Spring 1-15-2009

ENG 4762-001: Advanced Poetry Writing

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English 4762-001: Advanced Poetry Writing

Dr. Miho Nonaka
Time: 11-11:50 p.m. MWF       Class Location: Coleman 3159
Office: Coleman 3050   Mail Box: Coleman 3155   Phone: 581-6121   Email: mnonaka@eiu.edu
Office Hours: MWF 12:30-1:30 p.m., 3:30-3:30 p.m., F 12:30-1:30 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description:
This course is an advanced poetry workshop. The main activity of this course will be reading and discussing the works of professional poets and your peers. The focus of these workshops will be establishing your own distinct voice while experimenting with other styles. The final goal of these workshop is a twenty-page manuscript which will include your own poetic manifesto discussing your voice and the purpose of your poetic undertaking.

Texts:
Howe, Marie, *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time*
Vendler, Helen, *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*
Xeroxed handouts and electronic resources

Policies:
* Your attendance is important for everyone, but especially for you. If you miss more than 3 classes, I will lower your final grade by a letter. If you miss 5 or more classes, you will either drop the course or accept an F for the semester. As outlined in the student catalogue, I will consider an absence excused only for “reasons of illness, emergency, or university activity.” Unexcused absences are pretty much all others—oversleeping, hangovers, finishing papers for other classes, out-of-town trips (especially on Fridays), etc..

* I expect you to arrive ready to participate in discussion. Since the format of this class is primarily a workshop, participation is crucial. The quality as well as the frequency of your contributions affect your participation grade. If you have great attendance but rarely speak up in class, it will be difficult to get an A or B for your participation grade. Your written comments on your peers' works will also constitute an important part of the grade. You must type your comment to receive credit. Print your comment at the back of each poem, or on an individual sheet of paper (in other words, don't print your comments on several poems on the same sheet), so that I can pass your comment on to the person who wrote the poem. Include your name, the title of the poem and its author. I will collect your typed comments at the end of each workshop.

* If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing the material, completing all of the readings and turning in any assignments for that day. I recommend getting several classmates' phone numbers and email addresses so that you can keep up. Do not email me to ask for an “update” on missed assignments.

* Late comers (who arrive after 10 minutes) will receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I can mark their attendance. Every 3 instances of tardiness will count as 1 absence. Leaving the class early will be treated in the same manner.

* All assignments are due on the dates specified. You must also turn in your typed comments on the
poems on the day they are workshopped. **If you miss the workshop, don't turn in your late comments to me, but directly to the peers who wrote the poems.** Lateness will result in a lower grade. I will not accept assignments via email.

* All assignments must be typed and printed in black ink. You are responsible for saving copies of all work you turn in. Make sure to keep the old drafts of your poems. You will have to include the earlier version of every poem *with my comments still attached* in your final manuscript, along with the revised version, so that I can clearly see the changes you have made. You will not receive a grade on each poem you workshop the first time: instead, you will be graded on the final manuscript *(a collection of your revised poems)* at the end.

**Assignments:**
* Over the semester, we will read and discuss your work; you will prepare both individual poems and a packet *(3-4 poems of your own and a poem by a poet who has been influential to your writing)* to be workshopped.

* You will be assigned a presentation in which you will choose 1-3 poems by a contemporary poet. Bring enough copies of the poems for everyone, provide some background, offer your own observations and insight, and then lead the class in discussion by asking several analysis questions. It should take 15-20 minutes, including the class discussion. Keep the background information minimum; I am more interested in your interpretation of what the poet is trying to do through his/her particular use of language. **The poem(s) must be less than 20 years old** and published in a book or a nationally recognized literary magazine. This is a way for you to apprentice yourself to a poet working now or in the recent past, and present that poet's work and poetics to the workshop.

* At the semester's end, you will submit a manuscript of 20 pages of your best revised poems and poetic manifesto *(an *ars poetica* essay)* with previous drafts to show the progress.

**Note:** I reserve the right to alter or revise class policies and requirements for the course.

**Workshops:**
* You are responsible for providing copies of your poems for workshop discussion: one copy for me, and one each for everyone else in class. I will make a list of your last names, and for the most part, we will workshop alphabetically according to the list.

* We will start by having you read your poem out loud (or you may ask someone else in class to do it). While your peers discuss your work, you must remain silent. At the end of discussion you respond to the critique and have the option of asking for more feedback on specific parts that the class may have overlooked. Take notes on what is said in order to help you revise later.

