

Nancy Agabian

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Education

Columbia University, School of the Arts, Writing Division. M.F.A. in Nonfiction, 2003.

Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. B.A. in Studio Art, cum laude, 1990.

Selected Teaching Experience

New York University, Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Writing Cross-Culturally. Fall 2015.

Guided students in creating narratives that traverses identities, borders and cultures, as well as genres, as they explore and deepen their understanding of issues of form, craft and ethics. The class reads and discusses a variety of texts that center around various modes of culture crossing, such as travel and study abroad; immigration, exile, expatriation and repatriation; third culture and diaspora identities; and historical clashes and conflicts. Through an ongoing examination of structural and craft issues in the exemplary texts, students make creative decisions to help write three main assignments dealing with themes of Memory, Identity and Conflict. In order to write cross-culturally about personal experiences, students are encouraged to create texts along the spectrum between creative nonfiction and autobiographical fiction. Theoretical essays help students to consider how to ethically position themselves as writers observing cultures not (necessarily) their own in order to inform audiences and to challenge their own prejudices. Students are encouraged to experiment with form across genres to help illuminate experiences and confront perceptions.

Writing Nonfiction on Social Change. Spring 2016, Spring 2015, Spring 2014, Spring 2013.

Inspired by the events of 2011, this course explores how to write both politically and personally in times of conflict and of peace. Students learn to write essays and critiques in which they witness, report, advocate, question, and/or desire change. Through readings and discussions of writing by a variety of notable writers about 9/11 and its aftermath, the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter, students analyze how to use formal tools such as narration, observation, analysis, reflection, and argument. The class questions how writers bring a personal voice to writing a political essay and how reporters balance opinion and research to show the need for change. Students write a personal essay, a report from observation about a social or political movement, and an argument or advocacy piece on a public debate related to the previous assignments.

Oral Narratives. Fall 2012, Fall 2014.

Designed a creative writing class that incorporated oral tradition, storytelling and oral history as a way to inform written texts. Students write their own monologue – through improvisation, recording and transcription – in order to discover their own “oral tradition” before interviewing others to create a profile of one individual. The final project is to conduct oral history interviews of a group to inform a creative project of their choice: poetry, nonfiction, theater, multimedia, etc.

Writing Your Ancestry. Spring 2012, Spring 2011, Spring 2010, Spring 2009.

Developed an advanced creative nonfiction course on writing about cultural identity and family history. Taught students various nonfiction genres -- memoir, personal essay, process essay, and historical narrative -- as a means to explore in writing the dynamics of their family, past and present. Chose a variety of writers from multicultural backgrounds to encourage students to write on race, class, gender, mental health issues, and addiction. Covered research techniques such as interviewing, genealogical searches and using the NYU library and other NYC resources to aid students in uncovering information about their families.

CUNY Queens College, Flushing, New York:

Creative Nonfiction. Spring 2014, Spring 2013, Spring 2010, Fall 2009, Spring 2008, Spring 2006, Spring 2005, Fall 2004.

A creative writing class on memoir, personal essay and literary journalism. Assigned readings by various contemporary authors to help define each of these categories, to investigate the ways in which they overlap in terms of rhetorical approaches, and to identify the multitude of literary tactics (detail, dialogue, exposition, setting, metaphor, poetics, etc.) that nonfiction writers use to successfully join style and content. Helped students to develop their own versions of creative nonfiction through regular writing exercises inside and outside of class and peer feedback workshops.

Essay Writing. Spring 2012, Spring 2011, Fall 2010, Spring 2009, Fall 2008.

Community-based essay writing course, in which students write about themselves as members of communities, defining various identities and arguing current issues of their families, cultures and neighborhoods. Designed course to include readings on New York City, from the New York Times City Section, various blogs (“QC Voices”, “The Hell Gate Review”, “Mr. Beller’s Neighborhood”) and for students to write about the readings on a class blog. The last assignment is also a blog post: a substantially line-edited revision of a previous essay.

