

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Fall 2023

Fall 8-15-2023

ENG 3062-001 Intermediate Poetry

Colleen Abel

Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2023

Recommended Citation

Abel, Colleen, "ENG 3062-001 Intermediate Poetry" (2023). *Fall 2023*. 46.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2023/46

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2023 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

Writing 3062: Intermediate Poetry

Fall 2023 / Coleman Hall 3159 / 11-1215

Colleen Abel

crabel@eiu.edu

Office hours

Office: CH 3811

Tuesday 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Wednesday 10:30 a.m. to noon*

Thursday 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

*Virtual via [Microsoft Teams](#)

Required Texts

Poet's Companion, Addonizio & Laux

Blood Dazzler, Patricia Smith

Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude, Ross Gay

Best American Poetry 2022, eds. David Lehman & Matthew Zapruder

Miscellaneous readings: D2L / Class handouts

Course Description

Poetry readership is on the rise, as more and more people turn to poems to provide solace, or to reflect their feelings in our uncertain times. This course will focus on the writing and revising of poems at an intermediate level, with an emphasis on building vocabulary and learning the wide range of moves that poems can make. Using some of

the best collections of poems from the past few decades as our guide, we'll craft and revise poems that showcase each student's individual voice. Through workshops, students will end the course with a complete chapbook of poetry.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you should be able to

- Identify poetic techniques and use terminology when reading poems
 - Critique and explicate poetic works
 - Understand the historical and contemporary context of poetry
 - Write and revise your own original works of poetry
 - Evaluate, constructively, the works-in-progress of your peers
 - Reflect upon your own creative processes and practices
-

Instructional Philosophy

The course is divided into what I consider the two most important activities in learning to become a better writer: **reading** and **writing**. We will spend a great deal of time learning terminology and reading examples of poems that exemplify the techniques we are exploring. As the following writing advice attests, the way one learns craft is first by reading, then by writing.

“Read, read, read. Read everything -- trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out of the window.” -William Faulkner

Course Delivery Method

Though this class is face-to-face, this course will make use of the learning management system, D2L Brightspace, <http://www.eiu.edu/d2l>. However, if you need help: [Contact ITS User Services for technical support issues.](#)

Email: support@eiu.edu

Phone: (217) 581-4357

Support Hours: 7:00 AM - 4:30 PM, Monday-Friday with your EIU NetID account or password, contact Campus Technology Support at (217) 581-4357 or support@eiu.edu.

Instructor Response Time

For emails, please allow me up to [24 hours](#) to respond to your message, 36 hours on weekends or holidays. For grades, please allow a week to ten days for me to get back to you for large assignments, though it will likely take less time than this.

Learner Participation Guidelines

There are a few matters of classroom etiquette that are important to follow to ensure your success in this class.

[Turning in late work for workshop means you forfeit the right to feedback.](#) Feedback needs to come to the writer before the workshop takes place, unless you have an exceptional circumstance. I also do not allow writers to post their pieces late for the workshop. This gives your peers less time for feedback, which is very stressful for them. I may not be able to reschedule your workshop if you miss class that day.

Other late work will be [discounted one point for each day late](#). I do not accept late workshop feedback. If you come to class without written feedback done for the people being discussed, you can still participate in the conversation, but you cannot afterward

turn in written feedback. However, if you are concerned about those missing points, you may complete an alternate assignment from the Assignment Grab Bag. (More details on this will be available on D2L.

Even without a formal attendance policy, I have noticed a clear and direct link between students who miss more than a couple of classes, and students who are not able to achieve an A in the course. **Missing class will impact you.** This is a workshop, and one of the best ways to be a good workshop citizen is to show up. It's also a small class, which means we will feel your absence really keenly if you routinely are not there. Please speak with me as soon as possible if a situation arises where it looks like you will need to miss more than a single class here or there.

