

Creative Writing: Advanced Poetry Workshop, Course 300, Barrett 020

Dr. Tina Barr's New Office is 308B Palmer Hall, 843-3979 Office Hours Mondays 1:30 to 3:00 pm, Tuesdays, 11:00 to 12:30, and by appointment. You can also email me at: TinaBarr@rhodes.edu & TinaBarr@bellsouth.net. Extra copies of the syllabus, the Sr. Writing Project Guidelines and Recommendation request guidelines are in folders in the bin outside my office door. Any forms can be left and will be signed mornings between Mondays and Thursdays. Stop back at the end of the day to pick up your form. For those of you interested, the department will present a panel on Graduate Schools for Creative Writers. If you have any interest, now or in the future, in going to graduate school, be sure to attend this panel.

Course Description: This class will advance students knowledge of the principles of good poetry, including prosody, through readings in **Required Texts:**

1. *The Norton Anthology of Modern & Contemporary Poetry, Vol 2, Contemporary* 2. *An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity of Their Art*, edited by Annie Finch and Katherine Varnes, 3. *The Handbook of Poetic Forms*, edited by Ron Padgett. (3 texts) Students are expected to *analyze and prepare to discuss the poems and essays they read ahead of time, so that they will make significant contributions to class discussion*. The more each member contributes in different ways to the workshop the more interesting it will be.

A word here--- Most of us have written poetry to express our feelings, but poetry is an art, and it requires perhaps *more* discipline and hard work to achieve a decent poem, than to write a clear essay. You will have to relinquish the idea that you can express your feelings on paper, and that will be enough. It won't. You'll need to edit extensively, to re-think and re-write sections of your poem in order to make it a piece of thoughtful work, rather than purely and solely an expression of self. In addition, because you *are* expressing your feelings, you'll have to be willing to *examine* them and share them, and that takes courage. This semester, as well, you will begin, if you haven't already, to try to express your ideas through received or invented forms. Make use of your *Handbook of Poetic Forms* as reference. Do not rely solely on the book of essays.

Course Requirements:

1. Students must attend carefully to the **reading requirements** by preparing the reading outside of class, and **contribute significantly to class discussion including two oral reports---see below. (20%).**

2. Students must turn in a **portfolio (50%)** of poems at midterm and at end of term; these should consist of a folder that contains only the **final revisions** of the best *poems you have worked on from the beginning of term through midterm* (first portfolio) and *then from the beginning of term through the end of the semester* (second portfolio). Portfolios should consist of 8-14 poems. Excellence is more important than quantity, and usually comes after careful revision. Midterm grades tend to be conservative, so grades *can* go up considerably, but *may also remain the same* for a final grade if you have been unable to improve your work.

3. Students will prepare two oral presentations on topics to be selected. (30%) You will be graded on them. If I feel the class needs to be prodded in terms of careful attention to the assigned reading, I may surprise the class with spontaneous quizzes, which will be graded as part of class participation.

Grading: Grades are based on talent as demonstrated in the poems, but achievement in poetry is usually the result of the *work* of *editing and revising*. Writers must employ clear grammatical construction, complete sentences, and careful punctuation. They must make use of concrete imagery and careful diction. Poetry is a discipline. The use of abstract terms and generalized imagery will not result in good poetry. Careful reading of fellow students' work, careful reading of assigned texts, class participation, effort and attitude also count. The professor has been known to reduce a final grade based on attitude alone. (This falls under contributions to class discussion 20%.)

Procedures: Students will be responsible for turning in **copies for each class member and for the professor** of each poem they want discussed in class. Please note: You should prepare the weekend before, for the coming week. Sometimes we will discuss the assigned readings on Tuesdays, and the student work on Thursdays; at other times we may begin discussion with student poems on Tuesdays. Thus: "Assignment for next week" is due the following week.

Weekly Requirements for Poems: Students generally will turn in a poem every week for class discussion. Students should be continually revising their work. ALL students need to complete the weekly exercises.

Conferences: Conference time is built into the syllabus as part of the opportunity offered by this course. Once a student has signed up for a conference he or she must attend. **Conferences that are missed cannot be rescheduled.** Students should use this time to consult if they have difficulty with their writing, would like to share poems they'd rather the class did not see, or have questions about editing procedures. Always bring your poetry folder of poems you are writing this semester to class and to conference, since if we have extra time, I may have impromptu tutorials with individuals during the last part of class. Keep extra copies of all your poems, not just in your hard drive.

