

English 7603-001: Poetry Workshop
Mon 5:30-8:30 Spring 2017
Professor John Bensko Office: 411 Patterson Phone: 678-3318
Office hours: to be decided

This is a workshop course in the writing of poetry. Students will primarily be writing poetry and doing critical analyses of the work of others in the class. We'll also examine poems from contemporary poets. Class participation is highly important.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate a mastery of technique in the making of poems.
2. Students will learn to form succinct, insightful, and articulate critiques of the poems of others.
3. Revision of workshop poems will demonstrate the assimilation of constructive criticism.
4. Students will demonstrate a high level of reading comprehension of poetry.
5. Students focusing on poetry for their degree will progress in their ability to write poems at a high level of competency, toward an informed assembling of their theses.

Text:

The class will create its own anthology composed of poems chosen by the students and the professor, as follows.

Each student will choose 5 favorite poems that he/she will 1) type out (not cut and paste--you must type the whole thing to get a feel for it); analyze for poetic tactics and important issues raised by the poem; discuss for the class. For each poem pick 2-3 key points that you think are interesting about the poem and that you think you have learned from. The poems must be chosen according to the following criteria: 1) the total line length for the 5 must be at least 125 lines (avg 25 lines per poem); 2) 1 must be from the last 12 years, one must be from 1950-2000, one from 1900-1950, one from 1790-1900, and one from before 1790; 3) no more than 3 by either women or men; 4) at least 1 must be a translation from a foreign language.

Each week we will discuss the poems by one student, according to a schedule we will make up in the first week. The student whose selections we discuss will present his/her discussion first, followed by class discussion.

Creative Work Required: A minimum of 11 poems (each at least 14 lines long). Poems are due in class on Wednesday for the worksheet for the following week. Typed, single spaced. Please turn in poems weekly. There are 14 week, so that means, not counting the 1st and last class, a poem a week with 1 week off. Turning in poems regularly week by week is very important to the smooth running of the workshop, so falling behind will lower the student=s course grade.

Reading Responses: For each reading assignment, each student will select one poem to write a brief response about. These should be typed, about 100-300 words. In the response, the student should discuss in as much detail as possible some aspect of the poem which seems either particularly strong or particularly weak. It=s important to explain the effect the poem or passage had, and why it had that effect. (See class schedule for additional information)

Assignments: The subjects, forms, and styles of the poems the students write are up to them. If anyone wants the challenge of an assignment, then we can discuss it.

Conferences: 1 required, 2 recommended during the semester

Grading: The grade depends on the quality of the poems and participation in the workshop (weighted 67% and 33% respectively--but see below about attendance). Good class participation includes: reading the poems ahead of class and making written comments on them; making consistently clear, concise and developed comments orally in class; reading the text assignments and discussing them well; regular class attendance. Taking criticism well without becoming defensive is essential.

Policy on Revisions: Revisions are not required within the semester, but only as part of the long term thesis process. Because it can take a while for a poet to fully re-vision a poem, meaning not merely edit it but see it anew and significantly change it, in grading I assume that the poet will make reasonable changes as suggested in the workshop criticism. No need to turn those in. If, however, the poet makes a significant re-write and wants to turn that in, I will consider it. Just realize that if all you do is edit a few things, that is not a significant re-write; and if I read the "revision" and find that my expectations are disappointed, the disappointment may influence my grading negatively.

Attendance Policy: Workshop participation is extremely important. Missing more than two weeks will mean a course grade no higher than B+. Missing more than 3 weeks, no higher than C. More than that is an F.

Disability Statement: Qualified students with disabilities will be provided reasonable and necessary academic accommodations if determined eligible by the appropriate disability services staff. Prior to granting disability accommodations in this course, the instructor must receive written verification of a student's eligibility for specific accommodations from the disability services staff. It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the disability services staff and to follow the established procedures for having the accommodation notice sent to the instructor.

Class Schedule: All classes will be workshops during which student work is discussed. In addition, as time permits each week we will discuss the student-selected readings from the text and the student reading responses. If work is left to be discussed at the end of the semester, we will meet during the exam time as a final workshop.

Reading assignments for each week will be handed out at the beginning of the term by the students doing the anthology selections, and dates will be picked for each student to present the anthology selection at that time—it will be each student's responsibility to note the date for each reading and prepare the reading and reading response (or presentation, if the student is presenting that week—the student presenting hi/her anthology selection for the week does not need to turn in a reading response since that will be done orally)