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ENG 3062-600: Intermediate Poetry Writing

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Eastern Illinois University

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Writing 3062: Intermediate Poetry

Fall 2021 / online asynchronous

Colleen Abel

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Virtual office hours [via Microsoft Teams](#)

Office: CH 3811 (remote for Fall 2021)

Monday 11:00-noon

Tuesday 9 to 10 a.m.

Thursday 5 to 6 p.m.

Required Texts

Poet's Companion, Addonizio & Laux

Blood Dazzler, Smith

Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude, Gay

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 Faulker

Then, you will be asked to synthesize all that you have learned by writing your own work. You will continue reading, though the emphasis will be on your classmates' poems, and your task will turn from explicating to critiquing via workshop.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online through our learning management system, D2L Brightspace, <http://www.eiu.edu/d2l>. As far as I can tell every single one of you has used D2L for this class already to turn in assignments. 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. For grades, please allow **up to ten days** for me to get back to you for large assignments, though it will likely take less time than this. For discussion board posts, I will grade all posts and responses the week they are completed. Please note that I read and grade all discussion board posts, responses, and exercises, though I may not necessarily respond to each one, as the discussion board is a space that is designed to be student-centered, just as our classroom would be.

Learner Participation Guidelines

This class is asynchronous, which means “not happening at the same time.” This means that we aren’t going to be meeting at a specific time all together. Instead, most of our “meetings” will take place on the discussion board throughout each week. Our use of the discussion board will fall into three categories: discussion questions, creative exercises, and workshops. Workshops are their own category with their own rules; you can see D2L for more information, and I’ll also address this in class quite a bit. When it comes to the discussion board questions and the creative exercises, you can think of this as our class meetings. These cover activities we would otherwise be doing in face-to-face meetings. They are attendance, participation and in-class writings all rolled into one. You can see in the grade breakdown below that they are worth the most points, and that’s to reflect the fact the discussion board is our classroom for the next fifteen weeks.

My expectation is that each week you have a discussion board question due, you can write your response by the due date. I’ll be looking for about 200-250 words in your response; the more specific, the better. The second part of the discussion board will be responses to two of your classmates. These responses should be at least 75 words, and should be more than simply saying “Good point!” or “I agree!” If you respond to their discussion question, you should be adding to what they say, not merely echoing what they say. If you’d like, you can also respond to someone’s creative exercise, as well, which would count as one of your two responses. In this case, I would ask that you

remember that your goal is not to critique their exercise, but to perhaps reflect on where they could take things next.

Specific instructions will be given each week for the discussion board expectations for the week to come, but the above guidelines should give you a general sense of what to expect.

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, 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 will be posting these to a special forum on the discussion board, but if you'd rather the piece remain private, you do have the option to email me your exercise **by the due date**. 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:

Workshop Participation: Each of you will be workshopped three times over the semester, once in a full-class workshop, and two times in small groups. You should plan on turning in one poem for each small group workshop. You may submit either one or two for the final workshop. 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. You must turn in your piece to D2L by noon on Monday of the workshop week. **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:

Your portfolio must consist of the following:

- 12 pages* (minimum) of poetry. (60% of grade) This is your chapbook, 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.
**Students taking the course for graduate credit should produce 15 pages.
- 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 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 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 and, especially, the openness and effort toward revision. 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.

Late work

Online classes are particularly difficult to manage when work comes in late. On major assignments and original discussion board posts, I will deduct two points for each day it is late. **The following will not be accepted late: workshop contributions, discussion board responses and portfolios.**

Classroom (N)etiquette

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. There is a separate document on D2L in the Workshops module giving you some thoughts about how to be a successful workshop citizen.

***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.

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

notes:

- the D2L site will have much more detailed instructions for what we are doing and when. **Always consult that for the most current information.**
- Each week's discussion board has two due dates: your original post is due by Wednesday, 11:59 p.m. and your responses are due by Friday, 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise noted.
- Technique poem assignments are due by the end of the week, Fridays at 11:59 p.m.
- You must post your poem(s) for Workshop by Monday at noon. Feedback must be completed by Friday at noon.

Week One, August 23:

Student and Teacher Introductions

Syllabus

Vocabulary List

Writing Exercise

Week Two, August 30:	Poet's Craft: "Images" & "Similes and Metaphor" Discussion Board Writing Exercise
Week Three, September 7:	Poet's Craft: "The Music of the Line" & "Voice and Style" Discussion Board Writing Exercise Technique Poem 1 due
Week Four, September 13:	Poet's Craft: "Meter, Rhyme, and Form" & "Repetition, Rhythm and Blues" Discussion Board Writing Exercise
Week Five, September 20:	Small Group Workshop 1
Week Six, September 27:	Patricia Smith, <i>Blood Dazzler</i> Discussion Board Technique Poem 2
Week Seven, October 4:	Patricia Smith, <i>Blood Dazzler</i> Discussion Board Writing Exercise
Week Eight, October 11*: *10/15 = no class	Small Group Workshop 2
Week Nine, October 18:	Presentations Presentation Responses
Week 10, October 25:	Ross Gay, <i>Catalogue of Unabashed Gratitude</i>

Discussion Board

Technique Poem 3

Week 11, November 1:

Ross Gay, *Catalogue of Unabashed Gratitude*

Discussion Board

Writing Exercise

Week 12, November 8:

Poet's Craft: "The Energy of Revision"

D2L Readings

Discussion Board

Writing Exercise

Week 13, November 15:

Large-group workshop

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14, November 29:

Large-group workshop

Week 15, December 15:

Large-group workshop

Final portfolios are due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, December 16.