Attendance: Students should miss no more than 3 classes a semester, based on a medical absence or family emergency. Thus, baring surgery, if you get sick, you will be covered. So do not miss class unless you inform the professor. If you need to miss a class based on either a family emergency or an illness, please call or email the professor. More than 3 (unexcused) absences will likely result in a reduction in the final grade for the course.

Course Structure: We will be reading short essays each week from *An Exaltation of Forms*. Class will be based on these discussions in conjunction with examples of poems in the above text AND outside reading in *The Norton Anthology*. Thus you will broaden your focused reading in poetry in general. You will also turn in a poem a week, based on

our discussion OR by selecting on your own a Poetic "form" from the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. The poem should be marked near your name with the identification of the form. You have a choice then, of looser or more disciplined forms, but you'll need to turn in some more disciplined forms, regardless of your predilections. They will be assigned. You can also turn in any poems you want to discuss, either revisions or new poems of any sort. Think of the workshop as time devoted to YOUR work. Because this is a small group, you will have a lot more individual attention, but your participation will need to be more intensive. Hopefully, I can help you develop an enormous amount this semester.

Student Reports: You will give two oral reports during the semester. You should take about 20 minutes of class time.

Responsibilities: My job as your professor is to instruct you in techniques of poetic analysis and model for you the terms and approaches to that analysis. A poem has meanings in the plural. It presents an array of ideas. My job is also to assist you in learning to improve your writing of poems. Your job is to assimilate my suggestions and revise your work accordingly. I've been teaching students to write since the early 1980s and my students have gone on the graduate school, publication in national journals and sometimes chapbooks and books of their own. The most difficult challenge in writing poetry is to separate your emotional defenses from making a piece of art, a finished thing, a scrutinized thing. You have to know that technique is crucial in all fields, whether it's playing basketball, taking a car engine apart, dancing, playing an instrument, driving a car, baking a cake, or writing a poem. You have to practice. You have to work. You have to measure carefully the distance between the ball and the hoop or the amount in a teaspoon, or the verb you want to use that really does some *work*.

Week 1, 8/23

Introductions, class requirements, sign up for conferences and oral reports. We do not meet on days when conferences are scheduled. **Pay careful attention to the syllabus to follow the requirements of the course, including cancelled classes due to conference days or off-campus writing assignments.**

Assignment for next week: Read in an *Exaltation of Forms* essay by Dana Gioia, beginning on page 15, as well as poems he includes in his essay. Read in *Norton Anthology* section by Gwendolyn Brooks. Write a poem based on accentual verse, or free verse form in the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Following on Gwendolyn Brooks' work, write about some **detailed experience** rooted in childhood in a particular neighborhood; then play with the stresses in each line, or just write in free verse. **Bring in enough copies for the class for discussion next Tuesday.**

Week 2, 8/28 & 8/30

Student Presentation on the life of Gwendolyn Brooks

Discussion of Gioia essay on Accentual Verse and poems he includes. Students should turn in copies of a poem on Tuesday.

*Assignment for **September 11th**:* Read in *Exaltation of Forms* essay by Margaret Holley on Syllabics, page 24 and "Conjugation of the Paramecium," by Muriel Rukeyser, page 80 in the anthology, & Ann Sexton's "The Room of My Life," page 437 in the Norton. Read section in the Norton by Robert Creeley. Student report on poem by Marianne Moore. Write a poem in syllabics, remembering to mark the assignment as syllabics.

Week 3, 9/4 & 9/6, Conference Week. See Dr. Barr in Palmer 308B, her office, during the conference time you scheduled on the first day of class. She will post the list on her office door. Bring your poems and drafts when you come to conference.

Assignment for next week: Read in *Exaltation of Forms* essay by Margaret Holley on Syllabics, page 24 and "Conjugation of the Paramecium," by Muriel Rukeyser, page 80 in the anthology, & Ann Sexton's "The Room of My Life," page 437 in the Norton, as well as poems by Robert Creeley. Student report on the work of Marianne Moore. Write a poem in syllabics, remembering to mark the assignment as syllabics. Bring in enough copies to distribute on Tuesday. Also bring in revisions from poems you discussed with Professor Barr in conference.

Week 4, 9/11 Two Events this week: **On 9/11**, Tuesday, from 6 to 7:30 there will be an Open Mic Night in Rhea Lounge, with Pizza and Sodas. Sign up to read a poem. Tony Doerr reads from his fiction at 7:30pm **on 9/13** in Hardee Hall, the auditorium in Tuthill, the music building. He is terrific.

Student Report on Marianne Moore poem at end of essay. Discussion of Holley essay and poems by Creeley, Rukeyser and Sexton. (discussion of student poems and "White Glove" exercise) & no class on 9/13, but you must do "White Glove" cw exercise off-campus.

