

## ENGLISH 200: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY WRITING

Fall Semester 2015

TR 11:00-12:15, King Hall

CRN: 16641

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Office hours: TR, 12:30-2:00 PM and by appt.

### TEXTS

McClatchy, J.D., ed. *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.

“Poetry is language in orbit.”

– Seamus Heaney

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to help participants broaden their understanding and appreciation of the craft of poetry. Keeping in mind that the English word “poetry” derives from the Greek *poēisis* (i.e. an act of “making”) we will approach writing as a means of producing new ideas—not just expressing past experiences or preexisting views. Throughout the semester our work will focus on elements of craft such as imagery, diction, rhythm, and form. We will read a broad sampling of contemporary poetry; we will do a lot of writing, from weekly exercises to more polished poems; and we will discuss this writing in workshop format and learn how to make it better.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Eight writing exercises
- Four poems, each revised and collected in a final portfolio
- Memorization of fourteen lines of poetry
- Active participation in workshop and written responses to poems

**Writing exercises.** You will complete eight writing exercises, many of which will begin with an activity in class. These exercises will push you to experiment with different registers and forms, and they may serve as a springboard for later poems.

**Poems and final portfolio.** In addition to the exercises mentioned above, you will write four poems, three of which will be discussed in workshop and revised as part of a final portfolio at the end of the term. This portfolio will include the original versions of the four poems, your most recent revisions, and a narrative statement (two double-spaced pages) describing your writing and revision process.

**Memorization.** You will memorize at least fourteen lines of poetry (a sonnet or a few stanzas of a longer poem). Recitations are scheduled for Tuesday, 11/17.

### **Workshop**

During workshop weeks, we will discuss 4-5 poems in a class period. The formats for specific workshops may change as the semester progresses, but this is how the submission process will work:

- 1) The day your poem is due, you will email it to me **before** class. I will compile three or four workshop packets and post them to Moodle later that day. You **must** submit your poems on time, and they **must** be a complete draft. Late and/or incomplete poems will receive a 0.
- 2) Prior to workshop, everyone will read the poems in the packet and write a one-page letter to each author critiquing his or her poems.
- 3) You will print out and bring to class the workshop packet and **two** copies of your workshop letters (one copy for the author and one copy for me).

### **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 thoughtfulness and respect. If you come to class without the required materials (stories for workshop, workshop letters, handouts, books, and so forth), you will lose points from your participation grade.

Additionally, I may give quizzes. These will be short (3-4 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them.

## **POLICIES**

### **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 specific arrangements with me beforehand. This is a firm policy. With the exception of poems submitted for workshop, I will not accept work via email.

### **Attendance**

You are allowed three excused absences but no unexcused absences. An absence is only excused if you have contacted me before class to explain the circumstances. For each unexcused absence, your final grade will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade. After three excused absences, your final grade will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade as well. If you miss more than six workshops, you will fail the course.

## Grading

<b>Poems and final portfolio</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Writing exercises and memorization</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Participation</b> (includes attendance, quizzes and workshop letters)	<b>15%</b>

Because this course is workshop-based with an emphasis on revision, you will not receive letter grades for many assignments. 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 Honor Code.

## Rhodes College Commitment to Diversity

A diverse learning community is a necessary element of a liberal arts education, for self-understanding is dependent upon the understanding of others. We, the members of Rhodes College, are committed to fostering a community in which diversity is valued and welcomed. To that end, Rhodes College does not discriminate—and will not tolerate harassment—on the basis of race, gender, color, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, and national or ethnic origin.

We are committed to providing an open learning environment. Freedom of thought, a civil exchange of ideas, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives are fundamental characteristics of a community that is committed to critical inquiry. To promote such an academic and social environment we expect integrity and honesty in our relationships with each other and openness to learning about and experiencing cultural diversity. We believe that these qualities are crucial to fostering social and intellectual maturity and personal growth.

Intellectual maturity also requires individual struggle with unfamiliar ideas. We recognize that our views and convictions will be challenged, and we expect this challenge to take place in a climate of open-mindedness and mutual respect.

<b>SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS</b>
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Reading and writing assignments are listed on the day they are due. Unless otherwise noted, poems referenced are from *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*. All handouts referenced will be available on Moodle. Documents on Moodle **must** be printed out and brought to class (not accessed via laptop, tablet, or phone).

