

ENGLISH 300: INTERMEDIATE POETRY WORKSHOP

Fall Semester 2012

M/W/F 1:00–1:50 PM, Barret Library 216

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Office: Palmer 304
Office hours: M/T/W 2:00–3:00 PM, and by appt.

TEXTS

Finch, Annie and Kathrine Varnes, eds. *An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity of Their Art*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
Strand, Mark and Eavan Boland, eds. *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*. New York: W.W Norton, 2001.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help participants broaden and enhance their approach to poetic form. While we can agree that all poems make use of form, our discussions will focus primarily on metrics, specific stanza patterns, and received forms such as the sonnet, sestina, and pantoum. We will consider both visual and aural aspects of form—the experience of reading a printed poem, and the experience of hearing it read aloud. We will read a large sampling of poems, from Anglo-Saxon verse to contemporary lyrics, and we will compose poems in a variety of forms, experimenting with structure, shape, texture, rhythm, and sound.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Weekly poems and final portfolio.** Over the course of the semester you will write twelve poems, many which will be workshopped by the class. At the end of the semester you will submit a portfolio that includes the original drafts of these twelve poems (with my comments) and six revisions.
- **Report on a rare(r) form.** Once during the semester you will present a short report (5-10 minutes) on a form related to the week's reading. Additionally, you will prepare and distribute a handout that meets the following objectives: 1) provides a brief history of the form (where did it originate, and with whom?), 2) describes the form, outlining its specific rules or constraints, and 3) provides two examples of the form (preferably two examples that achieve different effects). I have included a list of forms and the dates they will be discussed at the end of this syllabus. Most of the forms can be found in your book, but I am happy to help you track down examples and further information.
- **Memorization.** You will memorize at least twenty lines of poetry (a short poem or several stanzas of a longer one). Recitations will take place on December 3.

★ All work must be typed, and assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. I do not accept late work unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand; the same goes for work sent through email. Late assignments will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e. from A to A-, from A- to B+, and so forth). Assignments received more than a week late will receive an F.

Workshop

I have divided the class into three groups, and we will workshop one group nearly every week. The Monday that your group is up for workshop, you will bring in copies of your poem to distribute to the class. Please be sure to make a copy for yourself.

Prior to workshop, members of the class will read the poems in that week's group and write a critique of each poem that takes the form of a letter addressed to the author; you will distribute these letters to their respective authors at the end of class. Each letter should be roughly half of a double-spaced page in length. The focus of your critique will change depending on the week's assignment, and we will talk more about these procedures during the first weeks of the semester. I will collect your letters at random.

Participation

A workshop cannot succeed unless everyone in the class participates; even if you are the quiet type, I will count on you to contribute to class discussions. Likewise, you are expected to complete your reading, to critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect, and to come to class with all the required materials (poems for workshop, handouts, both books, and so forth). Failure to do any of these things will result in a lower participation grade.

Additionally, I may give quizzes. These will be short (3-5 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them. If you fail a quiz, you will be marked absent for the day.

Course Schedule in Brief

Week 1, Aug. 22-24	Syllabics
Week 2, Aug. 27 – Sept. 1	Accentual-syllabic meter
Week 3, Sept. 3-7	Blank verse
Week 4, Sept. 10-14	Couplets
Week 5, Sept. 17-21	Quatrains
Week 6, Sept. 24-28	Sonnets
Week 7, Oct. 1-5	Villanelles
Week 8, Oct. 8-12	Ballads
Week 9, Oct. 15-19	Sestinas
Week 10, Oct. 22-26	Pantoums and ghazals
Week 11, Oct. 29 – Nov. 2	Prose poems
Week 12, Nov. 5-9	Found poems
Week 13, Nov. 12-16	Non-iambic poems
Week 14, Nov. 19-23	The ode
Week 15, Nov. 26-30	Rarer forms

POLICIES

Attendance

You are allowed three absences, excused or otherwise. For each absence after the third, your final grade will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade. If you miss more than eight classes, you will fail the course.

Grading

Weekly poems	50%
Final portfolio	30%
Report and memorization	10%
Participation (includes attendance, quizzes and workshop comments)	10%
Total	100%

When working with rhyme, meter, and received form, you may find it harder to make your ideas and sensibilities come through in the poem. This will take practice, and you should expect to spend a significant amount of time on the poems you write for this course. When evaluating poems, I will ask the following questions:

- 1) Does the poem adhere to the rules of the form, or does the poet provide a convincing explanation for any deviations?
- 2) Does the poem meet the guidelines of the assignment, and does it build on skills and techniques previously discussed?
- 3) Does the writing reflect sustained effort, and has the poet taken care to avoid the various pitfalls of formal composition (the Dr. Seuss Effect, Hallmark sentiment, metrical padding, and so forth)?
- 4) Has the poet attended to other aspects of craft such as tone, diction, and imagery?
- 5) Has the poet taken meaningful risks with the poem?

When grading your final portfolios, I will consider all of the above as well as the quality of your revisions. We will discuss specific strategies for revision in class.

I will assign midterm grades to give you a sense of where you stand, and you are always welcome—and encouraged—to discuss your progress with me.

Academic Honesty

All work in this course should be original and individual, unless I have made a group assignment. Evidence of collusion (someone helped you write the assignment), plagiarism (using someone else's published or unpublished words without acknowledgement), or multiple submissions (handing in the same work to different classes) will not be tolerated. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the College's honor code.

Reports

- Terza rima (9/19) _____
- Spenserian stanzas (9/19) _____
- Curtal sonnet and sonnet redoublé (9/26) _____
- Rondeaux and Roundels (10/3) _____
- Triolet (10/3) _____
- The Blues (10/8) _____
- Canzone (10/19) _____
- Cinquain and quatern (10/22) _____
- Renku (10/24) _____
- Epigram (10/31) _____
- *Carmina figurata* (10/31) _____
- Mirror form (11/12) _____
- Swivel lines (11/14) _____
- Litany (11/16) _____
- Ballade (11/16) _____

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