

Sarah Vap
411 Advanced Poetry Workshop
Thursday 3:30-6:20 pm; LA
Fall 2017
Office hours Weds 11-2 in LA 231
Email: sarahvap@gmail.com

This is an advanced poetry workshop in which we will mindfully engage with the craft of poetry writing. We will explore diction, syntax, form, recitation, line, page, book, and elements of sound, figurative language, and styles and traditions of making poetry. We will discuss the issues that are facing contemporary poetry today—and in doing so we will trace literary traditions that inform contemporary poetry.

You will be required to present your own work and the work of published poets to the class. You will be expected to keep a poetry journal in which you will reflect on assigned readings, take part in weekly writing prompts, create drafts and finished poems of your own, and collect poems, language, images, etc. that will be of inspiration to you. You will be expected to periodically complete poetry responses (1 to 2 pages) or imitations. Your poetry portfolio will be turned in both at the mid-term and at the end of the semester.

Regarding the readings: I assign a good amount of reading each week in this workshop. Please note that though class meetings will be primarily devoted to writing and workshopping, I do not believe it is possible to become a writer without being a voracious and devoted reader. We will accumulate references and ideas and inspirations and strategies from the readings across the semester, and our in-class writing exercises might be devoted to assimilating more-deeply the ideas or strategies of the readings. You may also regularly be asked to lead, probably with a partner, the class discussion on one of our readings.

Grading Policy

35% in class participation, 20% weekly assignments/responses, 20% mid-semester portfolio and 25% final manuscript. I expect full participation and will allow for only one absence*.

***Policy on absences and lateness:**

The standard policy is that no more than two absences in a fourteen week term may result in a grade of “no-credit.” Please arrive on time for class and stay until dismissal. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. If there is an emergency please speak to me about it as soon as you can.

Course Details

You will need to exchange e-mail addresses with me and with each member of the workshop so that we can distribute your poems for workshop each **Wednesday by noon**. I also encourage you to exchange phone numbers with your peers as you will be getting to know each other through your own work and responses. Since we are creating a conscientious and supportive environment, I trust that you will be mindful and respectful of each other’s work and not discuss the work with persons outside of our workshop unless you have permission from the author. Many of you will be making use of the class to explore personal and important themes and would enjoy a comfortable environment to do so.

Along with the workshop, the discussion of assigned readings, and the occasional essay, video or audio recording, each class will have free-write time and/or instructor-led writing exercises in which we explore stylistic, thematic, or formal considerations. You will also be expected to write, read, and revise on your own time.

All coursework that is not a poem (or unless stated otherwise) should be typed and printed on standard white paper, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Keep a copy (electronic or paper) of all material you submit to me or the class.

Your poem that is due for workshop every other week (you will be either Group A or Group Z for the entire semester) will be emailed to each member of the class by noon the day before workshop—**Wednesday noon**. Be prepared to print each of your peers' poems for class each week, read the poems, jot ideas and inspirations and thoughts and questions in the margins of the poems, and be prepared to think about the poems with the workshop the next day. If you are late emailing your poem to the class, it may not be workshopped and your grade may be affected.

READING MATERIAL

By Email:

Weekly student poems (distributed Wednesdays)

Books, available at Shakespeare and Co.:

Penguin Anthology of Twentieth Century American Poetry, ed. Rita Dove
Daughterarium, Sheila McMullin
Howl, Allen Ginsberg

Other:

Links and copies of poems I send or give to you

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week One, August 31:

Introduction to workshop
Writing exercise
Lineage pair exercise:
 Wallace Stevens' "The Snow Man" and Simon Armitage's "Snowman"

Week Two, September 7:

Workshop Group A

Reading from Dove anthology:
 James Weldon Johnson; Paul Lawrence Dunbar; Robert Frost; Gertrude Stein; Alice Moore
 Dunbar-Nelson

Reading from me: Lineage pair
 Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," C.A. Conrad "[pig says to Frank]"

Week Three, September 14:

Workshop Group Z

Reading from Dove anthology:

Wallace Stevens; William Carlos Williams (“The Red Wheelbarrow” only); Marianne Moore (“Poetry” and “Poetry” only); Claude McCay

Reading from me: Vievee Francis’ “Gun of Wishes”

Week Four, September 21:

Workshop Group A

Reading from Dove anthology:

Edna St. Vincent Millay; Jean Toomer; E.E. Cummings; Stanley Kunitz; Langston Hughes; W. H. Auden; Theodore Roethke

Reading from me: Layli Long Soldier’s “38”

Week Five, September 28:

Workshop Group Z

Reading from Dove anthology:

Elizabeth Bishop (“Sestina” and “One Art”); Weldon Kees; Robert Hayden; Randall Jarrell; Dudley Randall; William Stafford; Margaret Walker

Reading from me: Susan Briante’s “The Market Scans My Child”

Week Six, October 5:

Workshop Group A

Reading from Dove anthology:

Gwendolyn Brooks; William Meredith; Howard Nemerov; Gerald Stern; James Wright; Robert Bly; Robert Creeley

Week Seven, October 12:

Workshop Group Z

Reading from Dove anthology:

Anne Sexton; Derek Walcott (“A Far Cry from Africa” and “Sea Grapes”); Miller Williams; Etheridge Knight; Amiri Baraka; Audre Lorde; Sonia Sanchez

Reading from me: Linage pair

The song “I’m dreaming of a White Christmas”/ Ocean Vuong, “Aubade with Burning City”

Week Eight, October 19:

Workshop Group A

Reading from Dove anthology:

Mary Oliver; Lucille Clifton; June Jordan; C.K. Williams (“Blades”); Michael S. Harper; Paula Gunn Allen

Reading from me: Lineage pair

Emily Dickinson’s “[It sifts from Leaden Sieves]” - (291) and Sylvia Plath’s “Waking in Winter”

Week Nine, October 26:

Workshop Group Z

Read all of *Daughterrarium*

Week Ten, November 2:

Workshop Group A

Reading from Dove anthology:

James Welch; Toi Dericotte; Lyn Hejinian; Sharon Olds; Norman Dubie; Ai; Yusef Komunyakha;

Re-read all of *Daughterrarium*

Week Eleven, November 9:

Workshop Group Z

Read: All of *Howl*

Week Twelve, November 16:

Workshop A/Z as needed

Reading from Dove anthology: Roberta Hill Whiteman; Leslie Marmon Silko; Judith Ortiz Cofer; Joy Harjo; Li-Young Lee; Joanna Klink; Sherman Alexie; Natasha Tretheway

Re-read: All of *Howl*

Week Thirteen, ***November 23:*** Thanksgiving, no class

Week Thirteen, November 30:

Final Reading/Presentation of Portfolios

Lineage pair:

Daughterrarium, Howl, “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath, etc.

Week Fourteen, December 7:

Final Portfolio due in my office by 5 p.m.

** Syllabus subject to change. Probably to your advantage. You are responsible for adhering to any syllabus changes made during the semester.