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## ENGL 400-01, Creative Writing: Advanced Poetry Workshop, Spring 2010

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English 400: Advanced Poetry Workshop  
Sellers  
T/Th: 11-12:15 Barret 020

Professor: Danielle Sellers  
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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course will continue and intensify students' abilities to write poetry through the workshop experience. We will read a variety of poems to expand our familiarity with the discourse of "contemporary" poetry, and to become more adept at reading and writing poems. Through the experience of reading, writing, workshopping, and revising, students will work towards a collection of poems that will make up their final portfolio.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

*Triggering Town*, Richard Hugo  
*Poetry in Theory*, Jon Cook  
*Open House*, Beth Ann Fennelly  
*Carta Marina*, Ann Fisher-Wirth  
*Some Ether*, Nick Flynn  
*Black Box*, Erin Belieu  
*What We Carry*, Dorianne Laux  
A thesaurus and dictionary

#### GRADING

Creativity is notoriously difficult to grade. Completing all of the requirements, including attendance, will ensure a C. To earn an A or B in this course, a student must show evidence of significant effort and improvement. A grade of D or F will be the result of failing to turn in assignments, attempting to turn your work in late, and failing to attend and participate.

A large portion of this course is workshop, and you cannot participate in a workshop if you don't come to class, or you choose to come unprepared. Class participation will factor in to your grade; come to class prepared and ready to speak.

Your final grade will consist of 4 parts: FINAL PORTFOLIO (25 POINTS), ASSESSMENT (25 POINTS), PRESENTATION (25 POINTS), PARTICIPATION (25 POINTS—Event descriptions: 10 points)--equaling a total of 100 points possible.

ATTENDANCE:

## **Did I Miss Anything?**

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here  
we sat with our hands folded on our desks  
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything, I gave an exam worth  
40 percent of the grade for this term  
and assigned some reading due today  
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz  
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course  
has value or meaning  
Take as many days off as you like:  
any activities we undertake as a class  
I assure you will not matter either to you or me  
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time  
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel  
or other heavenly being appeared  
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do  
to attain divine wisdom in this life and  
the hereafter  
This is the last time the class will meet  
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people  
on earth

Nothing. When you are not present  
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom  
is a microcosm of human experience  
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder  
This is not the only place such an opportunity has been  
Gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here

## by Tom Wayman-From Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry

- Having just read this poem, you hopefully understand the importance of your presence in this class. If not, let me clarify: If you're not here, you can't participate. You are not only cheating yourself, but your classmates as well by not providing them with your specific "expertise." If that's not enough to convince you to come to class a measly two days a week, then how about this: You are allowed **three absences**, and I make no differentiation between excused or unexcused. Only extreme cases warrant an excused absence. Sickness is not an extreme case, either. If you miss more than three classes, you will drop a letter grade for every day you're not here, and will fail after five absences.

### OTHER POLICIES

- ★ All work must be completed before class. This includes readings. If I feel you are not completing your readings, I reserve the right to spring pop quizzes on you without mercy.
- ★ Since this is a workshop, you are required to comment IN WRITING on your classmates' poems. If I notice you are not doing this, you will be required to submit your comments on their work to me first, for the rest of the semester. Your grade depends not only on how your own work progresses, but also your behavior in class.
- ★ Missed work cannot be made up. If something is due and you cannot be in class, it is still your responsibility to get the assignment to me and your classmates, on time.
- ★ Arriving late and leaving early will not be tolerated. Arriving 20 minutes late and/or leaving early will be considered an absence. **I will count three tardies as one absence.**
- ★ Plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable. All work turned in must be original. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult me or your College Handbook. If I catch you claiming someone else's work as your own (and I WILL catch you), you will automatically fail this course.
- ★ You will be **required** to attend two literary events this semester. After each event, you will need to email me one page typed, double-spaced description about your experience. I will not accept any event-descriptions after the last day of class. This goes towards your participation and it is mandatory and worth 5 points each. You are encouraged to go to as many literary events as you can, but extra credit won't be given for attending more than 2 events.
- ★ Please bring the relevant books to class every day.

### EXPLANATION OF REQUIRED WORK:

#### PRESENTATION

Each student will be responsible for a 25-30 minute presentation on a poet who has only published no more than two books. Your presentation should consist of a short bio, and a

collection of poems that is representative of the work/style of that poet. In a sense, the student will teach the class about that poet and his/her poems, delving into their style and explicating the poems chosen to present. Don't be afraid to contact that poet and ask them for a brief interview. Note: You will be required to buy and read the first published book of your poet, so do so well in advance. Your presentation also consists of a typed, two-page review of the book you read: be sure to explore the poet's style and what effect it has on you as a writer; this is due in class the day of your presentation—you need only provide one copy for me. For your presentation: You are also required to provide copies for the entire class of the poems you choose to talk about. If your presentation is less than 25 minutes long you will lose points, so make it as substantive and interesting as possible, visuals are recommended, but not required.

