

Creative Critical Writing Workshop

IML 585 | 2 units | SCS 107

Fall 2022

Thursdays, 10:00 – 12:50 a.m.

class website tk

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Office hours: by appt.



Creative Critical Writing Workshop is a craft-based exploration of techniques for writing about – or alongside, next to, or near – film, video, still images, sound, and other media forms. Moving beyond the conventions of scholarly writing, the course explores forms that have been variously dubbed creative nonfiction, the hybrid essay, memoir, the fourth genre, the lyric essay, the video essay, and poetic or vernacular criticism; and it considers writers who have contributed often stunning examples to the form, including Tina Campt, Ross Gay, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Maggie Nelson, Gary Indiana, Natalie Léger, Moyra Davey, and more. In the class, students will have the opportunity to read/view work by these authors, and others; to explore the rich history of alternative writing techniques; and to experience work that might be situated within the context of media studies but which deviates from the tradition of the thesis-driven scholarly article or book. However, the emphasis on the course will be on writing.

With regard to writing, participants are invited to experiment with their own process through a series of short exercises, and to craft at least one complete essay or media project for publication or exhibition/distribution. We will explore voice, language, form, structure, and rhythm. We'll be attentive to the ways in which we might adopt techniques of the cinematic arts – awareness of space, time, motion, framing, mise-en-scene, for example – in our writing and making. We will also explore “designed writing,” which plays with the boundary between reading and viewing, and we will explore media-rich writing and the video essay. The course will introduce a variety of new writing platforms that encourage the integration of images, sound, and video where appropriate.

With regard to structure, this is a writing workshop and during each session, we will write, discuss craft, analyze the work produced by members of the writing group, and respond to exercises, provocations, and writing prompts. Each participant will determine his/her goals for the workshop and tailor the assignments with these goals in mind. However, all participants should be prepared to write and to experiment. Questions? Write to me: hwillis@usc.edu