ENGLISH 359.090
INTERMEDIATE POETRY WORKSHOP
Spring 2018
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45AM
Ferguson 177

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Office Hours: 9-10:30AM (MWF), 11-Noon (TTH), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION (from the university bulletin):
Readings and discussions demonstrating the basic structural and technical elements of poetry with opportunities for practice and peer workshop. Prerequisite: ENG 261 or consent of instructor.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:
This semester I’m not using a handbook or text for you to purchase. I will supply you with multiple handouts for readings and assignments. This should save you some expense, but you will spend money photocopying original work for distribution to your classmates for group workshops. You will need lots of paper, inkjet cartridges, and dedication.

You will also need a journal—nothing fancy—for your creative ideas. If you don’t own a dictionary, you should buy one of those as well. And then promise to use it. Dictionaries do no good if they are never opened.

OBJECTIVES
The purpose of this course is to get you started writing skillful poetry in a variety of modes. There are, of course, two primary ways to improve your craft. The first is to write, which you will be doing frequently—with an emphasis on technique and revision. The second way to become a better writer is to read and analyze the strategies of other writers. With that in mind, you will be reading, discussing, and dissecting multiple examples of poetry. You will also be sharing your work with your classmates and engaging in peer workshops. Be open-minded, willing to offer constructive criticism, and always remember that you are the writer and have the prerogative to accept or ignore any suggestions you receive (though it is probably best to heed any advice I give you—feel free to ignore me all you want after the semester is over). The course demands regular attendance and participation, frequent assigned readings, active editing of your peers’ work, six original poems of your own creation, one oral presentation on the contemporary poet of your choice, and a final portfolio of revised poetry. This should be a fun class but come prepared to think, act, and behave as if you were a professional writer, eager for deadlines and helpful advice.
Since this class counts for both the Creative Writing major (the BFA) and the minor, our Program Learning Outcomes are as follows:

1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (for this course, that means poetry).
3. The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4. The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.

The Student Learning Outcomes are based on those goals. Let’s put it in plain language: you’re going to read a lot of professional examples and pay attention to the craft; you’re going to write your own original poetry; you’re going to actively engage in workshop discussions; and you will turn in a portfolio of revised work at the end of the semester.

Since you all want to get a good grade, too, here’s the breakdown:

**GRADING:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Poem 2</td>
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<td>Poem 3</td>
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<td>Poem 4</td>
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<td>Final Portfolio</td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period. There will be numerous discussions, some quizzes, group activities, and assorted in-class assignments. Your eventual grade will benefit from high attendance and active participation. If you are going to be absent, I expect you to let me know in advance. If you are sick or otherwise unable to attend class, I expect you to leave a message at the above number or e-mail me. I give everyone **two free absences.** (That’s a week worth of class.) After that, absences will mar your final grade by a half letter grade per absence. Miss six or more days and you automatically fail the class, regardless of your other work.

Absence is not an excuse for missing assignments. You should either call a classmate or talk to me and find out what went on in class if you were not able to
attend.

DON'T MISS DAYS ON WHICH YOU HAVE WORK DUE OR WHEN YOUR ART IS THE FOCUS OF DISCUSSION. THAT WILL FURTHER HARM YOUR GRADE.

I don't accept late work. Ever. And I never give extra credit.

The effort you put into assignments, group work, and class discussion will count toward your grade. If you are absent for either class discussion days or group work, your grade will be affected. If you doze, pass notes, check your cell phone, text message, or act in a disruptive manner (specifically, talk while others are talking), expect your grade to suffer accordingly.

Tardiness is rude and annoys me more than you imagine. Be punctual. Every time you're late for class, you lose points. No kidding.

READINGS
Most of the assignments (and any pop quizzes) relate to the poems and articles you'll read for class discussion. Keep up with the readings; they are very important. We will be analyzing them carefully. I expect you to have read and thought about them before you come to class.

HOMEWORK
There will be a variety of exercises assigned. Do them and you’ll improve your writing and your grade. Don’t do them and both will suffer. Hopefully, you’re already in the habit of keeping a creative journal. That’s a notebook where you jot down ideas for poems or turns of phrase you want to use later. It’s not a personal journal or diary. I won’t be collecting your journals this semester but keeping a work journal is one of the best ways to hang on to your good ideas and have them bear fruit later. If you think good ideas will stick with you and you won’t forget them, you’ll forget them. Write it down. Make it a habit. Frequent journal keeping keeps writer’s block at bay. Trust me on this.

DETAILS
Pay particular attention to each assignment description. This should give you a good idea what I am looking for in each piece and the sort of errors I will mark. I will also go over this in class.

FORMAT
All in-class assignments must be written neatly in ink. Out-of-class work must be printed via computer; no handwriting for those. Staple sequential pages. Your work must be presented in a neat and professional manner.
PRESENTATION
You will need to give a brief in-class presentation on a current poet of your choice. You will analyze work we have not discussed in class. The presentation should be about ten minutes long, cover both biography and bibliography of the poet and explain some important technical trait of the poet’s work. A handout of your making is an essential accompaniment to your lecture.

POETRY
You are going to write six finished poems this semester (three open form, three fixed form). If you consider yourself a budding poet, wonderful. If not, I still hope you will enjoy creating striking images, the lure of alliteration and rhyme, the challenge of forms such as sonnets and villanelles and pantoums. Go into every assignment with enthusiasm and an open mind and you’ll be surprised what you can create.

PORTFOLIO
The last thing you hand in this semester will be an anthology of the work you produced this semester. I expect it to be revised work; nobody produces their sharpest stuff first time out. The poems you write in January and February will reappear in May, but it must be in a more polished form. Save your early draft. I want to see multiple versions, so I can compare how your manuscript has improved. We’ll talk more about this as the semester progresses, but my warning now is you must be prepared to revise. