

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY WRITING
BEGINNING POETRY WRITING
CREATIVE WRITING-POETRY
CONFESSIONAL POETRY

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY WRITING
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, SPRING 2001

REQUIRED TEXTS

Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry, eds. Ellmann, O,Clair, 2nd edition
Some Ether, Nick Flynn
Conjunctions: 35 American Poetry, ed. Bradford Morrow
Tender Buttons, Gertrude Stein
Selected Poems, Charles Simic
Writing Poems, eds. Wallace, Boisseau, 5th edition

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our goal in this course is to fall in love. I hope that by the end of the semester you will have become seriously attached to the works and words of a few, if not all, of the poets and writers which we will have investigated in class. Throughout the remainder of your life, you should want to have literature near you, and I like to think that maybe you might tape your favorite poems in prominent places in your present and future dwellings, as you would display a painting, picture, or sentimental token of a past journey. Likewise, I hope you will come to fall in love with a few of your own poems and feel comforted by always having pen and paper near you. May you leave here excited by libraries and notebooks. I hope you find your self inside these sacred places time and time again. May awe be with you.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to individual conferences with me, you will also be expected to attend several poetry readings on campus. Please prepare for these readings by familiarizing yourself with the author's work in advance, if possible.

Reading assignments: Read, reflect, take personal notes on what you've read, and be prepared to discuss your thoughts, reactions, and feelings.. If I feel as if class discussion is lacking in enlightenment, thus inhibiting our growth, I will ask for tangible proof that you have completed the reading in the form of short quizzes, journal entries, or papers. This will ensure that the work was digested and reflected on enough to generate engaging and exciting class discussions.

Participate! Writers want to share and share in terms of language, so talk talk talk. Writers always have something to say and are willing to bleed and undergo strange tortures to say what ever it is so imperative to say. Fortunately, in this course, you are expected to discuss your thoughts, freely and out of harm,s way.

Writing assignments: I expect you to have these done, photocopied, and handed out on time. If

your work is late, you will not be allowed to make it up, thus you will have a BLANK in your final portfolio.

Written comments on classmates' work: I will be discussing what I expect from you in terms of written comments. These comments should be written, directly on the work itself, BEFORE CLASS.

Presentation of a poem: You will come to love, cherish, and embody a poem and give a presentation, paying particular attention to poetic devices and terms.

Final project: Poem, essay, story, or anything else which illustrates what you have gained this semester.

Portfolio: This will be due the last day of class and will be comprised of the work you have done throughout the semester. Include both the workshopped copy with my comments as well as your revised copy.

COURSE SCHEDULE

JANUARY 16/T: Introductions, review of syllabus, how to read a poem, etc. First reading assignment: various poems from *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*

18/H: Discussion of poems assigned, focused on T.S. Eliot "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock," Wallace Stevens "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," Williams Carlos Williams "This is Just to Say," Rita Dove "Adolescence~III" (the use of images in this particular poem was discussed in depth). First writing exercise assigned: five images and their emotional evocations.

23/T: Image writing exercise due. Students read their five images aloud then picked one which the class discussed, attempting to surmise the author's emotional intent. Reading assignment for H: *Some Ether* by Nick Flynn, Chapter 1 in *Writing Poems*. Second writing exercise: taking Robert Hass's "A Story on the Body," insert line breaks and defend your reasoning.

25/H: Discussion of various aesthetics concerning line breaks and why Hass might have chosen to write his poem in prose. Talked a bit about line and stanza which led to a discussion on Robert Lowell. Discussion of *Some Ether*. First poem assigned with the topic of childhood to be due on 30/T.

30/T: Read poetry assignment aloud. Discussion of how to comment on poems and Bishop's "The Fish."

FEBRUARY 1/H: Workshop, discussion of Robert Hayden's "The Tattooed Man"

6/T: Discussion of Roethke's "The Waking," Bishop's "One Art," and Thomas' "Do Not Go

Gentle into That Good Night” -- remarks on the villanelle form. Continuation of workshop of childhood poems.

8/H: Continuation of workshop of childhood poems. Elizabeth Bishop poems assigned and handout of Bishop’s poems.

13/T: Continuation of workshop. Viewed video: *One Art* on Elizabeth Bishop from the *Voices and Visions* series. Reading asg: Robert Lowell poems. Writing asg: poem due on 20/T, any topic.

15/H: Viewed video: *Mania for Phrases* on Robert Lowell from the *Voices and Visions* series. Reading asg: Chapter 10 “Finding the Poem” in *Writing Poems*.

