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ENGL 300-01, Advanced Poetry Writing, Spring 2003

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Dr. Tina Barr

Course number 300, Advanced Poetry Writing: Form

11:20-12:50 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Office Hours 9:00-11:00 am Tuesdays and Thursdays, and by appointment. My office is on the 3rd floor of Palmer Hall, number 307. My phone number is 843-3979 and email is TinaBarr@rhodes.edu. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or to arrange a conference. *To be assured of reaching me call me at home: 725-1443. I do not have email at home.*

Course Description: This course has been developed as the first segment of a series of two advanced workshops in poetry, although they can be taken in reverse order. This segment will further your investigation of form. It will further your study in the prosodic tradition, with an emphasis on the evolution of form as an organic process. Students will continue to develop their own writing practices, both within received forms and *by conceiving forms appropriate to their own styles.*

Required Texts: 1. *Handbook of Poetic Forms*, edited by Ron Padgett. 2. *Writing Without the Muse* by Beth Barush Joselow. 3. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, shorter 4th edition, including poems by Mona Van Duyn, Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass, Thomas Gray, John Berryman, Ezra Pound, Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence, Allen Ginsberg, Li-Young Lee, Christopher Smart, Gertrude Stein, C.K. Williams, Seamus Heaney, John Skelton, May Swenson, John Keats, Pablo Neruda, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Thomas Wyatt, Theodore Roethke, George Herbert, and others.

Structure of Course: The class will be conducted as both a literary discussion and exegesis of poems by well-known poets, *and* workshop in which you will critique each other's work. It will also incorporate a tutorial component. In class and tutorial we will devote time to covering issues on poetic form. We will read the work of outside poets in the *Norton Anthology* and you will be required to complete careful verbal analyses of their forms. You will also write one brief technical analysis of a poem. You will complete writing exercises based on received poetic forms in the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*, as well as less structured exercises from *Writing Without the Muse*. *You will be given assignments in form, but you should also be working on poems in any form you choose.*

Workshop Format: When you have completed a poem you want to share, bring **2 copies** to the Tuesday workshop and they will be part of a packet distributed on Thursday. When copies of various students' poems are distributed, if we haven't immediately gone over them, take the time to read them and write comments for your fellow class member. Articulate those comments during class discussion and return your sheet to the author of the poem after we have finished.

Course Requirements and Grading: **1. Submit Poems** (try to produce a poem a week; your portfolio should consist of at least 10-14 poems by the end of the semester) (50%). **2. Complete required reading and writing** assignments, which will result in strong class participation (30%), and short **essay** (20%). **3. Complete writing exercises.** **4.**

Arrange your calendar now to attend Rosa Shand's reading on 9/19 at 7:30 pm in Blount.

Brief Essay: You may turn in a brief essay on a poem that excites you at any time during the semester. When you read a poem that you are preparing to discuss in class, and find it engaging, you may decide to complete your analysis on that poem. I would advise that you LOVE the poem you plan to write on. Find a particular aspect of the poem that seems to demonstrate the poet's skill. It could be his or her use of *imagery, line-length, rhyme, or use of musical devices such as assonance, consonance or alliteration, diction, word choice, form, etc.*. You select a technique or techniques and explicate the poem based on one or two, possibly three, specific techniques. You need to limit your discussion because I want only a **three to four page analysis**. You **MUST** turn in your essay **before** we discuss the poem in class. This essay counts for 20% of your grade. ***I would urge you to complete the brief essay by Thanksgiving.***

Organization of Materials: *Keep a folder of all your work, including drafts.* Never dispose of drafts; print out all drafts, and feel free to share them with me in conference. However, you need turn in **only final drafts** in your **portfolio**, which you will submit **at midterm and end of term**. Keep another folder for all student work. All copies of work submitted in the portfolio, in conference, and in class **must be printed, never handwritten.**

Conferences: You will see me during the semester for tutorials. Employ this time carefully, by sharing work you prefer not to workshop, asking questions about your style, grades, your development, any writing difficulties.

