

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:

Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University, New York, NY.
Undergraduate Advanced Writing Courses:

Writing Nonfiction on Social Change. Spring 2013—2019. Spring 2021 (online).

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, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo, 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.

Writing Cross-Culturally. Fall 2015—2018. Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 (online).

Guided students in creating narratives that traverse 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.

Oral Narratives. Fall 2014, Fall 2012.

Designed a creative writing class that incorporated oral tradition, storytelling and oral history as a way to inform written texts. Students wrote 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 was 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 2009—12.

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.

Eugene Lang College, The New School, New York, NY

Writing the Essay. Fall 2018—Spring 2019

Developed and taught sequenced first-year writing courses titled “Family, Identity, and Justice” and “Social Justice in New York”. In the first, students wrote a personal essay on the formation of their politics, an analysis of some of the course texts looking through an intersectional lens, and a critique of a social justice movement, including perspectives that they developed in the first two essays. In the second, students analyzed NYC-centered literature for social justice themes, researched a local NYC social justice cause, and wrote an argument taking a stand on that cause.

CUNY Queens College, Flushing, New York.

Undergraduate Courses:

Creative Nonfiction. Fall 2004--Spring 2014.

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. Fall 2008--Spring 2012.

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. Spring 2004--Summer 2006.

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 for students to learn elements of craft among the genres. Encouraged students to experiment with writing imaginatively and autobiographically. Guided members in learning how to give constructive feedback on their peers' creative writing assignments.

College Writing. Fall 2003--Fall 2013.

Required composition course. Led students through pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing 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 comp course on New York City in the Macaulay Honors College. Developed a section on Cultural Identity for Fall 2011 subsequently taught by many instructors.

Community Writing Workshops:

Online:

Connected Rooms, Spring 2021

A series of generative writing workshops on issues of diaspora, homeland, war, trauma, gender and sexuality. Using texts by Armenian, SWANA, BIPOC and/or queer writers, writing prompts are developed for writers to respond to. This workshop evolved after the 2nd Nagorno-Karabakh War as a space where writers' gender and sexuality didn't have to be sidelined in writing personally and politically about the impact of war.

New York:

Creative Writing From Queer Resistance, Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, SoHo, New York. Funded by Poets & Writers. Oct-Dec 2018, March-June 2018, Oct-Dec 2017
This creative writing workshop offers a space for writers of all levels (from beginning to experienced) to support and learn from each other in writing for social justice. Workshop participants read works by LGBT and queer authors from various time periods, communities, and movements in order to take inspiration from their content and craft. Selected texts from authors James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Sarah Schulman, Gil Cuadros, David Wojnarowicz, Ryka Aoki, Roxane Gay -- and others to be determined by the interests of the group -- to create new narratives to celebrate and empower our communities. Lead group in discussions and interactive exercises intended to generate short personal essays, short stories, and/or hybrid texts that challenge, resist, and subvert homophobia, transphobia, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, etc., at this political and cultural moment. Facilitated a public reading of new work by workshop members at the museum.

Personal Prose and Jumpstart Your Writing, Heightening Stories, Jackson Heights, Queens, NY, October 2012–December 2017.

Design and promote Heightening Stories – independent creative nonfiction and autobiographical fiction workshops focused on social issues as well as craft. Held in a supportive environment online and in the instructor's home, the weekly sessions 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 to the group. Each

session links a craft issue with a thematic issue, e.g. character and gender inequality, point of view and racism, etc., based on the members' interests, assets and needs. The session spans from 6 to 12 weeks and often culminates in a public reading of new work.

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

A prose writing workshop with a specific anti-racist framework. This workshop provided 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. Steps of publishing were covered: setting goals, researching venues, reading in depth, refining your pitch/submission list, and crafting pitches & cover letters. Read and discussed recent excerpts from journals or magazines connecting to content issues such as immigration, assimilation, repatriation, internalized oppression & privilege, historical legacies and losses, language & translation, mixed-race & cross-cultural identities, intersections with class & gender, etc. Critique workshops provided facilitated feedback from the group along with suggestions on where to publish. The final week was a submission session party, when members brought in their laptops and submitted and pitched their work to their chosen publications online.

Artist Peer Circle, October 2013 – May 2015. Queens Council on the Arts, Queens NY. Led a professional development group for 5-6 local Queens writers. Trained members in reflective questioning and goal setting with writing process issues, career concerns and work-life balance. Facilitated group support sessions, critique sessions, and organized a culminating reading at the Queens Council on the Arts.

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.

Publications

Books

“The Fear of Large and Small Nations”, a novel. Completed in 2016. Formerly represented by Robert Guinsler, Sterling Lord Literistic, NYC. To be published 2022 by Nauset Press, Brooklyn, NY. Finalist for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially-Engaged Fiction.

Me as her again: True Stories of an Armenian Daughter. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2008. Shortlisted for the Lambda Literary Award in LGBT Nonfiction and the William Saroyan International Writing Prize.

(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

- “Inside Our Walls: Reflections on Revolutionary Armenians,” Untitled Armenian American anthology. Austin, TX: UT Press, to be published 2022.
- “Rose-Poisoning: Beauty, Violence and the Unknown History of Zabel Yessayan.” *Self-Defined: Essays by and about Fierce Women*. New York: Nauset Press, 2018.
- “Holding Blood.” *Resist Much, Obey Little: Inaugural Poems to the Resistance*. New York, NY: Spuyten Duyvil, 2017.
- “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

- “Grief: April 17, 2020,” *Global Poemic*, July 2021. Online.
- “White Hair,” *Pangryus*. March 30, 2021. Online.
- “For the Love of Aunts,” *Dyads*, Fall 2019. Print.
- “Raisin Eyes”, a poem. *No, Dear Magazine*, Diaspora Issue, Fall 2018. Print.
- “Coffee Diplomacy,” an essay. *The Margins*, Asian American Writers Workshop, Fall 2017. Online.
- “Meeting the Man on the Street,” *Kweli Journal*, December 2015. Online.
- “Exhaustion, Faith, or Madness,” *Mr. Beller’s Neighborhood*, December 2014. Online.

“Armenia: Land of Bisexuality,” *The Hye-Phen Magazine*, November 2014. Online.
“Clouds of Paan,” *Newtown Literary*, Issue 3, Winter 2013. Print.
“100% Armenian Blood: A Theoretical Performance,” *Sunday Salon Magazine*, Spring 2009,
3 Feb. 2009. Online.

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

“American School.” *Ararat* Vol. XLIV, No. 182, Spring 2006. Print.

Articles

“How Tavloo Became Shesh-Besh: A Diasporan Experience of the 2nd Nagorno-Karabakh War.” Self-published on Medium, @nancyagabian_48837. 7 June, 2021. Online.

“Trauma and the Myth of Equivalence,” Self-published on Medium, @nancyagabian_48837. 6 Oct. 2020. Online.

“Stirring the Pot with Marsha Nouritza Odabashian,” *Boston Art Review*, 12 Dec 2019. Online.

“Armenian Genocide Resolution for Dinner,” *Pressenza*. 3 Nov 2019. Online.

“Family Returning Blows: A performance text,” *Armenian Review*, Special “Queering Armenian Studies” Edition, Spring 2018. Print.

“Making Ourstory,” *Poets & Writers Readings and Workshops Blog*, 4 December 2017. Online.

“Amina Arraf: A 'Queered' Antidote,” *The Brooklyn Rail*. March 2012. Print and online.

“Tiny Retreats,” *GetawayStyle*. 6 January 2012. Online.

“What is a Tiny House?” 18 November 2011. Online.

“Wonder Cabinet: The Artist in Academia,” *Hyperallergic*. 24 June 2010. Online.

“Ungeziefer: Kafka at the Whitney Biennial,” *Hyperallergic*. 16 March 2010. Online.

“Waiting for Tables,” *The Brooklyn Rail*. March 2010. pp. 3-6. Print and online.

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

“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. Print.

Select Recent Readings and Presentations:

Reading. An excerpt from “The Fear of Large and Small Nations,” International Armenian Literary Alliance. Zoom. 12, June 2021.