Creative Writing. Summer 2006, Summer 2005, Spring 2004.

An introductory creative writing workshop on poetry, playwriting and the short story. Collaboratively formed a supportive environment to encourage written and verbal expression. Developed and implemented creative writing exercises based on readings. Encouraged students to experiment with writing imaginatively and autobiographically. Guided members in learning how to give constructive feedback on their peers’ creative writing assignments.

Dance Writing, College Now. Spring 2008, Fall 2007, Summer 2006, Spring 2006, Fall 2005, Summer 2005, Spring 2005, Summer 2004.

A writing class linked with an intro dance class in a special program for college-bound high school students. Guided students through readings of dance journals, criticism, and physically-oriented literature in order to introduce them to dance history as well as to provide them with a verbal vocabulary to think and communicate about dance. Developed assignments with Te Perez, Dance Faculty, that allowed students to write about dance from the perspective of a dancer, as a critic and as a creative writer.

College Writing. Fall 2013, Spring 2013, Fall 2012 Spring 2012, Fall 2011, Spring 2011, Fall 2010, Spring 2010, Fall 2009, Fall 2008, Fall 2007, Fall 2005, Fall 2004, Fall 2003.

Required composition course. Led students through pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing processes to compose college-level essays. Covered topics of definition, reflection, narration, description, classification, persuasion and argumentation. Systematically taught steps of research papers – collecting, organizing, summarizing and citing. Assigned readings and facilitated class discussions to inform in-class and at-home journal writing. In Fall 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013, taught an honors level course on New York City in the Macaulay Honors College. Developed a special course on Cultural Identity for Fall 2011 and subsequently being taught by many instructors, including PhD candidates.

Community Writing Workshops:

New York:

Personal Prose, Heightening Stories, October 2012 – present

An ongoing community-oriented workshop for creative nonfiction and autobiographical fiction writers to work on stories that are both bravely personal and socially conscious. Held in a supportive environment, the weekly sessions will include exercises that help members to analyze contemporary fiction and nonfiction for inspiration, develop new material, give and receive constructive feedback in a group, and learn other skills as necessary. Each session links a craft issue with a thematic issue, e.g. character and gender inequality, point of view and racism, etc.

The Diversity Writing Project, Heightening Stories, October 2015 – April 2016

A prose writing workshop with a specific anti-racist framework. This workshop provides a forum to develop and polish work specifically about issues of identity relating to race, culture, and ethnicity using literary journal and magazine submissions as a timeline. Each week is dedicated to a step towards publishing work: setting goals, researching venues, reading in depth, refining your pitch/submission list, and crafting pitches & cover letters. Also, we read and discuss a recent excerpt from a journal or magazine that connects to content issues we are exploring, such as immigration, assimilation, repatriation, internalized oppression & privilege, historical legacies and losses, language & translation, mixed-race & cross-cultural identities, intersections with class & gender, etc.; writing prompts based on a related craft issue will help to develop new work. This will also be a critique workshop, with members bringing in the pieces they want to publish and receiving facilitated feedback from the group along with suggestions on where to publish. The final week is a submission session party, when members bring in their laptops and submit and pitch their work to their chosen publications online.

Our Side, Fall 2009, Summer 2009.

A writing course for immigrant and first generation writers to create personal essays and memoirs on emigration, homeland, assimilation, cultural identity and transnationalism. Used a cross-disciplinary approach with theater, visual art and languages of origin to develop and create texts, resulting in a group reading, blog, publication and annual writing retreat. Wrote grants to be sponsored by the Queens Council on the Arts with public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Poets & Writers' Inc. Worked with venues to sponsor and present readings at Topaz Arts Center and LaGuardia Performing Arts Center.

Yerevan, Armenia:

Physical Translating, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, Armenia. July 2010.