Perhaps the most important classroom policy of all concerns our learning environment. A successful learning community is one in which we can learn from people whose perspectives we might not necessarily share and I ask everyone to be constructive and mindful. Speaking our minds is a fantastic privilege of this environment, but doing so in an aggressive or hostile way helps no one.

***DISCLAIMER: One question that students often ask: is it okay if I write about ...? Usually, they want to know if I will be upset if their work contains profanity, violence, sexuality, drug use, etc. The short answer is no. What I care most about is the quality of your writing. That being said, **please do consider your audience** before you workshop a piece. Is it worth it to you to spend one of your valuable workshop slots writing a piece that will almost certainly be offensive? One exception here: if your poem contains hate speech or bias toward protected groups, I am obligated to report this to the university.

Grade Breakdown

Creative Exercises: 100 points

Poems for Workshop (x3): 200 points

Presentations (x2): 200 points

Close Readings (x3): 150 points

Workshop Feedback (x3): 200 points

Chapbook: 150 points

Total: 1000 points

Creative Exercises: Most weeks, sometimes twice a week, we will be doing a creative exercise to generate new poems. You should not treat these as demands for full drafts of poems; these are designed to take about fifteen minutes. You can always choose to expand on any of these exercises to include in your workshop or your final portfolio!

Close Readings: Three times over the semester, you will turn in a two-page (minimum) close reading of a poem. One close reading will be from the Smith text, one will be from the Gay text, and one will be from BAP 2022. Detailed instructions will be on Dropbox.

Presentations: You will do two presentations this term.

First, you will do a short presentation about a **living poet**, who you think the class should know more about. Give us a little bit of biographical information, but most importantly, give us an overview of their work. What makes you interested in them? Why is their work important? How would you describe their style? Their voice? Your presentation should include at least three poems, and should include a small analysis of one of those.

Second, you will do a short presentation where you “**teach**” **one of the poems from BAP 2022**. This should be a different poem than your close reading assignment from this book. You will sign up for these in class to make sure that there isn’t overlap.

Workshop Participation: Each of you will be workshopped three times over the semester. We will discuss workshop expectations more thoroughly but please note that there are two equal components to your workshop grade. The first is the **timely** uploading of your poem for workshop. This is worth 65 points each workshop. **See above for late policies.**

The second part of your workshop grade is your feedback to others. I would like you to prepare written feedback for each person being workshopped. What does good feedback look like? Good feedback gives the reader a sense of your response to the piece as an audience member. Over many years of teaching I've found that students most appreciate:

- A description of what you think their piece is about, what you think it's trying to achieve, and what the main idea or theme seems to be.
Sometimes this means stating things that seem obvious, but often this is something people see differently, so it helps to have many perspectives
- Things that you respond to with excitement or surprise. Everyone loves hearing where their piece really took off and flew. This is helpful, too, because authors want to try to preserve in revision those things that the audience is responding well to (usually!)
- Questions that you have. Is there anything confusing? Are you especially curious about why the author did or did not make a particular choice?
- Ideas you have about what they could do in revision to experiment with different directions. This isn't quite the same as saying you didn't like something or that an element wasn't "working. These are "constructive possibilities": what if this were shorter? Longer? Included research? What might that do for the piece?

All of this will probably take a **generous paragraph (200 words)** to achieve. All of your feedback will be worth 65 points for each workshop. (This will work out to roughly 10.5 points per person.)

