

## English 300: Intermediate Poetry Workshop

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Office Hours Wednesdays 1:30 to 3:30 and by appt.

Class Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11-12:15, Barret 214

This seminar will explore contemporary styles in terms of the poet's formal choices. We will be reading the work of Natasha Tretheway, (*Native Guard*) Ilya Kaminsky, (*Dancing in Odessa*) Lia Purpura, (*King Baby*) Michael Chitwood, (*Spill*) Yusef Komunyakaa (*War Horses*) and Mark Doty, (*Fire to Fire*) as well as other voices selected by class participants. We will consult other texts, including *Rules for the Dance*, by Mary Oliver, and xeroxed excerpts from *Poets Teaching Poets*, and *Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms*, as well as the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*.

**Course Requirements & Grading:** Students will fulfill all reading and writing assignments by the due dates. There will be two portfolios graded, one due at midterm and the other at the end of term. (60% of the grade) In addition, all students will give two oral reports (each counting for 20% of the final grade), one on the work of one of the assigned contemporary collections, another on a poem or poems by a poet of his or her own choosing in conjunction with the forms illustrated in the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*.

**Course Structure:** Generally, Tuesdays will be devoted to work-shopping of student poems, Thursdays to the other materials. Take advantage of the workshop to share your poetry. **Given that you are all advanced students, we will not be having any scheduled conferences.**

**A Note on Illness:** It is likely that some of the class members will become ill during the semester. If you are sick, with a cold, runny nose, sore throat, coughing, fever, queasy stomach, aching muscles, in short **any symptoms at all, DO NOT COME TO CLASS.** I will send you home immediately, and *I will not be pleased.* You run the risk of spreading your infection. You can email me with questions you may have about the reading assignment, and I will leave copies of any materials distributed during the class in the bin attached to my office door. Ask a friend or roommate to either drop off or collect any materials you need from the bin or deposit any assignments due. You are entitled to miss 4 classes without any effect on your grade. DO not miss class for any reason other than a death in the family, an illness or an unforeseeable conflict such as a traveling for a sport. I will allow the 4 absences because of the strong expectation of flu this Fall, but do not abuse the privilege or your final grade will be reduced due to excessive absences.

**Week 1: (Thursday, August 27th)** Introduction to course, in-class writing.

*Assignment for next week:* Read *Native Guard*. Rework in-class exercise. Student to prepare oral report on several poems by Tretheway. Read **Elegy** in *Handbook of PF*. Feel free to write an **Elegy**.

**Week 2: (September 1<sup>st</sup> ---September 3<sup>rd</sup>)** Out of class **Dialogue assignment** on Tuesday; discussion of Tretheway & **student report** on Thursday. Read Wilner chapter, "The Medusa Connection," from *Poets Teaching Poets*. off + Voigt

*Assignment for next week:* Read 2<sup>nd</sup> essay handout from *Poets Teaching Poets*. Begin to read *Dancing in Odessa*. Students to work on **Alphabet poem** and **Ballad**. Please read the brief codes for these forms in *Handbook of Poetic Forms* and bring in some kind of result for each exercise, no matter how far you may have strayed from its original form. They are a practice and an excuse for writing! Learning is a process, especially in poetry.

**Week 3: (September 8<sup>th</sup> & September 10<sup>th</sup>)** **Students (two) to report** on poetry by Ilya Kaminsky. Students to workshop **Alphabet poem** and **Ballad**.

*Assignment for next week:* Revise poems as needed and students to work on **Bouts-Rimes** list. Bring in list to exchange with a classmate. You must each compose one list. Continue with reading the work of Kaminsky for further discussion. Read essay handout from Prf. Barr

**Week 4: (September 15<sup>th</sup> --no class on the 17<sup>th</sup>, attend Alumnae Poetry Reading at 7:30 pm in Blount auditorium by former Rhodes Poetry Students)**

Discussion of Kaminsky. Turn in revisions of poems and drafts. We will meet on Tuesday, but not on Thursday, as you are required to attend the reading!

*Assignment for next week:* Read chapters 1, 2 & 3 in *Rules for the Dance*. Work on composing a **Calligram**, or **Canzone**, or a **Cento** in your *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Again, please feel free to work on narrative or lyrical or meditative poems as you wish, but do bring in at least ONE of the forms assigned, if not more, as you choose.