A body-based creative writing workshop for women. Members wrote about physical experiences -- in illness, disconnection, pain, joy, experimentation, athleticism, sexuality, reproduction, and otherwise. Short texts by a range of contemporary multicultural women writers, including Armenian writers, were read to stimulate discussion and prompt writing exercises. Creative movement/performance exercises were also incorporated to inspire writing. The series culminated in a reading of new work.

Women's Creative Writing Project, co-sponsored by CEC Artslink, Utopiana, and The Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, Armenia. Summer 2007.

A workshop for Armenian women to explore fiction and creative nonfiction writing. Topics explored: childhood memories and identity, family dynamics, issues of the body and sexuality, women and work, the personal as political. Collaboratively shaped an environment allowing women to be creative in voicing their various life experiences. The readings, from contemporary female authors of various backgrounds and nationalities, helped facilitate such consideration. Culminated in a reading at the performance venue The Club and a book, *Matnashoonch*.

Creative Nonfiction, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia. Spring 2007, Fall 2006.

A Fulbright Fellowship sponsored course. Introduced English department students raised in a post-Soviet educational system to forms of individual expression such as freewriting exercises, class discussion, response papers, and the workshop. Students read examples of contemporary creative nonfiction and wrote their own personal essays on topics of family, relationships, the generation gap and the Karabakh war, particularly relating to Armenian identity.

Los Angeles, California:

Life Stories, Writers at Work, Silverlake, CA. January – June, 1999.

A six-month weekly workshop in autobiographical writing. Selected contemporary memoirs, personal essays and autobiography for students to read and discuss. Led in-class writing exercises on detail, the components of character and setting, and structure.

Writing to Perform the Truth, Beyond Baroque, Venice, CA. 1994-99.

As artist-in-residence, created a series of 12-week workshops in which members wrote and performed material from their lives. Created a supportive space for exercises and group critique. Taught techniques of speech and movement to help students publicly present their texts.

Awards

PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially-Engaged Fiction. For the novel manuscript “The Fear of Large and Small Nations”. February, 2016.

Artist Peer Circle Leader. Selected to lead a professional development group for writers, sponsored by Queens Council on the Arts. Trained members in reflective questioning and facilitated group support and studio sessions. October 2013 – May 2015.

New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, re-grant program administered by the Queens Council on the Arts, Individual Artist's Grant, 2014.

Laundromat Project Create Change Professional Development Fellow. Selected to participate in a fellowship program for socially engaged artists. Summer 2013. Coordinated The Harlem Story Walk, a traveling storytelling event on Lenox Ave. September 21, 2013.

President's Award for Excellence in Teaching by an Adjunct. Queens College. March 2013.

Lambda Literary Foundation Emerging Writers Retreat. Selected as a participant in a competitive program for queer writers; Summer 2012.

Build Your Own Business professional development for writers, Queens Council on the Arts; Spring 2012.

New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, re-grant program administered by the Queens Council on the Arts, Individual Artist's Grant; 2012.

Macondo Writer's Workshop. Selected as a participant in Sandra Cisneros's workshop for writers of social justice in San Antonio, TX; 2011.

William Saroyan International Prize for Writing. Shortlisted for a nonfiction prize for *Me as her again*, May 2010.

Lambda Literary Award. Finalist in LGBT Nonfiction, for *Me as her again*, 2008.

New York State Council on the Arts, re-grant program administered by the Queens Council on the Arts, Individual Artist's Grant; 2009.

Queens Council on the Arts Individual Artist Initiative, 2008.

CEC Artslink Grant. Funding for a women's creative writing workshop in Armenia; 2007.

Fulbright Award A teaching/research fellowship to Armenia, 2006-07.

Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowship Full scholarship and stipend to attend Columbia University MFA Writing program, 2000-2003.

Publications

Books

Me as her again: True Stories of an Armenian Daughter. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2008.

