

# NYU Buenos Aires

## Introduction to Creative Writing

### CRWRI-UA 9815-001 (8554) / WRTNG-UG 9150-001 (12941)

#### Instructor Information

- Anna Kazumi Stahl, Ph.D.
- Office Location: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, NYUBA Academic Center
- Office Hours: before/after class & by appointment
- [aks5@nyu.edu](mailto:aks5@nyu.edu)

#### Course Information

This is an introductory course in creative writing: prose is predominant, all genres are accepted, and no previous experience or expertise is required. The thematic focus starts with the condition of being a foreigner abroad, outside of one's normal context or comfort zone. Most readings and writing prompts draw specifically on being in Buenos Aires and the Latin American region.

The course allows for flexibility in terms of genre: students may work with poetic discourse or with fiction, non-fiction, or autobiography. All work will be considered against the criteria of *literary* writing (this is not a "journaling" or "blogging" class).

A key aspiration from the start is for students to ground their writing in researched/corroborated details as well as effective, original word choice. Later technical objectives include developing plot and dramatic tension (suspense), using diverse narrative points-of-view, and working with voice and character.

Critical analysis of published texts and of each other's work are guided by the instructor to develop knowledge and application of literary critical criteria. The students give opinions and also intuitive sensations about the readings on issues like how a text is working, what strategies it is employing, and what effects it is able to produce thereby.

The writing assignments – ranging from spontaneous in-class jotting to longer projects meant to evolve over time – are designed to promote creative exploration and self-expression. Awareness of correct convention in English will be upheld; however, the key to this course is one's **active commitment to an on-going creative process via writing**. So, it is fine to turn in a draft or a work in progress to discuss in class, rather than feeling one should always have "perfect" finished products.

Over the semester, all the students build up a body of work. The final portfolios provide material evidence of that creative process as pursued over many weeks. In addition, one text (or set of poems) should be chosen to push into a more evolved and refined state, and should appear in the portfolio as if prepared for submission to a publisher.

- Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

- Piazzolla Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, NYUBA Academic Center
- **NOTE:** There will be several visits with local writers to discuss their work and creative process. This type of activity may be part of the “Lecture Series” that organizes academic events for more than one course at a time, usually Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. Reminders and/or any changes in scheduling will be announced in class and via NYUClasses messages to your NYU email. Please keep space available in your NYU email inbox. Thanks.

## Course Overview and Goals

### Desired Outcomes

- Engage in and carry on a creative process through writing.
- Explore being abroad, specifically in Buenos Aires
- Define/determine individual goals as a writer, including technical issues of language and style
- Learn how to critique (and to receive criticism) constructively
- Prepare a portfolio of original texts (approx. 6000 words total)

### Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Writing assignments	30%
Active critiques (of published authors + peers, written & orally)	30%
Final portfolio	20%
Class participation/attendance	20%

## Course Requirements

### Workshop action and interaction (30% + 30% + 20% of the final grade)

This class is a workshop – pro-active, candid collaboration receives the largest percentage of the grade. The grading/credit breakdown is: 50% weekly writing [creative work as well as critiques], 20% active collaboration in the workshop, 10% attendance/participation).

**Your Creative Writing:** Over the course of the semester students will produce at least 6000 words (approximately 25 pages) of original writing. Each student is required to present his/her writing to the workshop for constructive critiquing at least six (6) times in the 14-week semester. Presenting additional texts is voluntary as time permits (after others cued to present have done so or voluntarily passed). We will discuss how to critique constructively in class. To sum it up, “I like / don’t like it” is not enough to fit the bill.

**Assigned Reading:** Reading is a fuel/nourishment for the writer's task → not passive reception, but reading as entering into the texts pro-actively, with incisive curiosity, and a critical perhaps even meddlesome eye. To facilitate this mode, students will prepare their own commentary (subjective but *specific*) on the readings week-to-week. This is a key part of the creative process for writers. Your commitment to close incisive reading of texts we share in this course is reflected in your grade.

**“Response Paragraphs”:** In the case of the peer writing, all workshop members (except the author) are **required** to write and upload (to the Forum) short “response paragraphs” (usually 3 per week but depending on the number of students enrolled this number may vary – please refer to your instructor for definitive instructions for the semester or for any given week).

The “response paragraphs” deliver original unique commentary on specific aspects of the student texts assigned for that week.

We will begin carrying this out after the Add/Drop Period has passed. You will receive a calendar with the author names you're assigned to formulate and upload written feedback on by week.

Remember to refer to specific strong and weak points, citing the original and backing up your opinions with argumentation. Energetically avoid leaving it at “I liked it”/ “I didn't like it.”

