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ENG 3062-001: Intermediate Poetry Writing

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Eastern Illinois University

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Writing 3062: Intermediate Poetry

Fall 2022
Colleen Abel

crabel@eiu.edu

Office hours

Office: CH 3811

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Wednesday 11:00 to noon

Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Note: Contact me via Microsoft Teams during these hours or by appointment for fastest response times

Required Texts

Poet's Companion, Addonizio & Laux

Blood Dazzler, Patricia Smith

The Carrying, Ada Limon

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
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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 Faulker

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.

I do not ban electronics in my classroom, as we're all adults with outside lives. However, if I see that you're paying more attention to phones or laptops than to class, I will ask you to be more respectful; if it persists, I reserve the right to adjust your attendance grade to reflect this.

I do not accept late work when it comes to workshop. 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.

Other late work will be discounted one point for each day late.

Given that we are still in a global pandemic, my plan is to be flexible regarding attendance. This is not to say you can deliberately miss a lot of class and still do just fine. This is a workshop, which is hands-on and requires your presence and participation to function. 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

Technique Poems: 150 points

Presentation: 150 points

Discussion Board Posts: 250 points

Workshop Participation: 150 points

Final Portfolio: 200 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!

Technique Poems: These poems are a chance for you to pick one technique that we have studied so far and write a poem which uses it in a conscious way. In addition to the poem, I would like you to also turn in a paragraph explaining which technique you selected, and what your poem does with it. I do not grade these poems on quality, but on the effort you put into exploring and utilizing the technique at hand. You will hand in three of these, and each should spotlight a *different* technique. If you want to use the same poem for this assignment as a poem you also turn in for workshop, that's completely fine with me.

Presentations: 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.

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 your own readiness for your workshop. **I do not accept late work** because it's unfair to your peers, who need ample time to give feedback.

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 to achieve.

Your total workshop participation grade will be broken down thusly: You will receive 50 points for each workshop, to be divided equally between your timely posting of your own poem, and your feedback for your peers.

Final Portfolio:

Your portfolio must 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? This would be a good time to go back and look over the discussion boards for insights about the works we studied.
 - Your experience with my feedback or writing about the poems and your discussion posts. This would be a good opportunity to go back and read anything I've writing on the boards that you might not have read yet.
 - 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

- Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct. Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.
- 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.

Course Schedule

Week One, August 22:	Student and Teacher Introductions Syllabus Vocabulary List
Week Two, August 29:	Poet's Craft: "Images" & "Similes and Metaphor"
Week Three, September 6:	Poet's Craft: "The Music of the Line" & "Voice and Style"
	Technique Poem 1 due Thursday 9/8, EOD
Week Four, September 13:	Poet's Craft: "Meter, Rhyme, and Form" &

“Repetition, Rhythm and Blues”

Post workshop poem by Thursday 9/15, EOD

Week Five, September 20:

Large-group workshop

Week Six, September 27:

Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler*

Technique Poem 2 due Thursday 9/29, EOD

Week Seven, October 4:

Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler*

Post workshop poem by Thursday, 10/6, EOD

Week Eight, October 11*:

Large-group workshop

Week Nine, October 18:

Presentations

Week 10, October 25:

Ada Limon, *The Carrying*

Technique Poem 3 due Thursday, 10/27, EOD

Week 11, November 1:

Ada Limon, *The Carrying*

Week 12, November 8:

Poet’s Craft: “The Energy of Revision”

Post workshop poem by Thursday, 11/10, EOD

Week 13, November 15:

Large-group workshop

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14, November 29:

Putting together a chapbook: D2L readings

Week 15, December 15:

Final readings

Final portfolios are due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14.