(An)daratsutian Mej (In the [Un]Space). Co-written with Lara Aharonian and Shushan Avagyan. Yerevan: Women's Resource Center, 2007.

Princess Freak: Poetry and Performance Texts. Venice, CA: Beyond Baroque Books, 2000.

Anthologies

"Fighting Family". *Queered: What's to be done with Xcentric Art*. Yerevan: Queering Yerevan. December 2011.

A selection of thirteen poems. *Deviation: Anthology of Contemporary Armenian Literature*. Yerevan, Armenia: Inkagir, 2008.

"Memento" and introduction. *Matnashoonch: Armenian Women Write*. Geneva: Metis Press, 2007.

"Seeing Istanos," *Homelands: Women's Journeys Across Race, Place and Time*, ed. Patricia Tumang and Jenesha De Rivera. San Francisco: Seal Press, 2007.

"More Intimacy." *Gynomite: Fearless Feminist Porn*. Ed. Liz Belile. New Orleans, LA: New Mouth from the Dirty South, 2000. 44-49.

Birthmark: A bilingual anthology of Armenian-American poetry. Ed. Gourgen Arzoumanian. Glendale, CA: Open Letter Press, 1999. 132-152.

"Blanket," "Corrine Got Her Period." *Scream When You Burn: An Anthology from Caffeine Magazine*. Ed. Robert Cohen. Incommunicado Press: New York, 1998. 15-18.

"Ghosts and Bags." *Hers 2: Brilliant New Fiction by Lesbian Writers*. Ed. Terry Wolverton with Robert Drake, Winchester, MA: Faber & Faber, 1997.

"Sick Television." *Blood Whispers II: L.A. Writers on AIDS*. Ed. Terry Wolverton. Los Angeles: Silverton Books, 1994. 98-99.

Literary Journals

"Meeting the Man on the Street", *Kweli Journal*, December 2015.

"Exhaustion, Faith, or Madness", *Mr. Beller's Neighborhood*, December 2014.

"Armenia: Land of Bisexuality", *The Hye-Phen Magazine*, November 2014.

"America/Armenia/Angelina," *Perigee: Publication for the Arts*, Fall 2009, <<http://www.perigee-art.com/index-4.php>>, 15 Oct 2009.

"100% Armenian Blood: A Theoretical Performance," *Sunday Salon Magazine*, Spring 2009, <<http://www.sundaysalon.com/category/magazine/non-fiction>>, 3 Feb. 2009.

Excerpt from "The Fear of Large and Small Nations," *KGBBarLit*, 24 Apr. 2006.

"American School." *Ararat* Vol. XLIV, No. 182, Spring 2006.

Articles

"Amina Arraf: A 'Queered' Antidote," *The Brooklyn Rail*. March 2012.

"Tiny Retreats," *GetawayStyle*. <<http://getawaystyle.com>>. 6 January 2012.

"What is a Tiny House?" <<http://getawaystyle.com>>. 18 November 2011.

"Wonder Cabinet: The Artist in Academia," *Hyperallergic*. <<http://hyperallergic.com>>. 24 June 2010.

"Ungeziefer: Kafka at the Whitney Biennial," *Hyperallergic*. <<http://hyperallergic.com>>. 16 March 2010

"Waiting for Tables," *The Brooklyn Rail*. March 2010. pp. 3-6.

"Essay on Arlene Voski Avakian," *Forgotten Bread: First Generation Armenian American Writers*. Ed. David Kherdian. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2007.

"We Need Each Other: A Report on 'Water and Wine', a Performance in Armenia," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Spring/Summer 2006. Ed. Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner. New York: The Feminist Press of the CUNY Graduate Center, 2006.

Select Recent Readings and Presentations:

Excerpt from "The Fear of Large and Small Nations", "Strong Coffee" reading of Armenian American writers, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York, NY. 13, Apr 2016.