Attendance: Students should miss no more than 2 classes a semester, based on family emergency or illness. Let the professor know if you will miss a class. Missing more than 2 classes may result in a reduction in final grade.

Classes: You need to complete your writing exercises religiously, on time, and bring in 2 copies. During class we will discuss the outside reading, you will hand in poems, and we will discuss your work. I expect all students to **WORK** on their exercises to develop them so they will become poems. Don't waste class time by handing in merely a first draft. Take the poem as far as your can on your own. Work on it, set it aside, and work on it again.

While I always endeavor to abide by the syllabus, it is a statement of course goals and we may, at times, run behind schedule. We may also hold our literary discussion on Thursday, rather than Tuesday. I will hand out exercises and examples for you during the semester on specific editing issues and development of poetry. Please bring up questions and issues and we can respond to them as they arise.

Week 1: 8/29

Orientation, in-class writing exercises, including **epistle**. Barr drafts. In-class exercises # 57 & 58 from *Writing Without the Muse*. (*vegetable & places*)

Assignment to be completed for conference and for 9/10 & 9/12, the week following:
Work on 3 writing exercises; bring poem(s) you most need help with to conference.
Read “Letters from a Father,” an example of an epistle poem, by Mona Van Duyn, page 924 and on, in the *Norton Anthology*. Read Robert Pinsky’s small poem about place in conjunction with in-class exercise, page 1064 in the *Norton*: “A Long Branch Song.”
Read Robert Hass’s “Tahoe in August,” on page 1066, another poem about place.

Week 2 9/3 & 9/5

No class this week, see me in conference! Complete the reading assignment above for next week’s discussion and turn in 2 copies of poem(s).

Week 3 9/10 & 9/12 Tina Barr reads from her chapbook, *Red Land, Black Land*, at Burke’s Bookstore, 1719 Poplar, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday evening. Call 278-7484 for info.

Turn in two copies of each result of writing exercises, submit two copies of any other poems to Dr. Barr for workshop discussion on Thursday. Discuss the work of Mona Van Duyn, Robert Hass & Robert Pinsky. In-class exercise #24 from *Writing Without the Muse*.

Assignment for next week: Read on **elegy** and **found poem** in *A Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Write an **elegy** and a **found poem**. Read Gray’s “Elegy in a Country Churchyard,” page 366 in the *Norton* for discussion. In addition, we’ll consider “An Elegy for WCW” by Berryman, page 888. Read on page 750 “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter” by Pound. Remember to hand in 2 copies of all poems you turn in for class discussion. Consider writing your brief essay on one of these poems.

Week 4 9/17 & 9/19 Rosa Shand, author of the novel, *The Gravity of Sunlight*, will read on Thursday evening at 7:30 pm in Blount Auditorium. Attendance is required.

Discussion of poems by Gray, Berryman and Pound to illustrate the **elegy**. Turn in 2 copies of poems for discussion Thursday.

Assignment for next week: Write a poem in **free verse**, consulting *A Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Read “A Noiseless, Patient Spider,” by Whitman, page 612 in the *Norton*. Read Lawrence’s “Bavarian Gentians,” page 742 for discussion. Read on page 958, “from Howl,” by Ginsberg. Also complete 2 writing exercises in *Writing Without the Muse* (*WWM*). I’d suggest choosing from #2, 4, 6 or 8. Consider writing your brief essay on one of these poems. See above if you have questions.

Week 5: 9/24 & 9/26

Discussion of poems in free verse by Whitman, Lawrence and Ginsberg. Discussion of student poems on Thursday. In-class exercise #37 from *WWM*. (fruit)

Assignment for next week: Write a **list** poem. Read the following list poems in the *Norton*: Christopher Smart's "Jubilate Agno," page 376, and notice Stein's use of the technique in "Stanzas in Meditation, page 714 and on." Read and carefully attend to this poem for discussion next week, "Persimmons," by Li-Young Lee. Think about how the poem is structured. Consider writing your brief essay on one of these poems. See above if you have questions. **Midterm Portfolios are due on Tuesday, October 15th; begin to prepare yours.**

Week 6: 10/1 & 10/3

Discuss poems by Li-Young Lee, Christopher Smart & Gertrude Stein. Discussion of student poems.

