

## ENGLISH 300: INTERMEDIATE POETRY WORKSHOP

Fall Semester 2013

Tu/Th 2:00 – 3:45 PM, Clough Hall 300

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Office hours: Tu/Th 11:00–12:30 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.

Levin, Dana. *Sky Burial*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2011.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Fussell, Paul. *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*. Rev. ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1979.

Strand, Mark and Eavan Boland, eds. *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*. New York: W.W Norton, 2001.

Turco, Lewis Putnam. *The Book of Forms*. Rev. and expanded ed. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2012.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course builds on material from Introduction to Poetry Writing, with a special emphasis on poetic form. While we can agree that all poems make use of form, our discussions will focus primarily on metrics, stanzaic 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 eleven 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 eleven poems (be sure to save the drafts with my comments) and six revisions. For each of your revisions you will include a brief description (2-3 paragraphs) of your writing process; for example, you might describe the poem's transformation from first to final draft, or you might discuss specific decisions you made about rhythm, lineation, voice, and so forth. In the case of your free verse poem, this description will take the form of a longer "process narrative," the details of which we will discuss in class.

- **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. For this report 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
  - 3) includes three examples: two examples from published authors, as well as your own attempt at the form
  - 4) adheres to the MLA guidelines for formatting and documentation

A list of forms and the dates they will be discussed is included on p. 4.
- **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 November 26.

### Workshop

I have divided the class into three groups, and we will workshop one group nearly every week. The formats for these workshops will change as the semester progresses, but for the first several rounds this is how it will work: The week that your group is up for workshop, you will email your poem to the class (pasted in the body of the email *and* attached as a Word document or PDF). Prior to workshop, everyone will read the poems in that week's group and write a critique of each poem in the form of a letter addressed to the author. You are required to email me all of your letters, copied and pasted in the body of the email, by 8 AM on the day of workshop. Additionally, you will print out copies of these letters and distribute them to their respective authors at the end of the workshop. Each letter should be typed and roughly half of a double-spaced page in length. The focus of your critiques will vary depending on the week's assignment, and we will talk more about these procedures in class.

### Participation

Active participation is an essential component of this course. A workshop cannot succeed unless everyone in the class attends and participates. Even if you are the quiet type, you will be expected to contribute to class discussions and to critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect. If you come to class without the required materials (poems for workshop, handouts, both books, and so forth), you will be marked as absent for the day.

Additionally, I may give quizzes. We will read a lot of poems each week, and we may not be able to discuss them all in class. Quizzes will help me keep track of your progress. These will be short (3-4 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them.

Please note that the poet Dana Levin will be visiting our class on Thursday, November 7 and giving a reading on campus that evening. Your attendance and active participation, both in class and at the reading, is mandatory.

## Assignments

All work must be typed, and assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Late work will receive a 0 unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand. With the exception of poems submitted for workshop, I will not accept work via email.

## Course Schedule in Brief

Week 1, Aug. 22	Introductions
Week 2, Aug. 27 & 29	Syllabics and accentual verse
Week 3, Sept. 3 & 5	Blank verse
Week 4, Sept. 10 & 12	Couplets
Week 5, Sept. 17 & 19	Quatrains and sestets
Week 6, Sept. 24 & 26	Sonnets
Week 7, Oct. 1 & 3	Villanelles
Week 8, Oct. 8 & 10	Sestinas
Week 9, Oct. 17	Sestinas
Week 10, Oct. 22 & 24	Prose poems
Week 11, Oct. 29 & 31	Avant-garde forms
Week 12, Nov. 5 & 7	Rarer forms
Week 13, Nov. 12 & 14	Free verse
Week 14, Nov. 19 & 21	Free verse
Week 15, Nov. 26	Revision
Week 16, Dec. 3	Revision

## 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

<b>Weekly poems</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Final portfolio</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Participation</b> (includes attendance, quizzes and workshop letters)	<b>20%</b>
<b>Report and memorization</b>	<b>10%</b>

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 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.

Because this course is workshop-based with an emphasis on revision, you will not receive letter grades for individual poems. However, I will hold conferences with you twice during the semester, and I will assign midterm grades to give you a sense of where you stand. 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 Honor Code.

### **Reports**

- Ballad (9/17) \_\_\_\_\_
- Blues (9/19) \_\_\_\_\_
- Terza rima (9/26) \_\_\_\_\_
- Rondeaux and Roundels (10/1) \_\_\_\_\_
- Pantoum (10/3) \_\_\_\_\_
- Ballade (10/8) \_\_\_\_\_
- Concrete / *carmina figurata* (10/24) \_\_\_\_\_
- Cento (10/29) \_\_\_\_\_
- Oulipio (10/31) \_\_\_\_\_
- Ghazal (11/5) \_\_\_\_\_
- Sapphics (11/12) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS</b>
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Reading and writing assignments are listed on the day they are due.