Chapbook:

Your chapbook should consist of the following:

- 12 pages (minimum) of poetry. (60% of grade) This is your chapbook (a small book of poetry, also called a "pamphlet" in Europe), and so should be structured like a chapbook: with a title, table of contents, and an eye toward interesting order and unifying elements. The 12 page guideline could mean 12 poems that are a page or less. It could mean one 12 page poem. While I encourage experimentation with white space and font, you also shouldn't try to pass off a chapbook of poetry by writing one word in 36 point font on each page until you hit twelve. You should include all of the pieces you workshopped. You should feel very free to include poems that were inspired by class exercises. **At least four of the poems should show evidence of substantial revisions.**
- A writer's statement of at least 4 pages. (40% of grade) This statement should address all of these:
 - Your revision process. How did you go about revising your workshop pieces? How did you sort through all of the advice to figure out what your piece needed? What advice was most valuable? What do your pieces do now that they did not before?
 - Your experience with the course texts. What texts did you find most helpful to your writing? What elements did they help you understand as being relevant to your work?
 - Your experience with workshop feedback.
 - Your experience with your classmates' work. What did you learn from them? How do they help you think about your writing?

A note about grading final portfolios. Portfolios will receive top marks if they show substantial effort and thought about craft and revision. **I am not here to grade the quality of your poems:** it is my job to look at the effort that went into making the work, the attention to techniques we've studied and openness toward revision. For example,

poems that revise by changing a few words and some punctuation will not be assessed nearly as favorably as poems that show radical reimagining, via structural changes, changes in tone or form, additions, etc.

EIU Policies

- Department statement on plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.
 - Note: Poets are already beginning to use ChatGPT in meaningful and radically disruptive ways in their work; we can talk about this in class, and about the experimental potential of AI in creative writing. However, please do not use these tools to create any of the work you turn in for this class, unless you are experimenting under my specific direction.
- Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the [Student Success Center](#) for assistance with time management, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee 1301.
- If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the [Office of Student Disability Services](#) (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Other Helpful Information

- Hungry or need a break? The study lounge on the third floor of Coleman 3762 has food and couches and free books.
- The writing center (Coleman 3110) can absolutely help English students / English majors with their assignments. Just because you may be an English major / minor doesn't mean an extra set of eyes won't be useful to you. (Even the best writers never outgrow that need. That's why editors have jobs.)
- The closest all-gender restroom to our class is on the 2nd floor of Coleman Hall. Gender-limited restrooms are on every floor in Coleman Hall. EIU's GSD Center website has a map of all the gender-inclusive restrooms on campus, here: <https://www.eiu.edu/lgbtqa/all-gender-restrooms.php>

Course Schedule

Week One, August 21:	Tuesday: Student and Teacher Introductions; Syllabus Thursday: What is a poem?; Writing Exercises
Week Two, August 28:	Tuesday: Poet's Craft: "Images" + D2L readings Thursday: Poet's Craft "Similes and Metaphor" + D2L
Week Three, September 4:	T Poet's Craft: "The Music of the Line" + D2L R Poet's Craft: "Voice and Style" + D2L
Week Four, September 11:	T Poet's Craft: "Meter, Rhyme, and Form" + D2L R Poet's Craft: "Repetition, Rhythm and Blues" +D2L
Week Five, September 18:	T;R Living Poet Presentations
Week Six, September 25:	T;R: Patricia Smith, <i>Blood Dazzler</i> <i>Post workshop poems by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, 9/29</i>

Week Seven, October 2: T: Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler*
R: Workshop

Week Eight, October 9: **T: Workshop**
R: Workshop

Close reading #1 due Friday 10/13 at 11:59 p.m.

Week Nine, October 16: T: Gay, *Catalogue*
R: Gay, *Catalogue*

Week 10, October 23: T: Poet's Craft: "The Energy of Revision" + D2L
Post workshop poems by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, 10/25
R: Poet's Craft: "The Energy of Revision" + D2L
Close reading #2 due Friday 10/27 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 11, October 30: **T; R Workshop**

Week 12, November 6: **T: Workshop**
R: Putting together a chapbook: D2L readings
Post workshop poems by 11:59 p.m. Fri, 11/10 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 13, November 13: T: Putting together a chapbook: D2L readings
R: Workshop

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14, November 27: **T; R Workshop**
Close reading #3 due by Friday, 12/1 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 15, December 4: Teaching Poems Presentations

Final portfolios are due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, December 13.