## FINAL PORTFOLIO

The final portfolio is a compiled collection of your poems, submitted to me in a two-pocket folder. One side will contain 20 pages of finished/thoroughly revised poems; the other side will have the original drafts with my comments (note: keep the original drafts with my comments!!). The folder will also contain a 3 page assessment of your own progress, which we will discuss in class.

[This schedule is subject to change.]

### **Schedule:**

#### **Week 1:**

Thurs., Jan. 14:

- Introduction to the course
- Good poem/bad poem
- Assign poem #1 Bookstore poem
- Assign T.S. Eliot, "Traditions and the Individual Talent" and "Reflections"
- Assign Tropes poem (due at the end of the semester)
- Assign Hugo p.1-25

#### **Week 2:**

Tues., Jan. 19:

- Discuss Hugo 1-25
- Discuss Eliot
- Assign Hugo ch. 5 and 7
- Assign D.H. Lawrence, "Preface"

Thurs., Jan. 21:

- Discuss Hugo ch. 5 and 7
- Discuss Lawrence
- Assign Hugo ch. 8
- Assign Rilke letters

### **Week 3:**

Tues., Jan. 26:

- Poem 1 Bookstore due
- Discuss Hugo Ch. 8
- Discuss Rilke
- Assign Poem 2
- Assign: Dorianne Laux

Thurs., Jan. 28:

- Workshop Poem 1

### **Week 4:**

Tues., Feb. 2:

- Poem 2 due
- Discuss Laux
- Assign Revision
- Assign Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry," 2 page response paper

Thurs., Feb 4:

- No class
- Yeats response due 11am by email
- I'm reading at **Burke's Books at 6pm**
- Please try to come. You can pick up comments for your poem there.

### **Week 5:**

Tues., Feb. 9:

- Revision due
- Discuss Yeats
- Assign Hulme "Romanticism and Classicism"
- Assign Poem 3
- Presentation #1:

Thurs., Feb. 11:

- Workshop Revision 1
- In-class visitor Joan Biddle
- Discuss Hulme
- Assign Nick Flynn

**Week 6:**

Tues., Feb. 16:

- Poem 3 due
- Assign Poem 4
- Discuss Nick Flynn

Thurs., Feb. 18:

- Workshop Poem 3

**Week 7:**

Tues., Feb. 23:

- Poem 4 due
- Assign Poem 5
- Assign Beth Ann Fennelly

Thurs., Feb. 25:

- Workshop Poem 4

**Week 8:**

Tues., March 2:

- Poem 5 due
- Assign Auden "The Poet and the City"
- Discuss BAF
- Presentation #2

Thurs., March 4:

- TBA
- Auden responses due

**Week 9:**

Tues., March 9:

- Workshop Poem 5
- Assign Erin Belieu
- Assign 2 Revisions

Thurs., March 11:

- In-class conferences
- Visitor—Corinna McClanahan Schroeder

## **SPRING BREAK**

### **Week 10:**

Tues., March 23:

- 2 Revisions due
- Discuss Belieu
- Assign Poem 6

Thurs., March 25:

- Workshop Revisions

### **Week 11:**

Tues., March 30:

- Poem 6 due
- Assign Poem 7
- Presentation #3

Thurs., April 1:

- No class. (Easter Recess)

### **Week 12:**

Tues., April 6:

- Workshop Poem 6
- Poem 7 due
- Poem 8 due
- Assign Revision
- Assign undergraduate journal submissions

Thurs., April 8:

- No class—AWP in Denver
- Writing assignments due 11am by email



### **Week 13:**

Tues., April 13:

- Revision 3 due
- Workshop poem 7
- Assign Ann Fisher-Wirth
- Assign Poem 9
- Reminder: Poem 8 Tropes due in 1 week
- Presentation #4:
- Journal packets due

Thurs., April 15:

- Workshop Revision 3.
- Journal submissions due, with correct postage.

### **Week 14:**

Tues., April 20:

- Poem 9 due
- Discuss Ann Fisher-Wirth
- Presentation #5:

Thurs., April 22:

- Workshop poem 8 Tropes

### **Week 15:**

Tues., April 27:

- Conferences
- Workshop Poem 9

Thurs., April 29:

- Final Portfolios are due in class