt from *The Hate Race* – Maxine Beneba Clarke (Hachette, 2016)
• ‘On the Subject of Artists Talking About Art’ – Shelia Heti (available online)
• ‘The Trash Heap Has Spoken’ – Carmen Maria Machado (available online)

**Week 12: 19-Nov-18**

**Lyric/Essay? Subjectivity, Collectivity, Composition**

**Required reading:**

• ‘Looking Past White Australia and White Feminism’ – Celeste Liddle (New Matilda, 2016)
• ‘Poetry is Not a Luxury’ – Audre Lorde (in Sister Outsider, Crossing Press, 1984)

Week 13: 26-Nov-18
Reading Queerly
Required reading:
  • ‘Critically Queer’ – Judith Butler (in The Routledge Queer Studies Reader, 2013)
  • Excerpt from Gaysia – Benjamin Law (Black Inc. 2012)
  • Excerpt from The Argonauts – Maggie Nelson (Graywolf, 2015)
  • Excerpt from Living a Feminist Life – Sara Ahmed (Duke, 2017)

Week 14: 3-Dec-18
Troubleshooting & Editing
Work on final projects & read/prepare for final class!

Week 15: 10-Dec-18
Course Reflections
  • Readings supplied in class

Course Policies
Submission of Work
Assignments (excluding in-class presentations and exams) must be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm that the work has been successfully uploaded. In the unlikely event that a submission to Classes fails, students must immediately submit the work to the Academic Programs Coordinator via email before the original submission deadline accompanied by an explanation of the issue. All in-class presentations and exams must be completed during the scheduled class time. An assessment component is considered completed when the student has met all the terms for that assessment component as outlined by the instructor.

An assessment component completed after the deadline without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Work completed beyond five weekdays after the due date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work. Because failure to submit or fulfil any required assessment component will result in
failure of the course, it is crucial for students to complete every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. The class roster will be marked at the beginning of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

Faculty cannot excuse an absence. Requests for absences to be excused must be directed to the Academic Programs Coordinator. Students must provide appropriate documentation for their absence. In the case of illness, students must contact the Academic Programs Coordinator on the day of absence. They must provide medical documentation to Academic Programs Coordinator within three days of the absence in order to be medically excused. The note must include a medical judgement indicating that the student was unfit to attend class/work on the specific day or dates of the absence. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Academic Programs staff.

**Religious Observance**

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Classroom Expectations**
This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “…not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU Sydney we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

Provisions to Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Instructor Bio

Dr Anna Westbrook (Ph.D., University of New South Wales) published her debut novel Dark Fires Shall Burn in 2016. She has presented at many conferences and writer’s festivals around Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In 2015 she taught a sold out masterclass workshop for the Sydney Writers’ Festival. She was the recipient of the Sydney
University prize for Best Honours thesis in Gender & Cultural Studies, a Marrickville Council Arts Development Grant, the Australian Society of Authors Mentorship award, and has been shortlisted for the Australian Vogel. Anna has been anthologized in Herding Kites (Affirm Press) and online in The Disappearing, and published in harlequin creature (USA), The Bastille (France), Voiceworks, Slit, Scum, Cuttings, Pony, and WQ (Australia). She has lectured at NYU Sydney since 2012.