

Syllabus, Rhodes College, Fall 2011

ENG 300

CREATIVE WRITING, INTERMEDIATE POETRY

MWF 9-9:50am

Clough Hall 300

Professor Molinary

Palmer Hall, 304

843-3246

molinarym@rhodes.edu

Office Hours: (with noted exceptions)

Tuesdays & Thursdays 2-4pm or by appt.

Keeping Out Rain / Movement & Constraint
(Working With & Against Form & Structure in Poetry)

Hesiod's epic hexameters propel his poem [Theogony] forward from generation to generation, containing it against decay or meaninglessness.

—Anne Carson, intro to **it**

It. That's it. That started it. It is. Goes on. Moves. Beyond. Becomes. Becomes it and it and it. Goes further than that. Becomes something else. Becomes more. Combines something else with more to keep becoming something else and more. Goes further than that. Becomes...

—Inger Christensen, **it**

Poetry requires an invention of form.

—Lyn Hejinian

REQUIRED TEXTS

Caplan, Poetic Form: An Introduction [CAPLAN]

Christensen, Inger, Butterfly Valley: A Requiem [BUTTERFLY]

Christensen, Inger, it [it]

Rankine & Sewell, American Poets in the 21st Century: The New Poetics [ANTH]

The above texts have all been ordered through the Rhodes Bookstore. Please buy immediately. Students must have all the above texts by Friday, 26 August. Additionally, students will be asked to borrow or buy or otherwise obtain the Fall 2011 issue of *Beloit Poetry Journal*, a TBA text by Antje Krog, & one or two books by a single author. These will be announced by Week 8 or 9 to be acquired by week 11. Handouts may also be required or suggested reading.

DESCRIPTION/OVERVIEW

This course is intended to give students an opportunity to further refine & define creative writing ideas & skills learned in either an introductory poetry class or an introductory fiction class. Beginning in the crucial current, we will then “go back” to employ, study, & question the more traditional forms of poetry. Students will choose a topic & then, using devices of revision and re-invention, students will learn to work with & against not only inherited forms but forms of their own so that they can begin to make more potent choices according to the needs of subject & context. In addition to studying & discussing as much as possible from the required texts, students will write.

The majority of writing will generate from reading & from exercises & techniques plied in class & further honed in weekly assignments. This class also serves as an introduction to poetics in preparation for more advanced, theoretical work at the senior level.

COURSE OBJECTIVE & STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

If a student enters into & completes the class with proper measures of humility, curiosity, & passionate engagement with all the course material, required & suggested, that student will exit the course with increased measures of humility, curiosity, & passionate engagement with the world; that student will have affianced herself or himself, in permanent compact, to the bright lights of imagination, intelligent inquiry, & critical understanding.

Students will be responsible for coming to each class meeting on time having completed all reading & writing assignments & fully prepared to participate in a most lively, generous, & courteous manner. In addition to active participation in all aspects of the class & workshops, students will be responsible for comments on peer work when applicable; for all in-class & homework writing assignments; for two *short* essays; for one presentation; for a final portfolio of 8-10 “finished” poems with poet statement; & for one final exam take-home assignment.

GRADING

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|--|------------|
| <u>Reading & Daily Participation</u> | <u>20%</u> |
| <u>Essay #1</u> | <u>10%</u> |
| <u>Essay #2 / Presentation</u> | <u>20%</u> |
| <u>Weekly Homework/Poems & Final Portfolio</u> | <u>30%</u> |
| <u>Final Assignment</u> | <u>20%</u> |

Grade Ranges:

F = Work incomplete &/or attendance issues.

D = Work complete but lacking any obvious sign of curiosity or effort;
participation lackluster; &/or attendance issues.

C = Fine. All work complete with signs of curiosity & effort;
attendance & participation also fine. Good.

B = Very good verging on excellent. All work completed with verve & curiosity.
Passionate engagement is evident.

A = Above & beyond. All assignments completed with flair; impeccable participation;
evidence of further work, i.e. suggested reading or work beyond the basic requirements.

POLICIES

- In any space of collective learning, but in a creative writing class in particular, generosity, courtesy & respect are, perhaps, the most important policies.
- Attendance is crucial, but keep in mind that “attendance” means more than the presence of your physical body in the classroom; your mind & voice need be present & active as well. To count you “present” for any given day, I’ll need to see evidence of a heartbeat—of blood coursing through your veins, lungs taking in air supplying oxygen to your brain & your mouth with words. The classroom is a space of collective learning & it may be a dying

breed. Take advantage of this space—actual human bodies in a room, engaged together in human thought, imagination, & the history of ideas.

- No whining or public displays of disaffection. See me straight away if you have a problem. Trust. Trust that there are reasons for everything we do in class even if you can't yet imagine how or why. Trust that this class is designed to help you become better writers, readers, thinkers—better humans. In that spirit, attempt everything. Don't simply dismiss any given exercise or assignment. **See me about any documented disability.
- Generally speaking, no late work will be accepted.
- This classroom is a “safe zone.”
- Professor reserves the right to expel from the class any student who behaves like a troglodyte. The interpretation of “troglodyte” is in the sole purview of the professor.
- Antithetical to the current climate, in the realm of this course, all students are considered adults & all will be treated as such & expected to act as such. You choose to learn or not.
- Please review the Rhodes Honor Code pertaining to plagiarism &tc.
- Finally: because words & their meanings are arbitrary & because one of the purposes of this course is to help students think more deeply, imaginatively, & critically about languages & their implications, the professor retains the right to cuss &/or use language in colorful manner in order to make students think about words.

DAILY SCHEDULE

What follows is the first two weeks only. Once I've assessed the needs of the class, the remainder of the daily schedule will be handed out (no later than Labor Day).

***Please note that the daily schedule is subject to change. It is the student's responsibility—within reason—to stay abreast. I like to reserve room for spontaneity.

In general: we will discuss readings & forms on Mondays; poems will be turned in (x # copies depending on class size) on Wednesdays; & Fridays will be either further writing exercises or workshop. There will be reading & writing every week. The first essay will be due on Monday, October 3. The second essay & presentation will be due during the penultimate week of class. The final portfolio will be due at the beginning of the last class. We'll have a reading that last week as well. The final assignment will be due on Monday, 12 December by 9am.

Week 1. You

W 8/24: Introduction to the course; explanation of topics.

F 8/26: Bring 1 poem from a previous class & a very brief poet's statement putting the poem in the context of ANTH. This will be further explained in class.

Week 2. METER

M 8/29: CAPLAN pp1-39 + scan “comic forms” + bring ANTH + topics due

W 8/31: Poem 1 due: Short, memorable (*memorable*) poem no less than 3 lines, no more than 6.

F 9/2: Recitation of poems; line break exercise (in-class). MONDAY the 5th is Labor day NO CLASS.

