This course focuses on developing descriptive critical and creative writing skills. Through close readings of texts by authors including Jennifer Doyle, Eileen Myles, Lydia Davis, Hilton Als, Renee Gladman, Eve Sedgwick, Fred Moten and others, this course will challenge students to craft ideas and arguments by enhancing critical reading, creative thinking, and clear writing. We will experiment with style and form from academic essays to embodied writing and art criticism. Students will complete in-class writing assignments and exercises in response to written, recorded, and live performances. Students will be graded on participation, written work, and presentation of research/writing. Students will leave class with an understanding of “performative writing” and explore the written genres of the performance review, autofiction, personal essay, and creative conversation. We will use our class time together to workshop, create new writing, and discuss the readings. No previous experience in creative writing is necessary.

Readings:
- *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison
- *The Chronology of Water*, Lidia Yuknavich
- *Brown Neon*, Raquel Gutierrez
- All other readings will be in PDF format in moodle
Assignments:

• Complete 2,000-word performative writing piece due January 23rd.

Assignments:

• **Class Participation: 15%**
  Active, respectful and thoughtful participant in dialogue; has clearly done the reading. **Students are expected to write one carefully considered question in response to the assigned reading. You should post these questions to our class slack by 6pm the Monday night before class.**

• **Short Written Pieces: 60%**
  Students will turn in 2 short pieces over the course of the semester.

• **Final In-Class Reading/Project: 25%**
  This final assignment is a 2,000-word performative writing piece. You may write in any of the forms we have discussed in class from review to academic response to creative response. If you are writing a review, your description should make the artist’s work visible and tangible. In any genre please pay attention to detail, shape, context & critique. You will be asked to read or creatively/performatively present your work to the class.

***Workshop Guidelines***

• Be mindful and generous. No one is an inherently better writer for knowing more about craft or having taken more classes or read more books.

• Speak from your experience, using your language. It is valid. Honor the language and specificities that people use. They are valid. This is what Peter Elbow calls “the wisdom of the tongue.”

• Ask questions of the text

• Are the words in service of the story?

• What is the rhythm and pacing?

• How are the words performing and shaping the story? Are the soft or hard? Are the rounded and sharp? What is their syntax and unique character?

• Who is the character narrating the story (not you, but the version of self being represented on the page). Refer to this person as “the narrator.”

• What are the images shapes and textures pulling you through?

**Accommodation Statement**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](mailto:accessibility@wesleyan.edu) in order to arrange an appointment.
to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/218, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on the student code.

Discrimination and Harassment
Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office for Equity and Inclusion at 860-685-4771. The responsibility of the University Members has more information.

Honor Code
All students of Wesleyan University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council – Office of Student Affairs. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). The Office of Student Affairs has more information.

Attendance
You are allowed one absence for any reason; after that your grade will be lowered half letter grade per absence unless you have a documented excuse. Three tardies equal an absence. After three absences, you will automatically fail the course.

Day one: Self-Disclosure
Jan. 10
- Eileen Myles, “Everyday Barf”
- Laurie Weeks, “Eat Me” & “Worms Make Heaven”
- In-Class exercise: mapping
- **ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE: 500-word art review + in-class reading**

**Day Two: Performance Reviews**
Jan. 11
- Alexandra Vazquez, Introduction to *Listening in Detail*
- Jennifer Doyle, “Thinking Feeling” in *Hold it Against Me*
- In-Class exercise: Tisa Bryant, *Unexplained Presence*

**Day Three: Gendery & Queer Writing**
Jan. 12
- Eve Sedgwick, “Queer and Now”
- Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy “Queer Formalisms”
- In-Class exercise: Renee Gladman, *Plans for Sentences*

**Day Four: Auto-theory**
Jan. 13
- Melissa Febos / Billy-Rae Belcourt (TBD)
- In-class excerpts from Jordy Rosenberg

**Day Five:**
Jan. 16
- **ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE: 500-word autotheory piece + in-class workshop**

**Day Six: The Personal (Art) Essay**
Jan. 17
- Jamie Shearn Coan, “The Evolution of the Queer Dancer”
- Toni Jensen, “Carry”
- Denise Ferreira da Silva, “In the Raw”

**Day Seven: How to Write in a Way That Does Not Reproduce Colonialism & Conquest**
Jan. 18
- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*
- In-class Ursula Le Guin & N.K. Jemisin

**Week Eight: Embodied Writing**
Jan. 19
- Lidia Yuknavitch, *Chronology of Water* (selections)
- **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH & IDEA for final project.**
Final Project & Final Self-Assessment due Jan, 23rd at noon by email to kbrewerball@wesleyan.edu