

Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry

CRWR 211A - 01
Fall 2017
MWF
11:00- 11:50 AM

Instructor: Georgia Dennison
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Phone #: 954-618-9560
Office Hours: Fridays from 12:00-2:00
(or by appointment)
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Course Description

- Acquire foundational skills in reading, discussing and writing poetry.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the terminology / concepts that apply to poetry.
- Practice the art of writing and revising poetry.
- Learn to critique the quality of one's own work and that of peers.

Policy Statement

Required Text:

Gioia, Dana. Kennedy, X.J. *An Introduction to Poetry: Thirteenth Edition*

Note: This text is available electronically, is for rent on Amazon and is, of course, available in the student book store.

Note: You MUST bring the requisite text to class everyday unless otherwise communicated.

Coursework:

Final grades will be determined by your performance in four separate categories of coursework:

1. Reading Responses	20%
2. Poems	30%
3. Participation	20%
4. Final Poetry Portfolio	30%

Reading Responses:

Once a week (usually on Fridays) students will submit a one page (double spaced) paper. This paper is a reading response based off the required text that is assigned on Monday. Include your name and due date in the upper left hand corner. Title your Reading Response appropriately—example: Reading Response: Emily Dickinson’s poem “I could not stop for Death.” This paper should be written in 12 point font, in Times New Roman. The responses will be graded on a 1-5 scale for there engagement with the assigned reading and there demonstration of writing skills (spelling, grammar, etc.)

Aspects of student writing that will be considered in grading the reading responses:

- Use of poetic terminology (see hand-out with definitions)
- A unified consideration of the work with cited evidence
- Strong paragraph structure
- Correct diction/varied syntax
- Logical musings that consider all aspects of the work and move beyond simple conclusions such as “I liked it./I hated it./I didn't get it./ I got it.”

If writing is difficult for you, as it is for many of us, do not fret. Please do take your work to the writing center or to my office hours. Do NOT go under the page requirement.

Poems:

You will have a poem due once a week, usually on Mondays. You will be given your poetry assignment (prompt) on Fridays before the end of class and have the weekend to work on your poems. Poems are due at the beginning of class on Monday morning. **You must bring 21 copies of your poem to class every week** so that you may distribute them to your peers. Please write your poems in 12 point font and Times New Roman. In the upper left hand corner ALWAYS include your name, the date and the number of the assignment. Poems will also be graded on a 1-5 scale.

Aspects of the poem that will be considered when grading each person’s work:

- Engagement with the assignment: ability to follow directions and work with the given restrictions.
- Consideration and application of poetic terms such as repetition, metaphor, enjambment, meter, etc.
- Thoughtful and **original** content that promotes exploration.

Note: Yes, poetry is technically considered *writing*, but more than any other creative writing genre it is an art form. These assignments are not meant to confine you, but rather guide your creativity. I want you to be fearless within your work; by this I mean don't be afraid to get weird, have fun and take risks.

Workshop/Participation:

Each Wednesday we will workshop the poems of four different people. Workshop is only successful if we *all* participate and engage with each others' poetry. I expect you all to come to class ready to respond to the work of your peers thoughtfully and considerately. **It is required that you read your fellow students' poems before hand and write notes on their poems.** You will hand these notes back to the author, after we are done workshopping them, so they may reference your considerations when it comes time for revision. It is your responsibility to know when you are getting workshopped and come prepared. A workshopping schedule will be handed out the second week of school. **NOTE: It is essential that we maintain a professional and respectful workshop environment. Your notes on each other's poems should be constructive and not critical. See the Respect Contract.**

Final Portfolio:

Your final portfolio will contain seven revised poems from the semester. Accompanying these seven poems will be a **required** one page essay in which you will consider and defend your final work. We will discuss these portfolios in more detail as Autumn progresses.

Late Work:

This is a fast-paced/short (50 minute) class. We have a very limited amount of time to engage with the material, as such, **late work will not be accepted.**

Technology/Cell Phone Policy:

This class requires, only, the assigned readings, a pen, a notebook and a folder. You do not need a laptop. (If you prefer taking notes on a laptop, come speak with me.) **There is a strict no cell phone policy.** That being said, if you need to send a text or take a phone call please quietly remove yourself from the room to do so.

Attendance:

Attendance is required and will be recorded: more than three unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course itself. Late arrivals and early departures will, if they occur frequently, count as absences. If you do arrive late you will be responsible for letting me know after class that you were present for the day. Brief absences due to

medical and family emergencies will be excused, provided you come and discuss the situation with me. You are responsible for handing in any work that was due during an absence **your next day in class**. Lengthy crises that require multiple absences will require you to drop out and enroll in 211 during another semester.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty keep the individual student, as well as the collective community, from learning and will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. FOR A DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM SEE <http://www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm>. IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO CONSULT THE STUDENT CONDUCT CODE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA'S WEB SITE.