NOTE: We may also treat the work of outside published authors (i.e. the assigned readings) via workshop-type critique. Students (on a rotating roster) will be assigned the role of leading discussion with their own previously prepared talking points.

## Final Portfolios (20%)

This is a curated selection representing the “body of work” you have created over the course of the semester. The final portfolio should include 8 prose pieces, 1 of which (your choice) reveals its evolution over 3 different stages of re-thinking/revision/evolution. (For poets, there will be a different set of guidelines, to be handed out in class sloe to the end of the semester.) There is also an author's questionnaire about creative process. The portfolio should be titled and its contents ordered for effect as a collection. (Response paragraphs are handed in as well, but separately.)

## Workshop Participation

- we discuss what the *text / writing* achieved or fell short on (not the author/writer)
- the author won't speak until the group is finished critiquing his/her text
- be respectfully frank & specific (being too nice or too general/abstract is not useful)
- critique with a text's potential next evolution in mind (avoid negativity)
- silence is not a friendly gesture in a creative writing workshop – passivity will be taken as evidence of not having prepared for class (if special issues prevent you from participating actively in class, see your instructor or the Asst Dir of Acad Programs)

## Conduct and Etiquette:

- This class is both about individual creativity and also about a group dynamic. Hence, we must be honest and clear while also appreciating the effort involved in presenting one's writing to an audience. Appropriate interaction means being

on time, staying through class, listening actively, speaking in turn, speaking civilly in all circumstances, and keeping your integrity (on-line as well as in person). Your grade will suffer if you are disruptive to the collective constructive dynamic. Finally, always respect, as any writer must, laws relating to libel, invasion of privacy, and defamation.

- Be respectful of your fellow workshop participants.
- When you discuss a text, talk about the text, not the author.
- Use a civil tone when discussing a peer's work.
- When critiquing, back up your opinion by arguing your point justifiably.
- Provide suggestions for how you might resolve a problem you've observed.

## Letter Grades

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

Letter Grade	Explanation of Grade
<b>A</b>	The student makes excellent use of the course material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her critiques. The student manifests a committed creative practice in writing as well as respect for the co-constructive of a productive workshop environment. The student's participation and work show strong evidence of critical thought, insightful creative experimentation, and attentive reading of all texts assigned.
<b>B</b>	The student shows completion of all the assignments and basic participation in all workshop activities. The student's production for the class shows some evidence of critical thought and of having read the assigned texts.
<b>C</b>	The student's work for class is only partially adequate to the workshop's assignments and dynamic. Responses to the published & peer texts show only a basic or partial analysis. The work fails to ground critical observations with argumentation and/or reference to text and is in need of improvement.
<b>D</b>	The student's work does not adequately meet the assignment criteria. The student's production is not conducive to the workshop dynamic.
<b>F</b>	The student's production is lacking and/or does not meet the assignment criteria.

## Grade Conversion

Letter Grade	Percent
A	100-94
A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-65
F	below 65

## Course Schedule

Week/ Sessions	Focus	Readings	Writings
1 Aug 28 & 30	A sense of place. A foreign place with its own codes & terms. Word-play. (→ in-class work with text examples & “free writing” exercises)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sylvia Molloy “Homage”</li> <li>Carolyn Forche “The Colonel”</li> <li>Roberto Arlt <i>Mad Toy</i> (extract).</li> <li>AT-HOME READING: Reflections on writing from: Alberto Fuguet &amp; Felisberto Hernández.</li> </ul>	Write a “list poem” using the model of Molloy’s “Homage.” (See instructions/definition below.) This poem should evoke a place you have come upon in Buenos Aires, whether this be a private room or a public venue or a bus, subway, park bench, etc. Pay attention to the specificity of each word chosen.  DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS BELOW:

			(Due by/before 5pm FRI to the NYUClasses FORUM): As in Molloy's text, a "list poem" starts with 15 to 25 nouns, then closes with a final short paragraph to explain what the list evokes, and finally is crowned with a pertinent original title.
2 Sept 4 & 6	Character vs Narrator. Insider & Outsider perspectives on a larger socio-historical context.	Julia Napier "Chase the Sun" & Pedro Mairal "Early This Morning"	(due 5pm FRI): Short sketches of a foreign individual's perspective on an event of local historical impact. (250-500 words.)
3 Sept 11 & 13	Memory. Life stories. Writing, memory, and the body.  VISITOR: Dafne Casoy Tuesday Sept 11.	Dafne Casoy <i>Maybe Tomorrow</i> (extracts)  The author will present this "auto-fiction" work on Wed Sept 12 <sup>th</sup> at exESMA Memory Site. AKS will be part of a panel discussing the work. All students welcome to attend.	(due 5pm FRI): Explore memories via "trigger" elements, for example, part of the body as in Casoy's book. Write 3 to 5 short memory sketches, based all on the same person's life. (The material can be autobiographical or not.) Approximately 750 words.
4 Sept 18 & 20	Experimental form in narrative fiction. Literary translation and its negotiations.  VISITOR: Chris Andrews. Tuesday Sept 18.	Roberto Bolaño, "Dance Card" & "Gómez Palacio"  Students should prepare at least 1 question per text to put to Chris Andrews.	(due 5pm FRI): Taking on Bolano's experimental form, write a text that portrays a family myth via a key symbolic object of your family. Approx 750 words.
5 Sept 27  (Sept 25 make-up Lecture Oct 23)	Language, identity, ad relations of power.	Ngugi wa Thiongo "Decolonizing the Mind" (extracts) + Poems by Liliana Ancalao	(due 5pm FRI): Brief sketches or poems that draw on a life lived inside more than one language. Or sketches/poems that explore heritage(s) as manifest in different ways of using language. Emphasize ways in which SOUNDS also convey meaning in these texts.
6 Oct 2 & 4	Cross-cultural navigations & autobiographical writing (monologues)	"The Genogram Game" (excerpts), selected texts on a multicultural family tree by Anna-Kazumi Stahl	(due 5pm FRI): Sketch 3 to 6 separate very short autobiographical monologues from at least 3 different

		with art from Karin Lanzoni, published in the “Mixed Race Issue” of the <i>Asian American Literary Review</i> (2013).	generations, based on your family tree or a real family tree you know well.
7 Oct 9 & 11	Creative Process.  Meeting with novelist David Leavitt at the <i>Festival Internacional de Literatura de Buenos Aires</i>  <a href="http://filba.org.ar/filba-internacional">http://filba.org.ar/filba-internacional</a>	David Leavitt Short stories: “The David Party” & “The Reversal Spell” Essay on writing: “Comforting Lessons in Arranging Life’s Details”	<b>(PLEASE NOTE – due MONDAY Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> by Noon, i.e. after your break – a literary piece based on your travels. 750 to 1000 words. Images allowed.)</b>
<b>FALL BREAK</b>			
8 Oct 23 & 25  Also: Tues 10/23 7pm Lecture	Poetry. Voice. Poetic speaker.  <b>Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Lecture:</b> Ariana Reines	<a href="#">Ariana Reines</a> <i>Coeur de Lion</i>	Students must prepare & post to the Forum at least 2 questions on Reines’ <i>Coeur de Lion</i> .
9 Oct 30 Nov 1	Memory and “Free” or “Automatic” Writing Practices	Joe Brainard excerpts from <i>I Remember</i>	(due 5pm FRI): Write a string of autobiographical “I remember’s” on Brainard’s model. Use the “free writing” or “automatic writing” techniques. Let the content determine the length.
10 Nov 6 & 8	Travel Writing.	Pico Iyer “Why We Travel” & “La Dolce Vita Meets the Hyper”	Prepare travelogue ideas. Explore & demonstrate ways to have images intersect/interplay with text.
11 Nov 13 & 15  Nov 13 & 15	The “Profession” of Literary Writing. The relationship between writer and editor – a case study (Carver & Lish).  GUEST SPEAKER: FILBA Director Gabriela Adamo. (At Eterna	2 versions of a Raymond Carver story: “What We Talk about When We Talk about Love” versus “Beginners”	(due 5pm FRI): This text may be an essay rather than a fiction piece → (a) an essay reflecting on the relationship between an author and the publishing industry (agent or publisher or editor) or (b) a fiction piece exploring how power rels can impact an

	Cadencia bookstore & literary café.)		individ's voice or freedom to express self.
12 Nov 20 & 22	Poetry & Ethnic-Cultural Intersections (José Watanabe, a Japanese-Peruvian/Indigeneous master poet)	Selected poems by José Watanabe (translated by Michelle Har-Kim)	(drafts due in class on THURS, uploads due 5pm FRI): 1 long poem or 3 short poems
13 Nov 27 & 29	Translation as creative writing.	Tamara Kamenzsain <i>Men &amp; Women Alone</i> (Cecilia Rossi's translation of Kamenzsain's poetry collection <i>Solos y solas</i> )	(to create/present in class THURS): bilingual/multilingual poems
14 Dec 4 & 6	Re-Writing. Back to Core Elements: Words, Voice, Core Concept.  VISIT: Novelist & publisher Luis Chitarroni	Susan Sontag "Directions: Write, Read, Re-Write. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 as Needed"	(to present in class TUES:) <b>deep</b> re-writes (not cosmetic editing) of any previously presented text
15	Final Portfolios due (See NYUBA final exam Schedule for exact date/time.)		