“EF” refers to *An Exaltation of Forms*. All other essays and poems referenced will be available on Moodle.

**Thursday, 8/22**

Introductions / syllabus review

**Tuesday, 8/27**

Read: Margaret Holley, “Syllabics: Sweeter Melodies” (EF)

Dana Gioia, “Accentual Verse” (EF)

**Thursday, 8/29**

Read: Handout: Fussell, “The Nature of Meter” and “The Technique of Scansion” (Moodle)

**Tuesday, 9/3**

Read: Handout: blank verse poems (Moodle)

Write: Accentual or syllabic lines

**Thursday, 9/5**

Read: John Ridland, “Iambic Meter” (EF)

**Tuesday, 9/10**

Read: Handout: “The Heroic Couplet” (Moodle)

Write: Blank verse; Group A

**Thursday, 9/12**

Read: Handout: couplets (Moodle)

Workshop Group A

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 9/17**

Read: Handout: Fussell, “Some Critical Implications of Stanzaic Forms” (Moodle)

John Hollander, “The Quatrain” (EF)

Write: Heroic couplets; Group B

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, 9/19**

Read: Handout: quatrains and sestets (Moodle)

Workshop Group B

Write: Workshop letters

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 9/24**

Read: Handout: Fussell, “Structural Principles: The Example of the Sonnet” (Moodle)

Marilyn Hacker, "The Sonnet" (EF)

Write: Quatrains or sestets; Group A

**Thursday, 9/26**

Read: Handout: sonnets (Moodle)

Workshop Group A

Write: Workshop letters

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 10/1**

Read: Handout: "The Villanelle" (Moodle)

Maxine Kumin, "Gymnastics: The Villanelle" (EF)

Write: Sonnet; Group B

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, 10/3**

Read: Workshop Group B

Write: Workshop letters

Four possible refrains for villanelles; bring copies to share with the class

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 10/8**

Read: Handout: "The Sestina" (Moodle)

Lewis Turco, "Sestina: The End Game" (EF)

Write: Villanelle; Group A

Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, 10/10**

CONFERENCES, schedule TBA

**Tuesday, 10/15**

FALL BREAK

**Thursday, 10/17**

Read: Handout: sestinas (Moodle)

Workshop Group A

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 10/22**

Read: Michel Delville and Maxine Chernoff, "Strange Tales and Bitter Emergencies: A Few Notes on the Prose Poem" (EF)

Write: Sestina; Group B

**Thursday, 10/24**

Read: Handout: Prose poems (Moodle)

Workshop Group B

Write: Workshop letters  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 10/29**

Read: Handout: anagrams and erasures (Moodle)  
Keith Tuma, "Beyond Found Poetry" (EF)  
Write: Prose poem; Group A  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, 10/31**

Read: Mark Wallace, "Predetermined Avant-Garde Forms" (EF)  
Workshop Group A  
Write: Workshop letters  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 11/5**

Read: Dana Levin, *Sky Burial*  
Michelle Boisseau, "Free Verse" (EF)  
Write: Avant-garde form; Group A

**Thursday, 11/7**

**Dana Levin visits class**

Read: Dana Levin, *Sky Burial*  
Workshop Group A  
Write: Workshop letters  
Questions about *Sky Burial*

**Tuesday, 11/12**

Read: Handout: Greg Williamson, "Double Exposures" (Moodle)  
Rachel Hadas, "All Composed in a Meter of Catullus: Hendecasyllabics" (EF)  
Write: Free verse poem; Group B and A  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, 11/14**

Read: Handout: Matthea Harvey, "Don Dada on the Down Low Getting Godly in his Game"  
and "Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form" (Moodle)  
Workshop Group B  
Write: Workshop letters  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday, 11/19**

Read: Workshop Group A  
Billy Collins, "The Paradelle" (EF)  
Write: Rarer form; Group B and A  
Workshop letters

**Thursday, 11/21**

Read: Workshop Group B and A

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 11/26**

Read: TBA

Write: Revision exercise 1 and 2

→ Recitations (20 lines of poetry)

**Thursday, 11/28**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Tuesday, 12/3**

Read: Revision exercises

Write: Workshop letters

**Sunday, 12/8**

Final portfolios due in my office by noon