Disability Accommodation: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact **DSS in Lommasson 154**. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Syllabus accessible to people of all abilities here:

<http://www.umt.edu/accessibility/ghetstarted/documents/default.php>

Moodle: Minimal

UM Box: Minimal

Student Email: I expect you to check your email daily. Via email, I will occasionally assign additional readings that are not included in *An Introduction to Poetry*. It is your responsibility to stay engaged this way and come to class prepared.

Schedule:

- Monday: Poems are due at the beginning of class. A lecture follows. The weekly required reading is assigned
- Wednesday: Workshop
- Friday: Reading responses are due at the beginning of class. Discussion of the reading material follows. The weekly poetry prompt is handed out or verbally communicated at the end of class

Course Calendar

September

Week One: Introductions and Beginnings

- F 1: Introduction to the course. Discussion of syllabus.
First Assigned Reading: ITP Chapter 7: *Song*. Read pages 124-139. For your first assignment pick a favorite song and analyze the lyrics. Pick anything you want! Instead of writing a Reading Response for Friday, bring the lyrics into class on Friday September 8th. Tip: use your poetic terminology hand-out to help with your analysis. Chapter 7 will help you consider different aspects of the song as well. Does the song use repetition (a chorus) to create a general affect? Are there any metaphors? Similes? Is the tone joyful or mournful, etc?

Week Two: "I am a rock, I am an island." -Simon and Garfunkel

- M 4: *Labor day. No class.*
- W 6: Instead of workshopping, we will take this time to discuss your first reading responses. (Due on Friday Sept. 15th.) I will address any questions you may have about how to write them or what is expected. Examples of well written reading responses will be handed out as references.
- F 8: Due: printed lyrics to a song you love. Discussion on what you brought in and why. We will explore ITP's Chapter 7 in conjunction with this. Most of the class will be spent discussing workshop etiquette and answering any questions you have about workshop. First poetry prompt assigned / workshop schedule is distributed.

Week Three: "Every good poem begins as the poet's but ends as the reader's."

-Miller Williams.

- M 11: First poems due. Lecture on Chapter 1: Lyric/Narrative/Dramatic poetry. Assigned reading: ITP Chapter 2: *Listening to a Voice* pgs. 19-32. Reading Response: pick any poem from this section and analyze the speaker and the tone of the piece. How does diction (word choice) affect the overall tone of the poem? What is the attitude of the speaker?
- W 13: First Workshop: poem 1. Come prepared with notes on the poem's of your peers. Make sure you check the schedule and know who we are workshopping.
- F 15: Reading responses due. Discuss papers, Chapter 2 and the diversity in tones/speakers. Second poetry prompt assigned.

Week Four: "You can't make a poem with ideas. ... You make it with words." -

Stéphane Mallarmé

- M 18: Poem Two is due. Lecture on Chapter 3: *Words*. Assigned Reading: ITP Chapter 5: *Imagery* pgs. 84-94. Reading Response: pick any poem in this section and explore the images and the sensations they produce.
- W 20: Second Workshop: poem 2.
- F 22: Reading responses due. Discuss papers, Chapter 5 and the importance of imagery. What images were your favorite in these poems and why? How does imagery invite the reader to look at every day objects and even themselves differently? Third poetry prompt assigned.

Week Five: "All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry." G.K. Chesterton

- M 25: Poem Three is due. Lecture on Chapter 6: Figures of Speech. Assigned Reading: hand out of faculty poet Prageeta Sharma's work. Pick a poem from this packet to write about.

How does Sharma use metaphor/ simile/ personification/ apostrophe to create a sensory force?

- W 27: Third Workshop: poem 3.
- F 29: Reading responses due. Discuss the work of Sharma and what poems you chose to write about. Fourth poetry prompt assigned.

October

Week Six: "All poetry is experimental poetry." - Wallace Stevens

- M 2: Poem Four is due. Lecture on Chapters 10/11: closed form versus open form. Assigned Reading: hand out of Sherwin Bitsui's poems. Pick a poem from this pack to write about. Is the Bitsui poem open or closed form? How does form affect the tone? Consider the patterns or variations in the work.
- W 4: Fourth Workshop: poem 4.
- F 6: Reading responses due. Discuss the work of Bitsui and what poems you chose to write about. Fifth poetry prompt assigned.

Week Seven: "All literature is, finally, autobiographical." -Jorge Luis Borges

- M 9: Poem Five is due. Lecture on Chapter 14: confessional poetry. Assigned Reading: hand out of Robert Lowell's poems. Pick a poem from this pack to write about. Your paper should include some research on Lowell. (This does not have to be extensive.) What is confessional about Lowell's work?
- W 11: Fifth Workshop: poem 5.
- F 13: Reading responses due. Discuss the work of Lowell and what poems you chose to write about. Sixth poetry prompt assigned.

