

~Cultivate a love of names and naming—make lists of names of flowers, rocks, song titles, constellations, places, parts, ocean zones, anatomical names.

~ Look up words so you know *all* their meanings & connotations, even histories. “The dictionary is beautiful; for some poets, it’s enough.”--Marvin Bell

~Turn on your senses to sight, sound, smell, texture, taste, and physical feeling. Allen Ginsberg’s “vivid particulars.” Ezra Pound’s “luminous details.” Pound’s “Go in fear of abstractions.”

~ Surrender to the “reverie of composing” (Wallace Stevens). If something wild, weird or irrelevant comes up, write it down anyway. In composing, let your mind go as and where it goes. Do not discount the importance of anything that comes to mind while writing a poem. It may not work in the poem you are writing then, but may be useful later. *Nothing is alien to a poem.*

~ Keep a notepad by the bed and, immediately upon waking, write down any bit or shred of a dream that you can. “Poetry comes from the rising of your inner life as it meets outward experience. It is this intersection, transmuted, in words.”—H.T.

~ Be precise. Avoid adjectives or adverbs, which are the weaker descriptors and intensifiers, and usually a sign that the noun or verb is not yet exact. Nouns (names) and verbs (action) do the most work.

~ Compress, compress, compress. Use only essential words. Less is usually more.

~ Listen for cadence and rhythm. . . listen as you shape and break the line. . . Pound’s “melopoeia,” or the music of language. Avoid trite sing-songy end rhymes. Don’t force a line just to complete a rhyme.

~ Don’t try to be “poetic” or sentimental either. “Sentimentality is a failure of feeling.”—Wallace Stevens

~ “. . . Dive into the unedited. This text . . . in action, full of fire, of images and questions like a movement of thought in the process of gaining ground on the contemporary disquiet, or to explode in the acuity of the senses. . . . So we move roses, highways, the horizon if necessary the sea in another dimension.”—Nicole Brossard, Onward, 336-7

~Crafting and cutting *follow* composition. Be scrupulous then. Be ruthless.

~ The poem-space may be the only free and open space left for us mentally and emotionally, a fully human space.~H.T. Cherish it, and as poet-activist Anne Waldman says, “Keep the world safe for poetry.”

Spring 2005 WRI 312/010
Creative Writing: Poetry
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CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome! This is a writing and reading workshop in making poems and in studying the techniques of poetry. Poetry is language art to the max. I agree with poet-critic Charles Bernstein that “poetry and poetics are not so much a matter of how I can make words mean something I want to say, but rather letting language find ways of meaning through me.” As poet Susan Howe adds, “Trust the place to form the voice,” the place from which a poem comes. But what is this place? Where is it? Does a poem come from your “inner voice” or from the silence within? Does it come from a transaction between voices and silences both within you and beyond in the world around you? What is a poem and how is a poem made? Reading, studying, and writing poetry will begin to answer these questions for you. Studying how poets today deal with these aesthetic questions, given thousands of years of poetic tradition, will assist you to in discovering and developing your own creative process. Ah! but what is *good* poetry? We will read and study poems critically to learn and understand the techniques of practice. Our texts will include poems by published writers as well as your own work as you learn the craft. Much class time will be spent on peer reviews and critiques. Each one of you must turn the wheel of the class. Be ready to participate actively and to ask many questions.

BOOKS & TOOLS

Hoover, Paul. *Postmodern American Poetry*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994.
Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Letters to a Young Poet*. trans. M.D. Herter Norton. NY: Norton, 1934. 1993.
Turco, Lewis. *The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics*. 3rd ed. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000.

