ENG 2003-001: Introduction to Poetry Writing

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Course Description:

This is a course in both the reading and writing of poetry. It is based on the old-fashioned premise that reading and writing go together: a good writer knows how to read, accurately and critically. Our medium is language, and I expect you to listen to it, play with it, roll it around in your mouth: its verbs and nouns, its syllables and sounds. For this class throw away your computers and take out your quills: get physical with words when you're writing; use your mouth and hands when you're reading. Poetry matters—not in the commercial world but in the emotional one; it is not a commodity but a gift, but a gift earned, and earn it you will in here.

Grades:

Your grade will be primarily based on revisions. Revise, revise, revise. If you don't, and do only what is required generally, you will receive a "C." Simply to satisfy the course requirements means to receive a satisfactory—that is, a "C."

A final portfolio containing those revisions will be due the last day of class. (See the requirements below for what else is due that day.) I will grade each poem as it comes in with an initial grade. Don't be surprised if most of your early drafts get "F's" or "D's." That grade is not final, but either is that version of the poem. Revise it.

Requirements:

1. class participation—hard to do if you're not here
2. ten completed poems
3. daily journal/poetry log
4. 3-5 page critical evaluation of your own work

Schedule:

Week 1: Pocket Poems, selected readings, general intro to class
Week 2: Simic parody, selected readings in Hall
Week 3: Imagery—making sense of the senses
Week 4: Figures of Speech—how to figure them
Week 5: Symbols and Signs—that amber light
Week 6: The Sounds of Speech and, yes, Silence
Week 7: The Forms We Make—from home to first

Weeks 7-14: Workshop Sessions—hammering commas like nails

Poetry writing assignments will be made in class in response to class discussion, weather, and the whims of the instructor.

One final word: relax, have some fun, laugh at yourself, and me—