Week Eight: "The bag I wanted was beyond reason - something to hold my poems, twice as big as the universe and it must be androgynous."

- Eileen Myles

- M 16: Poem Six is due. Lecture on Chapter 14 continues with gender. Assigned Reading: poems from ITP pgs. 271-273 and an Eileen Myles's packet. Pick one of these poems to write about. How does gender influence the work of the poet? Why is gender important, or perhaps, unimportant to the poem?
- W 18: Sixth Workshop: poem 6.
- F 20: Reading responses due. Discuss the work of Myles/the poems from ITP and who you chose to write about. Seventh poetry prompt is assigned.

Week Nine: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

-Maya Angelou

- M 23: Poem Seven is due. Lecture on Chapter 14 continues with culture, race and ethnicity. Assigned Reading: read the poems in ITP from pgs. 266-270. Pick one of these poems to write about. Why is identity so important to the poem? What does the author want the reader to understand and why?
- W 25: Seventh Workshop: poem 7.
- F 27: Reading Responses due. We welcome staff poet/guest speaker Aya Satoh to class to discuss culture/race/ethnicity and her relationship with poetry as a Japanese American. Eighth poetry prompt is assigned.

Week Ten: "If your teachers suggest that your poems are sentimental, that is only half of it. Your poems probably need to be even more sentimental. Don't be less of a flower, but could you be more of a stone at the same time?" - Mary Ruefle

M 30: Poem Eight is due. Lecture on Chapter 17: recognizing excellence and the dangers of sentimentality. Assigned Reading: pgs. 305-313. Pick any poem from this section to write about. How do these poems evade emotional indulgence? What do you recognize as excellent in these poems? (The diction, the rhythm, the timing, the form, the syntax, the imagery?)

November

W 1: Eighth Workshop: poem 8.

F 3: Reading Responses due. Discuss the poems you chose to write about and why. Ninth poetry prompt is assigned.

Week 11: "The brain is wider than the sky." - Emily Dickinson

M 6: Poem Nine is due. Lecture on the work and life of Emily Dickinson. Close readings of select poems from ITP Chapter 19. No assigned reading or paper due this week!

W 8: Ninth workshop: poem 9. Tenth poetry prompt is assigned.

F 10: *Veterans Day. No class.*

Week 12: "A symbol is like a rock dropped into a pool: it sends out ripples in all directions and the ripples are in motion." -John Ciardi

M 13: Poem Ten is due. Lecture on Chapter 12: symbol. Assigned Reading: packet of faculty / visiting poet Sarah Vapp's work. Pick any poem from this packet to write about. How does Vapp use symbol to convey meaning? What feelings and associations do the symbols elicit?

W 15: Tenth workshop: poem 10.

F 17: Reading Responses due. Discuss the poems you chose to write about and why. Eleventh poetry prompt is assigned. This eleventh poem will not be due until the Monday after Thanksgiving (November 27th.) For the next class bring in any poem you want to discuss with the class. You can go to the library and pick a poem

from a book, find something online or pick any poem from ITP the we have not yet discussed.

Week 13: Free Bird Monday

- M 20: Discuss the poems you brought in and what you love about them.
- W 22: *Thanksgiving traveling day. No class.*
- F 24: *Thanksgiving Holiday. No class.*

Week 14: "An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he might choose." -Langston Hughes

- M 27: Poem Eleven is due. Lecture on Chapter 19: The life and writing of Langston Hughes. Assigned Reading: pick any Hughes poem and discuss anything from race, to rhythm, to diction, to lineation.
- W 29: Eleventh workshop: poem 11.

December

- F 1: Reading Responses due. Discuss what Hughes poem you chose and why. Twelfth poetry prompt is assigned.

Week 15: Submitting work/Final Portfolio Discussions

- M 4: We welcome guest speaker/poet/former student (MFA in Poetry 2017) Nate Duke to class. Nate lectures on how to professionally submit your poems to journals and magazines.
- W 6: Twelfth and final workshop: poem 12.
- F 8: Discussion of Final Portfolios. Tips on how to revise and how to re-engage with older work. Assignment: bring revised poem to class on Monday to share and discuss with your peers.

Week 16: Final Class

- M 11: Our last class. We read aloud each others revised poems and I answer any final questions you may have regarding your Portfolios. **Final Portfolios are due in my mailbox on Wednesday December 20th by 5PM. Late work will not be accepted. Paperclip your seven revised poems together and place them in a manilla envelope or folder. At the top of your packet should be the one page defense of your work.**

Note: This syllabus is subject to change