20/T: Poems due. Discussed the following poems: “One Art” by Bishop, “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home” by Craig Raine, “Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden, “Why I am Not a Painter” by Frank O’Hara. Raine’s poem led to a discussion on seeing the world with new eyes, being a child. Reading asg for 27/T: Chapters 2 and 7 in *Writing Poems*.

22/H: Workshopped poems.

27/T: Read and discussed “In Your Version of Heaven I am Younger” by Rachel Zucker, taken from *American Poetry Review*, focusing on how the message of the poem is conveyed strictly through metaphor. Discussed Chapters 2 and 7 in *Writing Poems*, focusing on the “persona” poem, which is to be next poetry writing assignment. Continuation of workshop.

MARCH 1/H: Continuation of workshop. Reading assignment for 8/H: Chapters 6 and 8 in *Writing Poems* and all the Sylvia Plath poems in the *Norton Anthology*.

6/T: Continuation of workshop. Creativity exercises: reading of “Séance” by Hugh Steinberg taken from *Seneca Review* and coloring a non-representational drawing of what the poem might mean or feel like; three minute free-write; association word games. Reading assignment for 20/T: *Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein.

8/H: Discussion of Plath poems, paying close attention to “Daddy” and “Lady Lazarus”. Creativity exercise: draw/color a picture of “Lady Lazarus”. Reading aloud of some segments of essays by Charles Simic and some of his prose poems.

SPRING BREAK

20/T: Discussion of *Tender Buttons*. Writing exercise for 22/H: embody an object, in the spirit of *Tender Buttons*, and write a short piece, exploring the rhythms, consciousness, etc of the object.. Reading assignment: poems in *Norton Anthology* by Gertrude Stein.

22/H: Readings of the “object exercises” and possible guesses. Persona poems due. Discussed the following poems: “After Making Love We Hear Footsteps” by Galway Kinnell, “The Snow Man” by Wallace Stevens, “Death of a Ball Turret Gunner” by Randall Jarrell. Reading

assignment: poems in *Norton Anthology* by Kinnell and Stevens.

27/T: Workshop of Persona Poems.

29/H: Workshop cont.; Reading assignment: Chap 11 in *Writing Poems*: “Devising and Revising”

APRIL 3/T: Workshop cont; Reading assignment: Chap 5 in *Writing Poems*: “The Sound (and look) of Sense”

5/H: Reading assignment for this date: selections from *Conjunctions*: (you should skim the whole text first, paying attention to form and typographical devices)

10/T: inventive form poem due to be shared in class

12/H: Reading assignment for this date: from Charles Simic’s *Selected Poems*, Chapters: “Dismantling the Silence”, “Return to a Place Lit By a Glass of Milk”, “Charon’s Cosmology”, “Classic Ballroom Dances” and hand-outs (essays by Simic on poetry)

17/T: Reading assignment: Chap 9 in *Writing Poems*: “Beyond the Rational”; Writing assignment due to be shared in class -- a poem emulating the style of Charles Simic / class field-trip, outing, exploring etc.

19/H: Presentations. Reading assignment: Chap 3 in *Writing Poems*: “Measuring the Line (I)”

24/T: Presentations. Reading assignment: Chap 4 in *Writing Poems*: “Measuring the Line (II)”; scansion exercise assigned.

26/H: Presentations. Reading assignment: Chap 12 in *Writing Poems*: “Becoming a Poet”; scansion exercise due.

MAY 1/T: LAST DAY OF CLASS Final presentations. Reading assignment: Reread *Some Ether* by Nick Flynn; capturing

BEGINNING POETRY WRITING – UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
DEBRA NYSTROM. SPRING 2001

REQUIRED TEXTS

Western Wind, ed. J.F. Nims

Collected Poems, Philip Larkin

The Lotus Flowers, Ellen Bryant Voigt

Rose, Li-Young Lee

Some Ether, Nick Flynn

Various Handouts

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and class discussion are mandatory. Students who have extreme difficulty speaking in class may see me about a special arrangement. Each student will write 6-10 poems for the semester. Some will be in response to assignments, some will be free choice. Expect to turn in at least a poem every other week, and significant revisions of these by the end of the term. Students will keep a work journal. Students will gain an understanding of the vocabulary used in critical discussion of poetry, and of the basic mechanisms of poetry's formal elements (dramatic location, sound, rhythm, syntax, shape, etc.) Attendance is required at two or more poetry readings. Students will write responses to poems submitted by classmates for workshop. Additionally, students will annotate two poems from the readings that weren't discussed in class, and make one in-class presentation or write a short essay.