Reading. “Grief: April 17, 2020,” a brief essay. International Armenian Literary Alliance. Zoom. 21 March 2021. Online.

Reading. “Trauma and the Myth of Equivalence.” International Day of Solidarity with Palestinians. Zoom. 29 Nov 2020.

Reading. “Trauma and the Myth of Equivalence.” Gallatin Alumnae Reading. Zoom. 6 Oct 2020

Reading. “The Faith of Candy”. No You Tell It. Zoom. 30 Sept 2020.

Reading. Selected poetry. The Virtual Cobalt. Zoom. 25 August 2020.

Reading. Byrdcliffe Open Studios, Byrdcliffe Artist Colony, Woodstock, NY, 28 Sept 2019.

Reading and Workshop. Hobart Festival of Women Writers, Hobart NY. 6—8 Sept 2019.

Reading: “Armenian Genocide Awareness”. Asian American Writers Workshop, NYC. 24 Apr 2019.

Reading: “White Hair”. Generation Women. Caveat, NYC, 10 Apr 2019.

Panel presentation: “Poets are women with bangs who write about Armenia: a tribute to Diana der Hovanessian.” *Diana's Diaspora*. AWP Conference, Portland, OR. 29 Mar 2019.

Reading: “Rose-Poisoning”. Launch reading for *Fierce*. Soho Gallery, NYC, 15 Dec 2018.

Reading. “A Portrait of the Artist as an Infant”. LIC Reading Series, NYC. 11 Sept. 2018.

Performance: “Family Returning Blows”. Roslin Art Gallery, Glendale, CA. 23 June 2018.

Panel Discussion: “Self-Expression in the LGBTQ Armenian Community”. Roslin Art Gallery, Glendale, CA. 19 June 2018.

Gallery Talk: “Queering the Armory Room” with Gonzalo Casals. Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York, NY. 15 June 2018.

Panel Discussion and Reading: “The Forty Days of Musa Dagh Book Club”. Coordinated with Haig Chahinian. With Chris Atamian, Elaine Merguerian and Aida Zilelian. Zohrab Center, New York, NY. 12 April, 2018.

Reading and Discussion: “Queering the Writerly Process: a conversation with Nancy Agabian”. Sponsored by Becton Dean's office, the Dean of Students' office and the Women's Studies program. Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, NJ. 29 March 2018.

Workshop: “Creative Writing with *Citizen*” Sponsored by Newtown Literary Alliance and St. John's University. Broadway Library, Astoria, NY. 10 Feb 2018.

Reading: “Coffee Diplomacy” for “Hishek: An Evening of Armenian Writers on Genocide Awareness.” Presented by AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union) Performing Arts. Berl's Poetry Shop, Brooklyn, NY. 23 March 2017.

Reading: “I Don't Want a President,” for the Soapbox Response series, The Highline, New York, NY. 24 Oct 2016.

Moderation: “What Difference Does Poetry Make? A reading and discussion on *Veils, Halos and Shackles: International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women*” at the LAB, Queens Council on the Arts, Astoria, NY. 7 Oct 2016.

Reading: Excerpt from “The Fear of Large and Small Nations,” “Writers in Progress,” Faculty reading at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York, NY. 5 April 2016.

Curation: “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.

Awards

The Jeanne Cordova Prize for Queer/Lesbian Nonfiction. Lambda Literary Foundation. June 2021.

Orchard Project Episodic Lab, a television screenwriting lab; advanced to second round of applications, Spring 2019.

Pushcart Nomination, for “Raisin Eyes”, Fall 2018.

Su-Casa Grant to teach a writing workshop for Seniors in NYC, administered by the Queens Council on the Arts. Spring 2017.

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

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.

Reading Series

Queens Writers Resist

Co-coordinator with Amy Paul and Meera Nair. Bi-monthly series of writers, musicians and artists resisting the policies of exclusion and prejudice towards people of color, immigrants, the undocumented, low-income, women and LGBT people. Terraza 7, Elmhurst, NY. February 2017—October 2019.

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.

Volunteering

Board of Directors, International Armenian Literary Alliance, October 2020 – present.

Board of Directors, President, Newtown Literary Alliance, January 2014--June 2019