CRWR 211 - 03 Intro Poetry Workshop

If you do not use language you are used by it.
-C.D. Wright

MWF 2:10 - 3:00
Liberal Arts 306
August 31 - December 18
2015

Instructor: Rachel Richardson
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Office Hours: W 3:30-5:30 and by request

REQUIRED TEXTS
Cooling Time, by C.D. Wright 9781556592164
Notebook of a Return to a Native Land, by Aimé Césaire 9780819564528
Paradise Lost, by John Milton 9780393924282

In addition to these texts, you will read critical essays, histories, loose poems, and poem packets that will be handed out in class as we go along.

If there is a poet or a particular poem that you would like to discuss that is not on the syllabus, email me or come to my office hours so we can discuss how to weave it into an upcoming class. I will expect each of you of your own volition to bring something new to me at some point during the semester, with ideas about how you’d like the class to look at it. This will go in to your participation grade.

Indeed, our syllabus, like poetry, should be a collaborative effort. While we will be focusing primarily on the work that you all bring in, the reading list is designed as a source of inspiration and to give you a bit of context in the poetry world. Which is to say, the world.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
What is the function of poetry? Do things have to have functions? Is there a difference between poetry and other types of writing, something poetry is trying to access, something it means that makes it itself? What is the role of the reader in the ‘function’ of poetry? What is the role of the academy? This class is a seminar as well as a workshop. These are just some questions we should have in mind as we discuss the particulars of certain books, poems, critical essays, and your own work. You are all required to speak in class, to ask questions, of me and, crucially, of each other. You are required to attempt. To attempt together. The myth of the writer as solitary world-maker is indeed a myth. Clarifying questions together is how worlds are made, not necessarily by answering them. Let’s knock on a door we’ve built and then build whatever it
If you have difficulty speaking in front of others, please tell me early on about your concerns and we can proceed from there.

What this isn’t is a survey course. Except where made explicit on the syllabus, do not expect to be lectured to.

**STRUCTURE**

Fridays will be devoted to reading, investigating, editing and revising each others’ poems. It’s what’s called “workshopping”. Each Wednesday (with the exception of the first week), you will be given a prompt meant to serve as direction for your next longer poem. **Prompted poems should be at least a page long.** Always overwrite, and try not to sanction yourselves. These poems will be due in my mailbox by **3pm the following Tuesday**. On Wednesday, I will have copies for each of you of the two poems that will be workshopped that week. By Friday, you should have prepared responses to those two poems either in clear prose on a separate paper or as notes in the original text (or both). These responses will be given to the poet at the end of the workshop.

Prompts will vacillate between the following: Imitation (getting inspired by the style of an artist we read/art we view/listen to/experience that week); Subject (an object, a place, an idea, a question); Form (prose poem, narrative, free verse, haiku, etc.). Occasionally prompts will overlap, and occasionally there will be no prompt at all because sometimes you have to do things for yourself.

In addition, each Wednesday you will have prepared **three prompt-less rough drafts** (“roughs”). They can be very short, they can be just the beginning of an idea, they can be terrible, but they have to be. Two people will be randomly selected each Wednesday to read aloud one of their roughs. These poems won’t be workshopped, though they may turn into poems that you eventually workshop. There is immense importance in the task of reading aloud and sharing, and then stepping away and sitting back down and silently considering.

The rest of class on Wednesdays will be devoted to continued discussions from Monday’s seminar, in-class writing assignments for your notebooks, experimenting, walk-abouts, etc.

Mondays will be strictly seminar discussion days. In order to make certain you each are engaging critically with our readings and are prepared to contribute to each discussion, you will hand in **three substantive discussion questions** (typed or handwritten) on that week’s reading each Monday and/or Wednesday. You may be called on randomly to provide the class with a question to consider together.

I also suggest making several quality mistakes outside the classroom over the course of this semester. Have adventures. Make adventures. Don’t spend all of your time in the back of the shelf hiding with the lives of poets.
Summary:
- Mondays: Discussion questions likely due
- Tuesdays: Prompted poems due in my mailbox by 3pm
- Wednesdays: Three roughs due, discussion questions possibly due, workshop poems handed out, prompt assigned
- Fridays: Have poems prepared for workshop

READINGS
You are required to attend two poetry readings this semester. There are a lot of readings going on in Missoula. I will hand out a list of readings, and I will remind you each week what’s taking place in town or on campus. After you attend your second reading, you will write a 5-page essay on your experience. You can hand this in any time during the semester, whenever you’re ready.

THE NOTEBOOK
You each must keep a notebook from Day 1 of the semester. This is to record any words, lines, notes on things you’ve seen, thought, overheard, experienced, lost, loved, touched, imagined, smelled, etc. Date each entry and write each day. This will be handed in along with your portfolio at the end of the semester.

CONFERENCES
Not all of you will be workshopped on each assignment, but that does not mean that you do not have to complete each assignment. Mid-semester, I will set up a conference with each of you to discuss your progress so far. At this time you will bring in a draft portfolio that includes each of the assignments we’ve had so far, including all drafts and workshop notes from your colleagues.

THE PORTFOLIO
At the end of the semester, you will hand in the complete portfolio, which should include drafts and “final” versions of each of the assignments (up to you to decide if a poem is ever finished). You will gather and curate each of these assignments for the portfolio.

You will also be required to write an introduction to someone else’s portfolio. That means you will be paired with another writer in class, you will read and analyze their work, and then write up a brief introduction as at the beginning of any book or reading. You will give your partner that introduction to include at the beginning of their portfolio.

FINAL
A 10-page paper on one of the texts we read in class. I encourage you to write about one of the books assigned, but you are free to write about anything we’ve looked at, essays or poems.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
If there is anything you believe will affect your learning or participation in this class, please see me as soon as possible to discuss the ways in which I might assist you, and to determine the parameters of whatever accommodations we can make. If you have a letter from DSS, do present it to me as soon as you can, in the first week if available.

PLAGIARISM POLICY
It is difficult to determine an exact difference between plagiarism and influence in art. We will
spend time before our imitation exercises discussing this difference, and will determine together what it means to us. However, there are some things in the context of this class that quite obviously will be considered plagiarism, such as copying directly the words of another writer, or paraphrasing another’s idea without proper citation or credit given. Plagiarism of this kind will result in possible expulsion from this class and in sanction by the university. It’s ok to be uncertain, and/but/so please see me if you ever have concerns that something you’ve written could be considered plagiarized.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
Come to class. Beyond the detriment it will be to your own work to not be present as often as possible, it is hurtful and entirely unfair to not be around to experience and critique the work of your colleagues. Missing two classes during which other students are being workshopped will result in the suspension of your own workshop until your devotion to your fellows can be demonstrated. Missing three workshop days will most likely result in a lowered grade. You must let me know via email and, if possible, in person if you plan on missing a class. There is no “allowance” in this class of a certain number of absences, but nor will any certain number of absences result absolutely in a failure or a lowered grade. Poetry is personal, and so are my policies.

GRADING CRITERIA
Attendance, Notebook, Contribution to discussions, Discussion questions, Roughs, Reading attendance & reaction essay, Workshop notes and contribution, Mid-semester portfolio, Final portfolio, Introduction, Final essay = Participation

Participation = 100%

Power ruptures at a thousand holes
Leaking the ancient air in,

The paraphernalia of a culture
On the gantries

And the grease of the engine itself
At the extremes of reality

Which was not what we wanted

The heart uselessly open
To 3 words, which is too little

-George Oppen

This syllabus, as all things, is subject to change.