**Thursday, 8/27**

Introductions / syllabus review

**Tuesday, 9/1**

Read: Handout: Mark Doty, "A Tremendous Fish" (Moodle)

Write: Exercise 1 (Ways of Seeing)

**Thursday, 9/3**

Read: "In the Waiting Room" (34-7); "Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg" (186-7); "Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio" (289); "Belle Isle, 1949" (314); "My Father's Back" (547-8); "Adolescence—II" (557)

**Tuesday, 9/8**

Read: Handout: First-Person Narratives (Moodle)

Write: Exercise 2 (Narrative)

**Thursday, 9/10**

Read: Handout: Richard Hugo, "The Triggering Town" (Moodle)

Write: Draft of Poem 1 (bring two hard copies to workshop)

**Tuesday, 9/15**

Read: "A View" (139-41); "Korean Mums" (176-7); "The Best Slow Dancer" (212-13); "My Sad Self" (231-3)

Write: Poem 1 (Narrative)

Exercise 3 (Line Breaks)

**Thursday, 9/17**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 9/22**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Thursday, 9/24**

Read: "Howl" (225-9); "Soonest Mended" (275); "Morning Song" (370); "Coal" (402-3)

Handout: William Stafford, "Against Good Diction" (Moodle)

**Tuesday, 9/29**

Read: “Mule Team and Poster” (202-3); “Why I am Not a Painter” (208); “Willowware Cup” (248-9); “Facing It” (537-8); “San Sepolcro” (550-1)

Handout: Ekphrastic Poems (Moodle)

Write: Exercise 4 (Diction)

**Thursday, 10/1**

TBA

**Tuesday, 10/6**

Read: “The Woman at the Washington Zoo” (58-9); “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” (58); “The Twins” (138-9); “Einstein’s Bathrobe” (153-4) “The Tourist from Syracuse” (200-1); “The Mad Potter” (334-7); “Prodigy” (437-8); “Orpheus and Eurydice” (552-3)

Write: Exercise 5 (Ekphrasis)

**Thursday, 10/8**

Read: Reread “The Mad Potter” (334-7)

Handout: Gary Jackson and Carol Ann Duffy (Moodle)

**Tuesday, 10/13**

Read: from *The Dream Songs* (48-55); “Her Kind” (304-5); “You Can Have It” (314-6); “Words” (379-80); “Winter Field” (529)

Write: Poem 2 (Character)

**Thursday, 10/15**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 10/20 – FALL BREAK**

**Thursday, 10/22**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 10/27**

Read: Handout: Selected Poems (II)

Handout: Tropes and Schemes (from *Poetry Dictionary*)

Write: Exercise 6 (Tropes and Schemes)

**Thursday, 10/29**

Read: “Strawberrying” (100); “Money” (119-20); “The War in the Air” (123); “The Night of the Shirts” (261); “My Shoes” (432); “Dear John, Dear Coltrane”(439-40); “Poem About People” (453-5); “Ode to the Maggot” (538-9)

**Tuesday, 11/3**

Read: Handout: Sonnets (I)

Write: Poem 3 (Lyric)

**Thursday, 11/5**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 11/10**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Thursday, 11/12**

Read: “The Illiterate” (111) and “The Feast of Stephen” (168-9)

Handout: Sonnets (I) – reread from 11/3

**Tuesday, 11/17**

Read: Handout: Sonnets (II); include longer sequences: Dawson, Patricia Smith

Write: Poem 4 (Sonnet)

→ Recitations: 14 lines of poetry

**Thursday, 11/19**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Tuesday, 11/24**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

**Thursday, 11/26 – THANKSGIVING**

**Tuesday, 12/1**

Read: Workshop packet

Write: Workshop letters

Ex. 7 (Revision)

**Thursday, 12/3**

Read: “The Shampoo” (28); “Love Calls Us to the Things of This World” (128); “A Renewal” (244); “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota” (290); “The Horse” (311-12)

Write: Ex. 8 (Beginnings)

**Tuesday, 12/8**

Group Workshops: more info to come

**Monday, 12/14**

Final portfolios due in my office by noon