

Spring 1-15-2015

ENG 4762-001: Poetry Writing

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ENGLISH 4762: POETRY WRITING
SPRING 2015

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Office: 3745 Coleman Hall
Office hours: M:1-2, 3:15-4:15
and W 12-1, 3:15-4:15, 5:45-6:45

Course Information:
MW 2-3:15
Room: CH 3159
Three Credit Hours

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 2*, edited by Ramazani, Ellmann, and O'Clair (Bring to every class.)
- *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver
- A writer's notebook of your choice. (Bring to every class.)
- Three-ring binder or folder to keep all of the poems and handouts. You are responsible for printing the additional readings on D2L.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This 4000-level poetry writing course continues the practices and studies in poetic craft began in ENG2003. More specifically, this course examines the state of the contemporary lyric and asks what are its necessary materials? We will study a range of contemporary poets to understand not only how to shape our own experiences into poetry, but also how to understand our role within the lyrical tradition.

Since part of the writing process is the revision process, workshop will play a fundamental role in our course. Every other week, we will submit poems to be workshopped. In workshop, students' poems will be critiqued with the goal of a revised, polished manuscript presented by each writer at the semester's end. A final portfolio of original poetry, a craft presentation, and attendance at four poetry readings will constitute the course's major requirements.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To express one's ideas in poetic form.
2. To learn fundamental poetic techniques and determine how such techniques are applied depending on genre, audience, and purpose.
3. To analyze major poetic forms such as sonnet, villanelle, and sestina, and write poems using these received structures.

"Poetry is truth in its Sunday clothes."
—Joseph Roux

4. To develop a critical, constructive vocabulary that will aid in future literary studies and within the workshop setting.
5. To apply critical reading skills to the genre of poetry.
6. To engage with the act of contemporary poetry and appreciate the role of literature as part of our cultural and intellectual history.

“Words mean something because they always threaten to sound like something else.”

— James Longenbach from *The Art of the Poetic Line*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Eight poems will be submitted to the class over the course of the semester. Please use a standard font such as Times, and in the right hand corner include your name, the date, and “Poem #.” Many weeks, we will be writing poems from assignments that I provide based on the class’s current needs and interests. Be sure to check with the syllabus and/or D2L. Also, be aware that it is your responsibility to bring **sixteen copies** of your poem to your workshop.

A writer’s notebook is key to the writing process and a requirement for this course. Some weeks, I will provide writing exercises. A few of them will be turned in, but most will be for your personal edification. All of the writing exercises will stretch your creativity and help you practice craft elements that can be used for later poems. We will also write in class together, so always bring the notebook to class. Most writers I know carry a notebook with them at all times to record images, bits of dialogue, poem ideas, etc., so this is a good habit to acquire. I encourage all of you to try to write at least six lines a day in this notebook since a writer is simply one who writes often.

Reading and writing assignments will be our way to learn about the craft of writing. In order for the class to be both challenging and organic, I will assign many of our readings and writing assignments on a weekly basis. So, check in with your D2L email regularly and be aware that it is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments not only listed in the syllabus but on D2L as well.

To ensure careful and comprehensive reading, I will often give **reading quizzes** over the assigned work. Think of the assigned reading as an opportunity to find models for your own work and to engage with the literary community outside of this classroom.

Finding a community is important for writers, partly because the work itself is often done in isolation. Therefore, **participation in four literary events** is a central part of this class. The three literary events are Lions in Winter literary festival, the English Studies Conference, and two other poetry readings listed on the syllabus. For each event, you will also submit a **response** the first class day after you attend. Use the response as a way to practice your

poetic skills. Set the scene and quickly summarize what occurred. For most of the response, focus on what was significant to you. Be sure to use vivid details and quotes when possible. Word count: 200-350 words.

Workshops will encompass the majority of the in-class work that we will do. For each workshop, you are required to write editing and revision suggestions on each poem.

We will discuss proper workshop etiquette in class, but the general guideline is to braid together honesty, specificity, and kindness since one without the others will not serve the writer. Also keep in mind that poems for workshops should have undergone at least two to three drafts before bringing them to us for suggestions. Not everything you write will be wonderful and not everything you write will be horrible. These are the extremes. What is more likely is that you will write poems that are somewhere in between—and we will help move the poems in the direction the poem wants to be moved.

Presentations: Each student will pick one poet to present on over the course of the semester. During this 5-to-7 minute presentation, the presenter will articulate one to three techniques or moves that are particularly effective. (Ideally, draw from our readings in *A Poetry Handbook* to guide your analysis.) After explaining the technique, the presenter will show examples within the poems. The goal is to provide the class with not only a better understanding of the poet, but an understanding of how the class could build a poem.