Excerpt from "The Fear of Large and Small Nations", "Diverse Women's Words" reading at the Astoria Bookshop, Astoria, NY. 23 Mar 2016.

Excerpt from "The Fear of Large and Small Nations," at "Third Space, Queens Writers Lab". Queens Council on the Arts, Astoria, NY. 8 May 2015.

Excerpt from "The Fear of Large and Small Nations," at "Jump Start Stories" workshop reading, Beyond Baroque Literary/Arts Center, Venice, CA. 16 Jan 2015.

"Exhaustion, Faith or Madness", at "Beyond 'Diversity': a conversation among artists, activists and neighbors about the dreams, divisions and direction of Jackson Heights. Sponsored by Poets & Writers Inc. and Queens Council on the Arts with public funding from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. Queens Pride House, Jackson Heights, Queens, NY. 25 Oct 2014.

"Protection from Secrets and Jokes" a prose reading for "When We Were Young" at Boundless Tales Reading Series, Waltz-Astoria. Astoria, Queens. 14 Nov 2013.

“The Harlem Story Walk: Generating Dialogue on Neighborhood Change”, co-presented with Bridget Bartolini. Cultural Organizing for Community Change Workshop, sponsored by Arts & Democracy. Brooklyn, NY. 10 Nov 2013.

Readings from *Me as her again* and “The Fear of Large and Small Nations”. Four Queens in Manhattan, a reading coordinated by Judith Sloan and EarSay. Cornelia Street Cafe. 19 Apr 2013.

“Prologue from 'The Fear of Large and Small Nations'”, a reading for “Cultural Consonance: a reading of cross cultural literature between Queens and the World”, organized and selected Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhran, Joseph O. Legaspi, Margarita Soto and Sweta Vikram as co-readers. Sponsored by Poets & Writers Inc. and Queens Council on the Arts with public funding from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. The Greater Astoria Historical Society. Astoria, NY. 30 June 2012.

“What I Can Take With Me on the Plane” a reading for QUILL (Queens in Love with Literature) at Queens Art Express. With Panagiota Lilikaki and Camila Santos. Sponsored by Queens Council on the Arts. Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Jamaica, Queens NY. 16 June 2012.

“Armenia: Land of Bisexuality”, a reading for “Ancestors: Queer Writers of Color”, sponsored by Lambda Literary Foundation as an off-site event of the AWP Conference. The Center on Halsted. Chicago, IL. 1 Mar 2012.

“Performing 'Victim' in Armenia”, a presentation for “Second Thoughts on the Memory Industry”, a symposium. New York Institute for the Humanities, New York University, 7 May 2011.

“The Intersections of Performance, Collage and Identity”, a talk presented at the “Kin: Mixed Genre of Color” panel. Associated Writing Programs Conference, Washington, DC., 5 Feb. 2011.

Reading from *Me as her again*. “An Evening of Armenian Discovery” with Cathy Salibian and Anais Salibian. Writers and Books, Rochester, NY. 9 Sept. 2010.

Poetry Reading with the Zephyr Poets. Gartal and the Armenian Poetry Project. Bowery Poetry Club, New York, 2 Apr 2010.

Presentation of “Waiting for Tables”. Arts in the One World. Brown University, Providence, RI. 19 Mar 2010.

Reading and discussion from *Me as her again* on the influence of the family on Armenian Writers. Conference on Armenian Writers. UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. 6 Nov. 2009.

Lambda Literary Awards Finalists' reading. LGBT Community Center, New York, NY. 5 May 2009.

"Waiting for Tables". Work-in-progress reading. Topaz Arts, Woodside, NY. 2 May 2009.

"Author's Series," with poet Gregory Djanikian, Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, NJ. Sponsored by the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Center and the Creative Writing Department. 22 April 2009.

Reading Series

Gartal

Coordinator. Quarterly reading series of Armenian-American and multicultural writers, Cornelia Street Café, Bowery Poetry Club, and other venues in NYC. December 2002-2010.