

Fall 8-15-2000

## ENG 2003-002: Poetry Writing

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### Recommended Citation

Smith, Lauren, "ENG 2003-002: Poetry Writing" (2000). *Fall 2000*. 57.  
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**Poetry Writing  
English 2003  
FALL 2000  
Phone: 359-9775**

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## Course Policy

**Goals:** Our first goal in this course will be to become better readers of poetry, to be able to better appreciate the difference between poetry and prose, but more importantly, to better appreciate the difference between more and less literary forms of expression. To that end, we will read lots of poetry, both as a class and as individual readers. You will also write a paper, do journal entries, and give a presentation on a poet of your choice. Our second goal is to help each other become better writers of poetry--which entails writing and rewriting, recycling the paper, and trying again. You will write poems and pieces of poems and ideas for poems in your journal. You will also workshop the poetry you write as a class, one-on-one, and sometimes with me. Towards the end of the semester, you will turn in a short portfolio of your best work--on which I will make general commentary and which you will share with the rest of the class.

**Attendance and Lateness:** The attendance policy is part of the grading policy. In addition, you should know that if your lateness becomes a problem, I will begin to count latenesses as absences.

**Late work:** A class like this cannot run smoothly if people do not bring their work in on time or if they are unprepared for presentations or workshops. For this reason, students who expect to make As or Bs **MUST** bring their work in on time and **MUST** be prepared for presentations, etc.

**Plagiarism:** Taking the words or ideas of another person without crediting that person is a serious matter and will be treated as such. Cases of intentional plagiarism will result in an NC for the course. Unintentional plagiarism, however, is also serious. You are responsible for knowing how to properly cite other writers and will be penalized for failing to do so.

**Grades:** Rather than breaking various elements of the course into percentage points, I will use a contract grading scheme to assign grades at the end of the semester. That means that in order to get a particular grade you must meet all the requirements for that grade. The advantage of this system is that there are no surprises--you know exactly what it will take to get a particular grade. It will, however, require of you a certain consistency. You won't be able to pull bad grades up at the last minute or let some one element of the course slide. If you fail to meet the requirements for, say, an "A," then you automatically slide down to a "B."

In order to make an "A" in the class, you must make As on all formal written work (rewrites possible), make an A or a high B on your presentation, complete an A journal (see below), consistently participate in class (i.e. practically every day--especially in workshopping), submit 10 finished poems in your portfolio, and have no more than 3 unexcused absences.

In order to make a "B" you must make Bs on all formal written work (rewrites possible), make an A, B or a high C on your presentation, complete at least a B journal (see below), consistently participate in class (i.e. make significant contributions more days than not),

have at least 7 finished poems in your portfolio, and have no more than 5 unexcused absences.

In order to make a "C" you must make Cs on all formal written work (rewrites possible), make an A, B, or a C on your presentation, complete at least a D+ journal (see below), participate in class, submit 5 finished poems in your portfolio, and have no more than 7 unexcused absences.

To make a "D" in the class you must complete each element of the course and have no more than nine unexcused absences.

**Journals:** Journals should be a significant amount of work, but they should also be fun, and they should be a place for you to try out ideas and explore poetry for other components of the class. For example, you will be asked to give a presentation on a poet of your choice, and you might decide to explore some of that poet's work in your journal. You should also be writing down words and phrases and images that come up in the process of reading poems--and you should be working on drafts of poems--all of which will help you put together your final portfolio.

You should have two entries every week, one for exploring the poetry of other poets and one for exploring your own ideas--though the two are bound to overlap. In the first entry, you should include a xeroxed poem and a detailed but informal reading of that poem. What is going on in that poem line by line? What does it mean? What images and symbols are at work and how does each of them work? How does the poet structure this poem? Where are the line breaks and how do they contribute to meaning? How long are the stanzas and what shape is the poem? How do those things contribute to your reading of the poem? How does the poem work in terms of sound? How does the sound contribute to overall understanding of the poem? How does this poem relate to other poems by the same author? How does it relate to other poems you have become familiar with? In the second entry, you should write down ideas and images, words and phrases, from your readings for this or other courses, from your discussions with other people, from your dreams or daydreams or imagination. You should also, eventually or immediately, be writing drafts of poems, some of which will later be workshopped and/or submitted in your portfolio.

