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ENG 5020-001: Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing

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ENGLISH 5020: GRADUATE WORKSHOP IN CREATIVE WRITING

“YOU ARE WHO YOU PRETEND TO BE:
REDEFINING THE AUTHORIAL ‘I’ IN POETRY”



Dr. Charlotte Pence

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Office: 3745 Coleman Hall

Office hours: M: 1-2, 3:15-4:15

& W 12-1, 3:15-4:15, 5:45-6:45

Course Information:

Tuesdays 7:30-9:30

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.)
- *Nox* by Anne Carson
- 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.

“When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies”
—Shakespeare #138

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The relationship between the poet and the poem’s speaker is not a simple one. It is continually mediated through the lyric’s use of figurative language, omissions, dramatic irony, and subject layering. As Emily Dickinson wrote in a letter to Higginson: “When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse—it does not mean—me—but a supposed person.” In this graduate poetry workshop, we will track the changing role of the lyrical “I” beginning with the Romantics and swiftly move to the present day as a way to aid our own creation of the first-person speaker within our poems. While students will be expected to do a substantial amount of reading to better understand what we now think of as “poetic,” “confessional,” or “edgy,” the majority of class time will be given to workshopping students’ poems. A final portfolio of original poetry with a critical introduction, a book review ready for submission, a craft presentation, and attendance at three readings will constitute the course’s major requirements.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate the technical writing skills to craft imaginative literature.
2. Articulate an advanced knowledge of the generic distinctiveness of poetry and its literary history.
3. Establish a familiarity with the practical and philosophical-conceptual aspects of critical-analytical skills required of thoughtful, independent readership.
4. Cultivate peer revision skills through weekly workshops.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Ten poems will be submitted to the class over the course of the semester. We have eleven scheduled dates, so every writer may abstain one time from turning in a poem. Please use a standard font such as Times, and in the right hand corner include your name, the date, and “Poem #.” Some 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 **ten copies** of your poem to your workshop.

Reading and writing assignments will be our way to practice 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.

Finding a community is important for writers, partly because the work itself is often done in isolation. Therefore, **participation in three literary events** is a central part of this class.

The three literary events are Lions in Winter literary festival, the English Studies Conference, and one other poetry readings listed on the syllabus. For each event, you will 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.

“Poetry is truth in its Sunday clothes.”
—Joseph Roux

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. 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 7-10 minute presentation, the presenter will articulate one to three techniques or moves that are particularly effective. 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 5-7 page critical introduction regarding your approach with the lyrical “I” in each one of the poems. In this reflection, be sure to cite models that we have read in class and explain how you managed to transfer your ideas of the lyrical “I” into poetry.

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

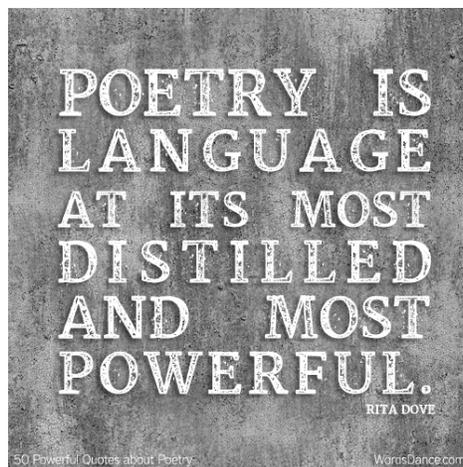
participation, I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. I will also consider your seriousness with in-class writing assignments as well. One of the more challenging aspects for writers is being able to shut off the world in order to write. 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.

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

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

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 three courses will lower your final grade by five points. Four absences will lower your final grade by ten points. Five 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.

Other work such as the assigned poems 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

Ten Weekly Poems: 200 points (20 points each)	(20%)
Presentation: 100 points	(10%)
Book Review: 100 points	(10%)
Event Attendance: 100 points (Lions in Winter=50 points One reading=25 points English Studies Conf.=25 points)	(10%)
Participation: 200 points	(20%)
Final Portfolio: 300 points	(30%)

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. *If I do not specify the text, I am referencing our anthology: *The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*.

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| January 13 | Introduction to Course
Discussion: What is the Lyrical “I”?
Poetry by Whitman and Dickinson
Hugo, “Writing Off Subject”
Select discussion leaders |
| January 20 | Read M.H. Abrams’s “Orientation of Critical Theories” pp. 3-29 that can be found on Google Books. Link also on D2L.
Poetry by Charles Olson and Elizabeth Bishop plus introduction to the anthology
Poem due |
| January 27 | Workshop
Poetry by visiting Lions in Winter poet
Poem due
Assign books to review |
| January 30 | Lions in Winter Literary Festival, Doudna |
| January 31 | Lions in Winter Literary Festival, Doudna
Please attend the poet’s craft lecture at 1:00 and the evening reading at 7:00 |
| February 3 | Workshop
Poetry by Robert Hayden, Muriel Rukeyser, and John Berryman
Poem due |
| February 10 | Workshop
Poetry by Dylan Thomas, his essay, Robert Lowell, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Janice Harrington
Poem due |
| February 12 | Janice Harrington Reading, 6:00 p.m. in the Dudley House with professor Dan Tessitore & graduating poet Tana Young |

- February 17 Workshop
 Poetry by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Louise Bennett, her essay,
 and Richard Wilbur
 Poem due
- February 19 Charlotte Pence Reading with Caleb Curtiss, at 6:00 p.m. in
 Doudna
- February 24 Workshop
 Poetry by Denise Levertov, her essay, Maxine Kumin, and
 Robert Creeley
 Poem due
- March 3 Workshop
 Poetry by Allen Ginsberg, his essay, Galway Kinnell, and
 John Ashberry
 Poem due
- March 10 Workshop
 Poetry by James Wright, Anne Sexton, and Adrienne Rich
 Poem due
- March 17 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
- March 24 Workshop
 Poetry by Derek Walcott, his essay, Gary Snyder, and Sylvia
 Plath
 Poem due
- March 31 Workshop
 Poetry by Mark Strand, Lucille Clifton, Seamus Heaney, and
 Fredrick Seidel (D2L)
 No Poem due: Start reading *Nox* and work on your review
- April 7 NO CLASS: Preparation for English Studies Conference and
 Anne Carson
- April 10 English Studies Conference, all day in Coleman Hall
 Presentation of Book Reviews
- April 13 Adam Clay Reading at 6:00 p.m. in the Dudley House
 with Dr. Robin Murray & graduating poet
- April 14 Book Review due
 Poetry by Anne Carson: *Nox*
 Poem due

- April 21 Workshop
Poetry by Robert Hass, Lyn Hejinian, and Yusef Komunyakaa
Poem due: Triangulate one subject with three subjects.
- April 28 Workshop
Read Southern Humanities Review's "Under the Radar:
Trends in Contemporary American Poetry." Link found on
D2L.
Optional: Poetry by Ai, Sharon Olds, Charles Bernstein and
his essay, and Alberto Ríos

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5th 7:30-9:30. Portfolios are due at this time.
Please submit in the box outside my office door by the end of the final exam
period.