Writing journal and pen; Computer with KU email account; Backup tools for computer files.
Photocopying expense

WRITING/PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- ◆ Five original poems written as assigned for this course and submitted for class workshops
- ◆ Additional “springboard” poems as assigned.
- ◆ Poem parody & craft essay
- ◆ Report on a literary magazine (written and oral)
- ◆ Writing Journal with sections for:
 - 1) in-class writing and poem drafts
 - 2) reading responses and homework assignments
 - 3) “field notes,” personal jottings, observations, inspirations
- ◆ Detailed written peer reviews
- ◆ Self-evaluations and reflections on your own work
- ◆ Final Portfolio of revised assigned poems

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance: Attend class and arrive promptly. Please be on time; habitual lateness is rude and disruptive to everyone. While tardiness is discouraged, it is better to be late than absent. Missing 3 classes without a documented, verifiable excuse, as outlined in the KU Key, will result in lowering of participation grade by one letter grade. Missing more than three classes without a verifiable excuse will result in a participation grade of F. Missing “Draft Due Days” will result in a 1) failure for that particular poem, and 2) failure to obtain a packet of student poems for critique assignments. If you must miss class, alert another student to pick up materials for you and ask that student to hand in work for you. You may see me during office hours to pick up missed handouts, but I cannot prepare critique packets for absent students.

Preparation: Be prepared for each class. This includes doing all the reading and assignments due on that day. All work submitted in class must be black typescript in a legible, 12-point font, preferably double-spaced.

Participation: Your active participation is essential to successful learning. I will not give a good participation grade to anyone who is merely present, but not actively involved.

Late Work: To receive full credit, you must hand in a poem or paper on the due date. Late work without a documented, verifiable excuse will not be accepted and cannot be made up.

Cellphones & Gadgets: Please have cellphones, pagers, watch alarms, headsets, etc., silenced during class and conferences.

Respect your classmates. Mutual respect builds trust and makes for a successful writing workshop.

PROCEDURE FOR POEM DRAFT DUE DAYS

On the day a poem draft is due, bring enough typed copies for everyone (including you and me). Packets for each student and for me will be made in class. Each of us will depart with a stapled packet of all drafts for that assignment. This packet must be read and some of the poems critiqued in writing before the next class. In that next class, our workshop discussion of packet poems will begin. As should be clear, you must hit the mark on Draft Due days to be included in the workshop cycle. **Late poems cannot be accommodated, and missing the cycle will result in an F for that poem.**

PROCEDURE FOR PEER CRITIQUES

Critiques must be typed on full or half-sheets of 8 1/2 x 11 paper; no scraps. Include a heading with your name, Poem #, date, author’s name and poem title. Use the question sheet that I’ll distribute as a springboard for writing your response. Write each critique as a paragraph-long note to the writer. Note the elements, parts, or aspects of the poem that spark your interest or work effectively, and why. Ask questions about elements, parts or aspects that bother, confuse or fail to stir you. What further work do you think this poem needs? Do not simply say something is “good” or “bad”--the useless equivalent of a grunt. For each poem critiqued, **make 2 copies of your response: one for the writer and one for me.**

All poems are considered “in-process” and unfinished until published. Your critical attention should be paid to the poem, not to the “person” who wrote it. My class is a “safe haven” for poets; no one will be criticized *personally*. Likewise, no one will be patronized or praised for trite or unachieved work. When you present your poem to other readers, you will not be compelled to “explain” it, or to confess the details of your “real” life. However, you will need to talk about your composing and writing process as well as the technical elements.

FINAL PORTFOLIO

A final portfolio of typed, revised poems is required. The draft with my comments should be stapled behind your final version. At least one additional revision must be included. Each poem needs a heading with your name, date, the Poem # as well as a centered title for the poem. Some springboard or exercise poems also will be included. You will also write and include a final letter of self-evaluation. A grade will be given for the portfolio as a whole.

EVALUATION

At Midterm Conferences I will verbally assign a grade to your work up to that point. I begin by assuming that everyone is average, meaning your “default” grade at the start is a C. Poem drafts will not be given individual grades; however, completion, on-time delivery and quality of each assignment will be evaluated and noted. A written grade will appear on the Final Portfolio.