NOTES

The class will be divided between discussion of student poems and discussion of assigned readings. Writing is improved by careful reading. The works of your literary predecessors can be used as tools.

Everything turned in for class should be typed. A poem you wish to have discussed in workshop must be reproduced by you (times the number of people in class) and placed in the box outside the Creative Writing Office by the weekly deadline time.

Since the class is a workshop, it depends on the earnest and generous participation of each class member. You will be expected to read carefully each poem turned in for workshop: be ready to discuss it in such a way as to help the writer understand how the poem comes across, and what he/she might do to make it communicate more effectively. Read the poems, mark them for comment, and come to class ready to talk about them along with any other assigned reading. I'm most interested in your serious involvement with poetry and in the growth of your skill with language.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR: JENNIFER JACKSON
W203 CREATIVE WRITING-POETRY
FALL 2001

COURSE SYLLABUS

Welcome. This is a course in reading and writing poetry. Throughout the semester we will be looking closely at various elements of poetry. Your writing, listening, and critiquing skills will be put to the test. We will spend approximately 1/2 of our time together discussing your own original poems; the other 1/2 of our class time will be spent reading published contemporary poetry, as well as discussing the craft of writing poetry.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Poet's Companion by Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux

Neon Vernacular by Yusef Komunyakaa

Some Ether by Nick Flynn

She Didn't Mean to Do It by Daisy Fried

JOURNAL

As we read A poet's companion, you will notice that at the end of each chapter there are "ideas for writing". After you read each chapter, you will be required to try at least one of these ideas. We are reading ten of the book's chapters, and you will keep ten of your attempts in a notebook/journal. All ten of these "entries" are due after Thanksgiving break. Your journal will not be graded on content, merely on your effort. These entries will likely not turn into polished poems, but they will keep the writing juices flowing.

WORKSHOPS

This class will consist of several class sessions of workshopping your original poems. When "workshopping" or critiquing another poet's work, be fair, yet honest. Your comments to your fellow students should be meant to help, not hurt. My comments on your poems should be a model for how to approach the workshop material. While your poem is being workshopped, you will be asked to simply listen remain silent until all opinions are shared. Be sure to bring enough copies of your poems for everyone in the class **AT LEAST ONE CLASS SESSION** before your scheduled workshop. Further instructions will follow as the workshops approach, including how to write a Response Paragraph for workshop preparation.

PRESENTATION

We are reading two collections of poems by single authors (Flynn and Fried) in their entirety. (We will only read selections from the Komunyakaa book.) For both of these books, there will be group presentations. Each group will be responsible for teaching one 50-minute class period. We will discuss what should be covered in each presentation, so by the time those presentations roll around, you should feel comfortable. Most likely, the groups will discuss the themes of the book, explicate specific poems, think about the overall construction of the book, and possibly bring in book reviews of other information about the poet. These presentations will take place

on the first two days of the week we will spend on each book, and they should spark class discussion on both of those first two days as well as give ideas for what we might jump to on the third day. Each group member will also write a 2-3 page paper that somehow relates to the book his/her group is presenting. Presentations are worth 150 points – 100 points for the in-class portion (group grade), 50 points for the paper (individual grade).

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

The final assignment will serve as a wrap up for the term. The assignment consists of two parts: an Ars Poetica essay and a “20 poetry projects” poem in drafts. Both are due on the last day of class. **THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS CLASS.** We will spend time discussing this assignment well in advance of the due date, but briefly, the Ars Poetica essay will be short, probably three pages, and you will examine the “are of poetry” as you understand it. No research will be necessary. The “20 poetry projects” poem will then tear apart everything you think you know. There will also be a mandatory one-on-one conference with me during the week before the due date.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- M 08/27 -Review syllabus, get to know each other; in class writing – not an apology; What s poetry? Handout.
- W 08/29 -POETRY DEFINITION DUE
In-class reading/writing: “first thoughts” by Natalie Goldberg (handout)
- F08/31 -in class writing; in class reading: “the politics of narrative: why I’m a poet” by Lynn Emanuel, “everything I know about writing poetry: notes for a lecture” by Jane Kenyon (handouts)
- M 09/03 -NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
- W09/05 -in class writing; discuss a handy-dandy lexicon for talking about poetry
(handout)
- F 09/07 -small group workshop of “inclass writing” poems
- M 09/10 -“in class writing poems due” – not graded; read “a poet’s companion” pp. 11-13, 85-93; journal entry
- W 09/12 -read “a poet’s companion” pp. 94-103; journal
- F 09/14 -read “a poet’s companion” pp. 104-114; journal poem #1 due
- M 09/17 - read “a poet’s companion” pp. 115-128; journal;
- W 09/19 -in-class writing

F 09/21 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 171-185; journal; poem #2 due

M 09/24 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 19-45; journal

W 09/26 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 46-63; journal; poem #3 due

F 09/28 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 64-81; journal; poem #4 due; bring in copies of poems from workshops.

M 10/01 - workshop

W 10/03 -workshop

F 10/05 -workshop

M 10/08 -workshop

W 10/10 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 186-192; journal entry

F 10/12 -no class

M 10/15 - two revisions due; read "neon vernacular"pp. Tba

W 10/17 -read "neon veranacular" pp. TBA

F 10/19 - read "neon vernacular" pp. TBA

M 10/22 -read "neon vernacular" pp. TBA; poem #5 due

W 10/24 -read "neon vernacular" pp. TBA

F 10/26 -read "neon vernacular" pp. TBA; poem #6 due

M 10/29 -read "a poet's companion" pp. 129-137; journal

W 10/31 -exquisite corpse

F 11/02 -discuss surrealism; two revisions due

M11/05 -read "some ether" pp. 3-42; group presentation

W 11/07 -read "some ether" pp. 43-83; group presentation

F 11/09 -further discussion of "some ether"; poem #7 due

M 11/12 -read “ she didn’t mean to do it” (whole book, jah); group presentation

W11/14 -further discussion of “she didn’t mean to do it”; group presentation

F 11/16 -further discussion of “she didn’t mean to do it” poem #8 due

M 11/19 -no class

W 11/21 - no class

F 11/23 - no class

M 11/26 -discuss final assignment guidelines; journal due

W 11/28 - no class – mandatory conferences

F11/30 -no class – mandatory conferences

M 12/03 -small group workshop for final assignments

W 12/05 -discuss publication and the writer’s life

F 12/07 -final assignment due

CRW 315-002; Confessional Poetry

Lavonne J. Adams

Spring 2002, TR 2:00-3:15

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

TEXTS:

Addonizio, Kim. *Tell Me*. Rochester NY: BOA Editions, 2000

Duhamel, Denise. *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Carbondale; Southern Illinois UP, 1999

Flynn, Nick. *Some Ether*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2000

Hass, Robert. *Sun Under Wood*. Hopewell NJ: Ecco, 1996

Jordan, Judy. *Carolina Ghost Woods*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1996

Lee, Priscilla. *Wishbone*. Berkeley: Roundhouse Press, 2000

Lowell, Robert. *Life Studies* and *For The Union Dead*. New York: Farrar, 1956.

Olds, Sharon. *The Father*. New York: Knopf, 1992

Olds, Sharon. *The Wellspring*. New York: Knopf, 1997

PURPOSE: This course is an exploration into confessional poetry – its history and its contemporary practitioners – with the ultimate goal of crafting poetry in the confessional vein

GRADES: Grades will be based on the following criteria –

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT (30%): This will be an analytical essay of 3-6 pages in which you compare and contrast the styles of two of the author's we have read to date. Make sure you use MLA-style parenthetical notation when referring to the poems. This essay is due on Thursday, March 14, 2002

FINAL ASSIGNMENT(50%): This is a two-part assignment. The first part is a revised version of one confessional poem that you have authored and works hopped in the course of the semester. The second part of the assignment is an analytical take on that poem, in which you discuss your intent, topic and style, and the influence of author(s) you have read in the course of the semester. This assignment may be turned in at any point between class on April 30 and 6 pm, Monday, May 6 (the conclusion of the scheduled exam period).

CLASS/WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION (20%): This grade will be based on the effort you exert during class discussion and workshop sessions. In addition to verbal comments made at the time of peer workshoping, I will also consider the written comments you give to the author (a copy of these comments need to be turned in to me at the beginning of each workshop class). Please note that no work from another poetry workshop should be used to meet assignments in this class – the Department of Creative Writing considers this an act of self-

plagiarism, and will result in failing the assignment. Should quizzes on the reading material become necessary, those grades will also be factored into the class participation grade.