A final manuscript of your poems will be submitted for the final exam. The manuscript needs to be submitted in a black paper folder (no three-ring binders). Within this manuscript, include—in this order—a title page, a table of contents, an epigraph, the critical introduction, six poems that you have heavily revised followed by the poems that you submitted throughout the semester with my comments on them. For the six revised poems, I would like the original workshop poem placed directly behind it so that I can see how extensive the revisions are. The majority of the final manuscript's grade stems from the seriousness of revision. Please note: it is your responsibility to keep your work throughout the semester.

In addition to the above material, also include a 2-3 page critical introduction on what you wanted to revise, why, and how you went about the process with three of the six revised poems. In this reflection, be sure to explain how you came to decide what needed to be revised and why. Also, be sure to note how your revision strategies were specifically tailored to your poem's needs.

Your participation—which means your active presence and attention to detail—is the most important factor in whether or not this class is a success. The time we spend together is our opportunity to expand our views on what is poetry, to build a writer's community, and to learn the craft behind the art. In *Mystery and Manners*, fiction writer Flannery O'Connor reflects on the value of writers interacting with one another. She says that unless the writer "has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication, and communication suggests talking inside a community." At the end of the semester when I reflect on your participation, I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. I will also consider your seriousness with in-class writing assignments as well. One of the more challenging aspects for writers is being able to shut

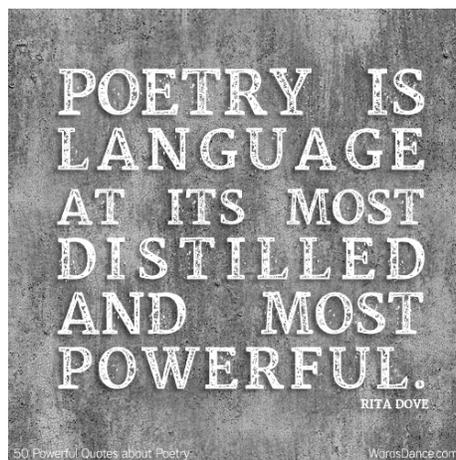
off the world in order to write. Therefore, we will practice mindfulness in class. Text messaging (even once) and other distractions such as checking email in class (again, even once) will result in a failing participation grade for the semester. Since cultivating a supportive and challenging writers' community is critical to our growth as writers, participation counts as 20% of your grade.

Attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines are all part of the writing life. There are days you may not want to write, but writers write—when they feel inspired or not. Coming to class is part of your obligation to your creativity and to your writing community. To help build a writers' community, the course depends upon everyone's participation and attendance. Therefore, missing four courses will lower your final grade by five points. Five absences will lower your final grade by ten points. Six absences will result in failure of the course. To allow adequate time for class discussion and in-class writing, arrive on time. Being late twice (or leaving early twice) will be considered an absence. Be aware that there is no such thing as an “excused absence.” Finally, if you arrive without the day’s reading printed out or in book-form in front of you, you will be counted as absent.

If you miss your scheduled workshop, twenty-five points will be deducted from your participation grade, no exceptions. (I will also determine if you can make-up this workshop. Usually, I do not allow for it.) If you fail to bring printed copies on the day your poem is due, twenty-five points will be deducted from your participation grade, no exceptions.

Other work such as the assigned poems, reading quizzes, and writing exercises are not accepted late or allowed to be made up.

The reason for this strict policy on not accepting late work is to help build discipline as writers. Procrastination can be the creative killer to writers, so I am trying to take the option of “later” off the table.



GRADING

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| Eight total poems worth twenty-five points each: 200 points | (20%) |
| Class Participation | (20%) |
| Reading Quizzes | (15%) |
| Participation in four poetry events: 25 points each | (10%) |
| Craft Presentation: 50 points | (5%) |
| Final Manuscript/Final Exam: 300 points | (30%) |
| The final manuscript grade will include the following: | |
| Six revised poems: 200 points (33.33 points each poem) | |
| Presentation of manuscript: 20 points | |
| Critical Introduction: 80 points | |

Grading scale is as follows:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

“A poem is an event, not the record of an event.”
—Robert Lowell

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>) . Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with according to university policy, which can be found on the Office of Judicial Affairs pages. First offense will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs and **will result in a grade of F** for this class. I think we all know what plagiarism is by now: the willful “appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (from *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*). In sum, do your job, which means do your own work.