Assignment for next week: Write a poem based on our discussion of Li-Young Lee's poem. Read about the **line** in *A Handbook of Poetic Forms*, and write a poem that employs **one style of line length**, based on your reading in *Handbook*, and in the *Norton*, of C.K. Williams' poems "Snow," and "The Question," page 1046, Seamus Heaney's "Punishment," page 1059 and John Skelton's "To Mistress Margaret Hussey," page 66. Consider writing your brief essay on one of these poems.

Week 7: 10/8 & 10/10

Turn in writing assignments, one poem based on Li-Young Lee's poem, and another based on a specific model of line length. We will initiate discussion on Tuesday with an analysis of the poems you read by C.K. Williams, Seamus Heaney and John Skelton with consideration of their uses of **line** length. You will need to work hard on these poems!

Assignment for next week: Follow-up discussion on line-length; assemble **midterm portfolio**.

Week 8: 10/15

Complete discussion of line-length, turn in **portfolio**. **No assignment over Fall Break.** Bring your Norton Anthology and your WWM texts to class next week.

Week 9: 10/22 & 10/24

Bring your *Norton Anthology* to class, so we can read May Swenson's "Cardinal Ideograms" together; it's on page 881. In addition, we will discuss "**Ode** on a Grecian Urn," page 512 by Keats. We will complete in-class exercises from *WWM*, #16, 32 & 42. Bring your *WWM* text to class.

Assignment for next week: Read for discussion on the **Ode** in your *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. We'll complete discussion of Keats and discuss Neruda's "Ode to the Watermelon." Consider the structure of the poem, its line lengths, its images, its goals and its achievement(s). Consider writing your brief essay on Neruda's poem. Write an ode.

Week 10: 10/29 & 10/31

Discussion of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and Neruda's "Ode to the Watermelon."
Discussion of student poems on Thursday.

Week 11: 11/5 & 11/7

No class this week. Each student will meet Dr. Barr in conference.

Assignment for next week: Read Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues," page 822 in the *Norton*, as well as the discussion on the **blues poem** in *A Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Write a blues poem. **Remember you are running out of time for your brief essay. It must be turned in by 11/26.**

Week 12: 11/12 & 11/14

Discussion of **blues** poems, and student poems on Thursday.

Assignment for next week: Read about the **sonnet** and the **villanelle** in your *Handbook*. Read sonnet on page 904 "the rites for Cousin Vit," by Gwendolyn Brooks and Thomas Wyatt's "Whose List to Hunt," page 89 in the *Norton*. Pay careful attention to the villanelles in your handbook, including Theodore Roethke's "The Waking." Read villanelle by Dr. Barr (handout). Compose *either* a sonnet or a villanelle. Have you turned in your brief essay?

Week 13 11/19 & 11/21

Discussion of sonnets and villanelles by Gwendolyn Brooks, Thomas Wyatt, Theodore Roethke and by students.

Assignment for next week: Write a **concrete poem** and read about concrete poems in your *Handbook*. Read George Herbert's "Easter Wings," page 219 ***and*** 220, in the *Norton*. (Dr. Barr—handout of "Under the Lamp") ***This is your final opportunity to turn in your brief essay;*** see above discussion at opening of syllabus if you have questions.

Week 14 11/26

Discussion of **concrete poetry** by George Herbert and others. No assignment for Thanksgiving Break. Sign up for conference on 12/3 or 12/5.

Week 15 **12/3 & 12/5 No classes this week; see Dr. Barr in conference.**

Week 16 **12/10 Final class, turn in portfolio, and complete evaluations, class party.**