English 300: Intermediate Poetry Workshop
Tina Barr (tinabarr@rhodes.edu, office is 308B Palmer Hall, 843 3979)
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 1st ---September 3rd) Out of class Dialogue assignment on Tuesday; discussion of Tretheway & student report on Thursday. Read Wilner chapter, “The Medusa Connection,” from Poets Teaching Poets.

Assignment for next week: Read 2nd 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 8th & September 10th) 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 15th -no class on the 17th, 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 22nd & no class on 24th, 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 29th & October 1st) 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 8th.

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 6th & October 8th) Turn in midterm portfolio on October 8th.

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 13th & October 15th) 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 22nd) 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 27th & October 29th) 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 3rd & November 5th) 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 10th & November 12th) 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 17th & November 19th)** 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 24th)** Discussion of student poems.

Assignment for next week: Prepare poetry portfolio for December 1st. 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 1st & December 3rd)** Collect poetry portfolio. Two students will have oral reports due.

**Week 16: (December 8th)** Final Class and Party.