**Week 5: (September 22<sup>nd</sup> & no class on 24<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Barr away for poetry reading she is giving in Georgia)** Discussion of poems on 9/22. Discussion of Mary Oliver's chapters.

*Assignment for next week:* Continue with your reading in Mary Oliver's book, chapters 4 through 7. Begin reading Michael Chitwood's book, *Spill*, with students **(two) to report**.

**Week 6: (September 29<sup>th</sup> & October 1<sup>st</sup>)** On Tuesday, **Student reports on Michael Chitwood's poem(s)**. Discussion of *Rules for the Dance*. Workshop student poems/revisions. **Prepare all drafts for midterm portfolio, so bring in poems you wish to workshop before October 8<sup>th</sup>.**

*Assignment for next week:* Continue reading in Chitwood's book of poems. Handout **number one** from *Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms*. Work on a **Cinquain**, **Epistle**, and/or **Found Poem**.



**Week 7: (October 6<sup>th</sup> & October 8<sup>th</sup>) Turn in midterm portfolio on October 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Discussion of student poems on Tuesday in preparation turning in midterm portfolio on Thursday. Discussion of Handout One. Complete discussion of Chitwood.

*Assignment for next week:* Read chapters 8 through 13 in Mary Oliver's *Rules for the Dance*. Handout **number two** from *Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms*.

**Week 8: (October 13<sup>th</sup> & October 15<sup>th</sup>)** Discussion of Oliver's text and handout number 2.

*Assignment for next week:* Have Fun over the break. Two students will have oral reports due: **Each student should report** on a poem or poems by a poet of his or her own choosing in conjunction with the forms illustrated in the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*.

**Week 9: (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)** In class writing exercise(s), **Prf Barr will arrange.** (Mex Bak) **Students (2) to report on poet of his/her choices.**

*Assignment for next week:* Read in the Mary Oliver chapters 14 through 17 and practice as you wish!!!! Each student should work on an assignment from a *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Try a **List Poem, Ottava Rima, Pantoum, Parody** or **Performance Poem**, depending on your style and choice! Be ready to bring in at least one draft/performance, however, of at least ONE of the above on Tuesday of next week. Begin reading Lia Purpura's *King Baby*. **Student report on Purpura due.**

**Week 10: (October 27<sup>th</sup> & October 29<sup>th</sup>)** **Student to report on Lia Purpura's King Baby**, focusing on several "poems." Discussion of student poems on Tuesday. Final discussion of Mary Oliver text.

*Assignment for next week:* Complete reading in Purpura's text. Three students will have oral reports due: **Each student should report** on a poem or poems by a poet of his or her own choosing in conjunction with the ideas on form about which we have been reading. Work on another poem; you could write a **Prose Poem, Rap** or any other "form" ---even Free Verse---you choose. **Revise other poems.**

**Week 11: (November 3<sup>rd</sup> & November 5<sup>th</sup>)** Three students will have oral reports. Student workshop discussion of new and revised poems.

*Assignment for next week:* Read Yusef Komunyakaa's book, *Warhorses*. **Two students to report on Komunyakaa poems. Do confer with each other to avoid overlap.** Handout **number three** from *Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms*.

**Week 12: (November 10<sup>th</sup> & November 12<sup>th</sup>)** Discussion of **Komunyakaa poems and oral reports.** Discussion of **Handout** and student poems as needed.

*Assignment for next week* --- **Work on poems for final portfolio**— Begin reading Mark Doty's new and selected poems, *Fire to Fire*. **Student to report on selected Doty poems.** Two students will have oral reports due: **Each student should report** on a poem or poems by a poet of his or her own choosing in conjunction with the ideas on form about which we have been reading.

**Week 13: (November 17<sup>th</sup> & November 19<sup>th</sup>)** **Student to report on selected Doty poems.** Discussion of student poems in workshop. Two students will have oral reports due.

*Assignment for next week:* Read further in Doty text. Work on your poems.

**Week 14: (November 24<sup>th</sup>)** Discussion of student poems.

*Assignment for next week:* **Prepare poetry portfolio for December 1<sup>st</sup>.** Two students will have oral reports due: **Each student should report** on a poem or poems by a poet of his or her own choosing in conjunction with the ideas on form about which we have been reading.

**Week 15: (December 1<sup>st</sup> & December 3<sup>rd</sup>)** Collect poetry portfolio. Two students will have oral reports due.

**Week 16: (December 8<sup>th</sup>)** **Final Class and Party.**