Students with disabilities

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 Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, 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 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

“Line breaks are a proposal about listening.”
— Robert Hass

DAILY PLANS

*Please note that the following plans may be altered and that additional assignments will appear on D2L. I will email to your D2L account when I add these assignments. Be sure to check both the syllabus and your D2L email for each class.**If I do not specify the text, I am referencing our anthology: *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 2*)

- Monday 1/12 Introduction to class and syllabus.
Discussion: What is the Lyrical “I”?
Selected poems by Dickinson and Whitman
- Wednesday 1/14 **Reading due:** Olson pp. 1-9 and his last poem.
Select poets for presentations.
Poem #1 due (Please note that typically our poems will be due on Mondays. With the coming Monday being a holiday, we are getting an early start.)
- Monday 1/19 NO CLASS: MLK OBSERVED
- Wednesday 1/21 Workshop
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 1-18 and Bishop’s “The Fish,” “Roosters,” “Sestina,” and “The Armadillo.”
- Monday 1/26 Workshop
Reading due: Selected poems by Lions in Winter poet on D2L.
- Wednesday 1/28 Workshop
- Friday 1/30 Lions in Winter Literary Festival, Doudna
4:00 Faculty Talk 7:00 Fiction Reading, Stephen Graham Jones
- Saturday 1/31 Lions in Winter Literary Festival, Doudna
Please attend the poet’s craft lecture at 1:00 and the evening reading at 7:00.
- Monday 2/2 **Poem #2 due: “I” to “You”**
For this assignment, you will write on the same subject but imitate two different voices. Choose between Olson, Bishop, the visiting poet, Whitman, and Dickinson. Submit both poems to workshop. Will count as 25 points per poem.

Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 19-28 on sound, Hayden pp. 62-64 plus “Bone-Flower Elegy” and Plath pp. 609-611.

- Wednesday 2/4 Workshop
- Monday 2/9 Workshop
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 29-34 and selections by Janice Harrington on D2L.
- Wednesday 2/11 Workshop
- Thursday 2/12 Janice Harrington Reading, 6:00 p.m. in the Dudley House
with professor Dan Tessitore & grad student Tana Young
- Monday 2/16 **Poem #3 due:** “I” to “You”
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 35-43 (“The Line”), Bennet pp. 167-170, Brooks p. 145, and Ferlinghetti pp. 162-166.
- Wednesday 2/18 Workshop
- Thursday 2/19 Charlotte Pence Reading with Caleb Curtiss, 6:00 p.m. in
Doudna
- Monday 2/23 Workshop
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 44-57 (“The Line”), Lowell’s
“Skunk Hour” and “For the Union Dead” pp. 132-136
- Wednesday 2/25 Workshop
- Monday 3/2 **Poem #4 due:** “I” to No One
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 58-66, Charles Wright pp. 648-651, Hollander’s “Adam’s Task” p. 491, Wright’s Saint Judas p. 416-417, and Sexton 435-436.
- Wednesday 3/4 Mid-Term
Participation grades will be entered. They are not permanent and are meant to provide feedback on your class performance at this time.
Workshop
- Monday 3/9 Workshop
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 67-75 and Li-Young Lee, pp. 1040-1045.
- Wednesday 3/11 Workshop
- Monday 3/16 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
- Wednesday 3/18 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

- Monday 3/23 **Poem #5 due:** “I” to No One in syllabics (or another received form)
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 76-91, Wilbur pp. 198-201, Strand p. 624, Clifton 660-663.
- Wednesday 3/25 Workshop
- Monday 3/30 Workshop
Reading due: *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 92-108 plus other TBA.
- Wednesday 4/1 Workshop
- Monday 4/6 Poem #6 due: No “I”
Reading due: Ai pp. 875-879, Simic pp. 704-712, and Gluck pp. 819-823.
- Wednesday 4/8 In lieu of class, attend the English Studies Conference on Friday
- Friday, 4/ 10 English Studies Conference, all day in Coleman Hall
- Monday 4/13 Workshop
Reading due: Selected poems by Adam Clay on D2L.
Be sure to attend the poetry reading later that day.
- Monday 4/13 Adam Clay Reading at 6:00 p.m. in the Dudley House
with Dr. Robin Murray & graduating poet Sarah Porter
- Wednesday 4/15 Workshop
Reading due: Olds pp.807-809, Komunyakaa 859-861, and Ondaatje pp. 834-835
- Monday 4/20 Workshop
Reading due: Selection of popular emerging poets: Roger Reeves, Jericho Brown, Beth Bachmann, and others on D2L.
- Wednesday 4/22 Workshop
- Monday 4/27 Revised or new poem due: your choice
Small group workshop
Reading due: “Writing Off Subject” by Hugo on D2L
and Robert Hass pp. 785-788.
- Wednesday 4/29 **Reading due:** *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 109-118.
In-class discussion on publishing, submitting, and writing without teachers.

