A fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities and a 1999 Director's Fellow of the New York Public Library's Center for Scholars and Writers, Prose is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine, for which she has written such controversial essays as "Scent of A Woman's Ink" and "I Know Why the Caged Bird Can't Read," and Bomb magazine. She writes regularly on art for The Wall Street Journal.

In 2010, Prose was awarded the prestigious Washington University International Humanities Medal. Awarded biennially, the medal honors the lifetime work of a noted scholar, writer, or artist who has made a significant and sustained contribution to the world of letters or the arts. She has also been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a 1989 Fulbright fellowship to the former Yugoslavia, two NEA grants, and a PEN translation prize.