Syllabus, Rhodes College, Spring 2012
ENG 200 CREATIVE WRITING: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY
M/W 3:45-4:15
Clough Hall 300

Professor Molinary
Palmer Hall, 304
843-3246
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Office Hours: (with noted exceptions)
Thursdays 11:45-2:45 or by appt.

Poems ` Poeming ` A World

From / The sound of water / Emperor Xuan of the Tang dynasty / Extracts the sorrow in a lock of black hair
—Luo Fu, “Song of Everlasting Regret”

Mariposa, what a clean word is that! / It can fly around all day / and never get mud on its wings. / It makes a clean sound as it passes right through me— / almost nothing really.
—Paul Hoover, “The World is Found”

Where is a written deer running through a written forest?… / Over a white page letters are ready to jump
—Wislawa Szymborska, “The Joy of Writing”

In the dark times, / Will there also be singing? / Yes, there will also be singing / About the dark times.
—Bertolt Brecht, “Motto”

REQUIRED TEXTS
Kaminsky and Harris, eds., The Ecco Anthology of International Poetry [ECCO]
Caplan, Poetic Form: An Introduction [FORMS]
Christensen, Alphabet [CHRISTENSEN]
Mullen, Sleeping with the Dictionary [MULLEN]
Lorca, In Search of Duende [DUENDE]

The above texts have all been ordered through the Rhodes Bookstore. Please buy immediately.

Additionally, students will be asked to borrow or buy or otherwise obtain a good dictionary. Handouts may also be required or suggested reading. Additional, more personalized, reading will be recommended to individual students as the semester progresses.

DESCRIPTION/OVERVIEW
Designed to be an introduction to the arts of reading, analyzing, & writing poetry, this class will place poetry in the larger context of creative writing & the still larger context of writing & of language, itself. The emphasis of this particular class will move between poetic knowledge, correspondence, genealogy, & subjectivity. Among our lines of inquiry will be questions such as: what is a poem? How & where do we encounter poems? Why do we write them? To what do they correspond in the world at large? What does it mean to be an artist “of one’s time” or “one’s place”? How does language come to mean & what happens when meaning is transformed, translated, or transported?

Along the way, students will be introduced to forms & prosody as well as to the primary modes of poetry & the currently accepted elements of poems with an emphasis on metaphor & image, rhythm & music, & performance. Students will develop a vocabulary for discussing & analyzing poems.
Furthermore, students will gain practice in generating & revising their own poems & in critiquing peer poems. Students will be introduced to “the Workshop” in its various uses. This course is intended to have students read, write, & analyze as much poetry as is possible in our brief semester together. Inundation is key. The majority of writing will generate from reading & from exercises & techniques plied in class & further honed in weekly assignments.

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 consisting of, but not limited to, one annotated poem each week and one poem composed by the student each week; for one short cento essay (about 2pp); for one presentation & exercise in a form; for one mandatory conference at about mid-semester; for one longer, semester poem & for a final portfolio of 5-8 “finished” poems with brief introduction or after-word in which the student places her or his work in a larger context. There is no formula for grading poems; students must be comfortable with this fact. An “A” in the class depends upon actual engagement with ALL aspects of the class. If you are enrolled in the class for an easy grade, that is fine BUT be honest with me as to your intentions so that we do not waste our time working with your poems.

GRADING
Reading & Daily Participation 15%
Essay 10%
Forms Presentation 10%
Weekly writing and annotations/ Midterm drafts 20%
Final Portfolio with drafts and Poetic Statement* 25%
Long Poem 20%

*Should a student decide that she or he prefers the analysis of poetry to the writing of poetry, that student may opt to write an analytical essay in lieu of the final portfolio of poems. This can be discussed at the mandatory conference.

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. At least one or two drafts for each poem. Good.
B = Very good verging on excellent. All work completed with verve & curiosity. At least two significantly different drafts for each poem. Passionate engagement is evident.
A = Above & beyond. All assignments completed with flair; impeccable participation; remarkable work in drafts; 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.

- Generally speaking, if you miss class, do not expect comments on work for that week or to have your poem workshopped.

- 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

***Please note that the daily schedule is subject to change. It is the student’s responsibility—within reason—to stay abreast. I like to leave room for spontaneity.
In general: Annotations will be due every Monday. On occasion, a poem will be due as well. Every Wednesday, a poem will be due. Once we turn to "workshopping," students may be responsible for supplying the proper number of poems.

Hence, your weekends will involve reading, collecting & annotating with some writing. Mondays will be spent discussing assigned readings & annotations followed (often) by in-class writing exercises. Poems will be due on Wednesdays. Wednesdays will be spent on Forms presentations & exercises for about the first third of the semester AND THEN will be spent on the traditional Workshop.

Week 1. Introduction to the class
An introduction to Music Image Utterance.
An introduction to Language & to where we might find poetry lurking.
*Questionnaires & ask for volunteer/s to present Meter.

MUSIC

Week 2. ABCs: 26 little characters or sounds?
Monday: Read MULLEN; annotate one poem therein. (Photocopy or separate sheet.)
    Collect favorite words from the dictionary: 5 by sound; 5 by sense.
Wednesday: Meter.
    Choose which form you’d like to present/discuss.

Week 3. To be continued.