Assignment for next week Read essay by Hilda Morley on Organic Form, page 325 in the book of Essays. Read the accompanying poems as well as these poems in the *Norton Anthology*: "Persimmons," by Li Young Lee, page 1041, "Forty Something," and other poems, page 788 by Robert Hass. Student Reports due on the work and bios of Li Young Lee, and Robert Hass. Write a poem based on organic form, bring in copies on Tuesday.

Week 5, 9/18 & 9/20

Discussion of Morley's essay & poems by LYL and Hass. Thursday: Student Reports on the work and bios of Li Young Lee, and Robert Hass. In-class writing assignment, re Persimmons.

Assignment for next week : Read essay on Blank Verse by Anthony Hecht in *E of F*; read Amy Clampitt's "A Procession at Candlemas," page 186 in the Norton. Write a poem, in

blank verse, or another form; mark its form on the page when you turn in your copies on Tuesday, October 2nd.

Week 6, 9/25 No class on 9/27, Professor Barr doing poetry reading at Southern Women's Writers Conference in Georgia

Discussion of Hecht essay and Clampitt poem.

Assignment for 10/2: Work on revision of poem in blank verse or other form and turn in copies for class discussion on 10/2. Begin the work of assembling your portfolio for midterm. Bring in any revisions you want discussed on 10/2.

Midterm portfolios due on 10/9, no exceptions.

Week 7, 10/2 & 10/4

Workshop Day: discussion of student poems on 10/2. 10/4 Lecture and Object lesson exercise or further discussion of student poems.

Assignment for next week: Read essay on Free Verse by Michelle Boisseau, on page 73 in *E of F*. Prepare to discuss the poems at the end of the essay. Write a poem in free verse and include it in your portfolio. Revise Object Lesson exercise. **You can include these poems in your portfolio, but you'll have my responses to them in class next week.** Distribution of off-campus writing assignment.

Week 8, 10/9 portfolio due

Turn in copies of poem in free verse and object lesson exercise. Discussion of student poems on Tuesday. You can include these poems in your portfolio.

No assignment over Fall Break

Week 9, Thursday, 10/18 Complete off-campus writing assignment during class period.

Assignment for next week: Read "The Blues," an essay by Raymond Patterson, in *E of Forms*, as well as the sections by poets informed by the blues: Robert Hayden and Yusef Komunyakaa in the *Norton*. Write a blues poem and revise off-campus writing assignment you did on Thursday morning.

Week 10, 10/23 & 10/25

Discussion of essay & Hayden & Komunyakaa poems. Turn in blues and other poems. Two Student Reports on African-American Poets in the *Norton*: choices of Amiri Baraka, and Lucille Clifton. Consult with me if you want to choose another Af-American poet. You can include these poems in your portfolio from your anthology.

Assignment for next week: Read essay on The Sonnet by Marilyn Hacker in *E of F*, and the sonnets included at the end of the essay, as well as sonnet on page 1037, "White Spine," and "Childlessness," page 1039, by Henri Cole, and "Manhole Covers," page 71 by Karl Shapiro. Write a sonnet. Two students to report on sonnets.

Week 11, 10/30 & 11/1

Discussion of reading and poems. Two Student Reports on Sonnets. Discussion of student poems to begin on Thursday and continue into next week.

Assignment for next week: Work on revisions of all your poems. Read Maxine Kumin's essay on "Gymnastics: The Villanelle," page 314 in *Exaltation of Forms*, with special attention to Elizabeth Bishop's poem cited in the essay and on page 43 of the *Norton*, "One Art" and the opening section of "Parsley," by Rita Dove, page 979 in the *Norton*. Write a villanelle.

Week 12, 11/6 & 11/8

Discussion of Kumin essay and Dove poem, as well as student villanelles, and Student Report on Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art."

**Week 13, 11/13 & 11/15
& Week 14, 11/20**

This week and a half before and after Thanksgiving Break will be set aside for private conferences.

We will not meet in class. Please sign up on the sheet, which will be posted on Dr. Barr's office door, Palmer 308B. Bring to conference the 2 poems you find most difficult to revise.

Assignment for 11/27 & 11/29: Bring copies for everyone of revised poems you want discussed during the workshop. Final Portfolio due on 11/29, share the best poem you wrote this semester with the class.

Week 15, 11/27 & 11/29

Discussions of student poems during this week of final workshops. On Thursday, when you bring in portfolio, share best poem you wrote this semester by reading it aloud to the class. If you can memorize it, even better. Two Student Reports on Poets on Thursday.

Week 16, 12/4, ----Breakfast meeting off-campus.