## Course Materials

### Required Textbooks & Materials

- Reading, as for any writer, is an edgy & creative endeavor: you will be asked often to write spot critiques and/or do creative free-writes based on the reading and to discuss in detail personal idiosyncratic observations about an assigned text.
- All your readings are uploaded to NYUClasses. Your instructor will orient you as to how this course uses NYUClasses. If in doubt, ask. ([aks5@nyu.edu](mailto:aks5@nyu.edu))
- **NOTE:** If a previously unscheduled visit (with an author or with a publishing house or newspaper) becomes possible, we will give preference to relevant local material over the photocopied texts on the schedule for that date. The relevant new reading will replace those previously scheduled texts. The new material will be distributed either via NYUClasses or in class as photocopies. Examples of such possible changes this semester are provided below:
  - Encounters with local writers (poets, novelists, short story writers).



- Encounters with cultural journalists / magazine writers.
  - Encounter with a literary agent.
  - Visit to the International Book Fair of Buenos Aires.
  - Visit to a publishing house or writers' association such as PEN.
  - Visit to a local site relevant to a literary work we have discussed.
- A bibliography of suggested works relevant to the course is uploaded to NYUClasses in a separate folder in Resources.

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Tardiness

- NYU's Global Programs (including NYU Buenos Aires) must adhere to a **strict policy regarding course attendance. No unexcused absences are permitted.**
- Each unexcused absence will be penalized by deducting 1% from the student's final course grade.
- Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies.
- Absences due to illness or mental health issues must be discussed with the Assistant Director for Academic Programs **within one week** of your return to class.
- A doctor's note excusing your absence is mandatory.
- **The date on the doctor's note must be the date of the missed class or exam**
- Being absent to any kind of examination must be informed at or before the time of said examination via email to the Assistant Director for Academic Programs.
- Requests to be excused for non-illness purposes must be discussed with your professors prior to the date(s) in question. (If you want the reasons of your absence to be treated confidentially and not shared with your professor, please contact the Assistant Director for Academic Programs.)
- If students have more than four unexcused absences, they will fail the course.
- Each class lasts one hour and half or two hours. **Missing one class represents one absence. For those courses that meet once a week (three-hour block), missing one class represents two absences.**
- Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.
- NYU BA also expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks) and to remain for the duration of the class. Three late arrivals or early departures (10 minutes after the starting time or before the ending time) will be considered one absence. Missing more than 20 minutes of a class will count as a full absence.
- Please note that for classes involving a **field trip or other external visit**, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive at an agreed meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.
- Make-up classes for Holidays are mandatory as regular scheduled classes.
- 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 Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

## Academic Accommodations

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their [website](#) for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](#).

## Late Submission of Work

- Late work should be uploaded to the on-line Forum designated for the course, but will lose 5 points (of 100) per day that it is behind schedule. Also, late work forfeits its place in the roster for getting critiqued by the group.
- In the case of work that is to be submitted as a hard copy during the semester, late work must be submitted in person and during office hours (Mon–Fri 9.30am–5pm) to the Assistant Director for Academic Programs or another NYUBA staff person, who will write the date and time of submission on the work in the presence of the student.
- Written work submitted after 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.
- **Please note:** Final Portfolios and any other end-of-semester work must be in on time (by the course’s Final Exam date); NYUBA has a “no-extension” policy on end-of-semester work. Final projects that are not in by the deadline receive zero credit.

## Academic Integrity

- Academic Integrity is intimately related to the teaching and learning process.
- When writing research papers, you need to keep in mind that plagiarism includes the use of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It also includes presenting and/or paraphrasing discourse or ideas from a published work (in print or on internet) without quotation marks and clear without acknowledgment of the original source.
- For formatting in your papers, refer to MLA guidelines.
- On matters regarding academic integrity, refer to the section “[Academic Standards and Discipline](#)” in the College of Arts and Science Bulletin and to “[Statement on Academic Integrity](#)” in NYU Expository Writing Program: Policies and Procedures.
- All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor.
- It is expected that the student follow the rules on academic honesty and intellectual integrity established by NYU University.

## Instructor Bio

Anna-Kazumi Stahl is a fiction writer and holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley. In 1995, she relocated to Argentina and began to experiment with writing in a foreign language. A collection of short stories resulted: *Catástrofes naturales* (*Natural Disasters*) [1997]. Her novel *Flores de un solo día* (*Flowers of a Single Day*) [2003] was a finalist for the prestigious Rómulo Gallegos prize and came out in Spain as well as Latin America, plus in translation in France and Italy. She is currently working on a new novel in Spanish. In Buenos Aires she is an active member of the Fulbright Board and of PEN Argentina. In addition to teaching she currently serves as the director of NYU's program in Buenos Aires.