An A journal will always be thorough and thoughtful. It will show detailed analyses of poems read, thoughtful explanations of structures and interpretations, as well as serious drafting and gathering of ideas and images. Pages aren't really the point, but as a guideline the writing for the week would total somewhere in the neighborhood of four (handwritten) pages--two of analysis and two of drafting.

A B journal will often be just as thorough and thoughtful as the A journal is, but will be less consistent. Some weeks the entries are rushed or repetitive or short, and others they will be insightful and fully elaborated.

A C journal has many interesting moments and makes a real attempt to grapple with the problems of poetry, but is more often a bit short, fails to try the harder questions about sound and structure, seems often to have been written at the last minute.

A D journal has the requisite number of entries, but they are short, perhaps a page each, sometimes more and sometimes less. Also, they tend to be perfunctory and last minute.

**Paper:** You will get the assignment sheets for this later, but it will be 3-5 pages and should be an elaboration of the one of your journal entries. You will have one opportunity

to rewrite, but because I do give you that opportunity and because I will work with early drafts, I have high expectations regarding these papers.

**Presentation:** You will get the assignment sheets for oral presentations early--since the first presenters will speak within the first several weeks. Other presentations will be scattered over the course of the semester, the order of which will be determined by a drawing on Thursday.

**Portfolio:** Your portfolio will consist of a three-to-five-page paper in which you explore the development of your poetry over the course of the semester--including how your reading affected your work. It will also include poetry that has already gone through several rewrites--or that is the "fruit" of more extensive work with a particular theme, with particular imagery or form, sounds or ideas. Some of this poetry will have been workshopped and some of it will not have been workshopped. I may have read it or I may not have read it. If you want to be sure whether or not I consider it "finished," however, you should check with me. In any case, you should include ten poems, or ten pages of poetry, in your portfolio.

**Problems:** If you have any problems regarding scheduling, grades, papers, etc., please call me, come to office hours, or make an appointment. I'd be happy to talk to you about any of your concerns.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with documented disabilities may receive help. Contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services at 6583.

## Syllabus

T A 22	introduction
R A 24	Shakespeare 130 "The Silver Swan" "Snow on a Mountain" "The Canonization" "Go Down Moses" Shakespeare's 73
T A 29	"Sea Rose" "Persimmons" "Not Knowing" "Dusting" "From Essay on Psychiatrists" "The Skunk"
R A 31	Donne's Holy Sonnet 18 "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" John Berryman's 4 and 14 "Lady Lazarus" "Gretel in Darkness" "An Agony. As Now."
T S 5	<b>presentations 1-4</b> "Kubla Khan" "Heritage" Emily Dickinson's 465
R S 7	<b>presentations 5-8</b> "The Raven"

	<p>“Pied Beauty”  “Don’t Go Gently into That Good Night”</p>
T S 12	<p><b>presentations 9-12</b>  “Girls on a Bridge”</p>
R S 14	<p>“Hanging Fire”  “The Butcher’s Wife”  “This is Just to Say”</p>
T S 19	<p><b>presentations 13-16</b>  “Musee des Beaux Arts”  “Dream Variations”  “Howl”</p>
R S 21	<p><b>remaining presentations</b>  “The Mud Dauber Wasp”  “Love Calls us to the Things of This World”  “Eve to her Daughters”  <b>journals due</b></p>
T S 26 R S 28	<p>writing exercises  <b>papers dues</b>  writing exercises</p>
T O 3 R O 5	<p>writing exercises  writing exercises</p>
T O 10 R O 12	<p>workshops 1-5  workshops 6-10</p>
T O 17 R O 19	<p>workshops 11-15  catch up</p>
T O 24 R O 26	<p>workshops 1-5  workshops 6-10</p>
T O 31 R N 2	<p>workshops 11-15  catch-up  <b>journals due</b></p>
T N 7 R N 9	<p>workshops 1-5  workshops 6-10</p>
T N 14 R N 16	<p>workshops 11-15  catch up</p>
T N 28 R N 30	<p>conferences  conferences</p>
T D 5 R D 7	<p>conferences  READING  <b>journals and portfolios due</b></p>