* We will begin our critique with a general opinion of the work. Example: "I like the simplicity of the poem; the writer's honesty and passion for its subject come across clearly." Or: "The poem has a lovely melody to it. But I want the poem to 'show more and tell less' by putting some of its ideas into tangible images. The lack of images makes the poem less interesting." Or: "Although I enjoy the mysterious atmosphere of the poem, I often don't know what exactly is happening in the poem." Or: "There are so many great, vivid images. The line breaks are a little distracting, though. Some lines are very long, while others are very short." Or: "I love the idea and emotion woven through this poem, and
I believe that you can make it more powerful by replacing the abstract words and clichés with something more concrete and original.” We will then move on to more specific/editorial comments. Example: “The last two lines of the third stanza are awkward to read; the wording needs to be changed.” Or: “Some poems work well without much punctuation; however, this one would be easier to read with some periods.”

* Make an extra effort to define what a poem is doing well; at the same time, address problems honestly and unapologetically. False praise does not help the writer in any way but stunts his/her progress. Never give or take criticism personally. When taking criticism, be open-minded, but remember that what you revise is ultimately your decision. Listen carefully to your peers' remarks and use what is most helpful to you.

**Grading:**
Participation (attendance, having poems ready for the workshops, which means having enough typewritten poems for everyone in class, spoken and typed comments on your peers' poems, and the discussion of the assigned readings): 40%
Presentation: 20%
Manuscript: 40%

Note: I do not keep a running tally of your current grade from day to day, so please don't ask. You should keep your own record of your participation and all of your assignments.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. I will follow the English Department policy on plagiarism:

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work’ (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of “F” for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.”

Moreover, you are not allowed to workshop your old poems unless they are significantly revised this semester.

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Course Calendar**
This is a tentative schedule, which will evolve as the class progresses. Changes will be announced in class.

**Week 1**
M Jan 12: Introduction
W Jan 14: Discuss poetic manifesto/ars poetica packet (xerox); distribute the copies of your favorite
poem to the class
F Jan 16: Introduce favorite poems Last day to ADD courses

Week 2
M Jan 19: No class; M. L. King's Birthday
W Jan 21: Poem #1 due; discuss favorite poems
F Jan 23: Workshop

Week 3
M Jan 26: Workshop Last day to DROP a course with No Grade/No Charge
W Jan 28: Poem #2 due; workshop
F Jan 30: Workshop

Week 4
M Feb 2: Workshop
W Feb 4: Poem for conference due; workshop
F Feb 6: Conference

Week 5
M Feb 9: Conference Last day to Withdraw
W Feb 11: Conference
F Feb 13: No class; Lincoln's Birthday

Week 6
M Feb 16: No class
W Feb 18: Poem #3 due (the revision of conference poem); discuss “Four Temperaments and the Forms of Poetry” by Gregory Orr (xerox)
F Feb 20: Workshop

Week 7
M Feb 23: Workshop
W Feb 25: Poem #4 due; discuss The Kingdom of Ordinary Time by Marie Howe
F Feb 27: Workshop

Week 8
M Mar 2: Workshop
W Mar 4: Poem #5 due; discuss The Kingdom of Ordinary Time
F Mar 6: Workshop

Week 9
M Mar 9: Workshop
W Mar 11: Workshop; presentation
F Mar 13: Everyone's poetry packet due (your 3-4 poems plus a poem by a poet who's been influential); presentations

Week 10
M Mar 16: No class; Spring Break
W Mar 18: No class; Spring Break
F Mar 20: No class; Spring Break

Week 11
M Mar 23: **Start keeping dream journal;** packet workshop
W Mar 25: Packet workshop; presentation
F Mar 27: Packet workshop; presentation

Week 12
M Mar 30: Packet workshop
W Apr 1: Packet workshop; presentation
F Apr 3: Packet workshop; presentation  *Last day to withdraw with W*

Week 13
M Apr 6: Packet workshop
W Apr 8: Packet workshop; presentation
F Apr 10: Packet workshop; presentation

Week 14
M Apr 13: Packet workshop
W Apr 15: **Dream poem plus 3 dreams due;** packet workshop; presentation
F Apr 17: Workshop; presentation

Week 15
M Apr 20: Workshop; presentation
W Apr 22: **Final poem due;** workshop; presentation
F Apr 24: Presentations

Week 16
M Apr 27: Workshop
W Apr 29: Workshop
F May 1: **Final manuscript due;** last class day