◆ Grading Criteria: Grades will reflect my assessment of each individual student’s:

1. Degree of serious and earnest engagement in writing poetry
2. Attendance and active participation in class
3. Critical reading skills and your ability to translate this into intelligent discussion about writing
4. On-time completion and delivery of assignments
5. Careful editing and technical proficiency with a nod to poetic license
6. Overall growth and development as a poet

◆ Each poem will be evaluated by me based on the following:

1. Was it turned in on time?
2. Does it adhere to the assignment’s requirements?
3. Is it written with technical care in terms of spelling, punctuation, word usage, etc.?
4. Does it have a focus or a discernible intention (as a poem, not just as an assignment)?
5. Is it obviously a hasty job? Is it sloppy, careless or thoughtless?

What else do I look for when I read your poems ?

- vivid particulars and “luminous details” (show, don’t tell)
- your own “voiceprint”
- precise and exact words
- verbal economy, awareness that every word counts (less is more)
- fresh metaphors & striking juxtapositions
- an ear for the rhythm and music of language
- the familiar made new (“to see a world in a grain of sand”--W. Blake)
- the unusual brought close (“hold eternity in the palm of your hand”—W. Blake)
- no clichés or deadwood phrases
- no melodrama, but earned emotion
- no greeting-card verse--“Sentimentality is a *failure* of feeling.”--W. Stevens

6. Final Grades will be figured on a 100-point scale as follows:

- 30 percent: Weekly Assignments & Midterm Evaluation
- 40 percent: Weekly Assignment & Final Portfolio
- 25 percent: Workshop Participation & Critiques
- 5 percent: Literary Magazine Report

WK 1 Jan. 18	Introduction / Journal Writing
WK 2 Jan. 23 Jan. 25	Begin Poem #1 Reading and Unpacking a Poem / Imagery Turco, Introduction 3-5; The Typographic Level, 6-8; The Sensory Level 55-67
WK 3 Jan. 30 Feb. 1	Draft Due Poem #1 / Begin Poem #2 / Sound & Rhythm Turco, Chiming, 49-54 Workshop Poem #1
WK 4 Feb. 6 Feb. 8	Workshop Poem #1 Draft Due Poem #2 / Begin Parody and Craft Essay Turco, The Sonic Level, 9-53
WK 5 Feb. 13 Feb. 15	Workshop Poem #2 Workshop Poem #2
WK 6 Tues Feb. 21 & Feb. 22	Individual conferences instead of class Due at Conference: Revised Poems 1-2 w/ prior drafts; Poem #3 Draft; Letter to Rilke
WK 7 Feb. 27 Mar. 1	Craft & Parody Reports Craft & Parody Reports
WK 8 Mar. 6 Mar. 8	Begin Poem #3 / Line Breaks Turco, Phrasing, 43-4 Turco, Traditional Verse Forms, 109-119 / Poets in Performance / Voice
WK 9 Mar. 13 & 15	Midterm Break! Keep a dream journal.
WK 10 Mar. 20 Mar. 22	Poem #3 Draft Due / Begin Poem #4 / Form Turco, 121-198 Workshop Poem #3
WK11 Mar. 27 Mar. 29	Workshop Poem #3 Draft Poem #4 Due / Begin Poem #5 / Juxtaposition / Turco, 199-285
➤	Attend David Budbill performance 7 p.m. 3/29, Boehm Hall 145 (reaction report or poem required)
WK12 Apr. 3 Apr. 5	Workshop Poem #4 Workshop Poem #4
WK 13 Apr. 10 Apr. 12	Draft Poem #5 Due / Experiments / Turco, 286-301 Spring Break (no class)

- WK 14 Apr. 17** Workshop Poem #5
Apr. 19 Workshop Poem #5
➤ Attend *Shoofly* 2006 literary magazine launch and reading, 4:30 p.m. Thurs., 4/20, Voices and Choices Gallery, 2nd floor Library
- Wk 15 Apr. 24** Literary Magazine Reports
Apr. 26 Revision and Conferences / **Journals Due**
➤ Attend *Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania* reading, 7 p.m., 4/26, SUB Alumni Auditorium (reaction report or poem required)
- WK 16 May 1** Conferences
May 3 **Final Portfolios Due** / In-class Poetry Reading
- WK 17** Friday, May 12 2-4
Portfolios returned in LY 256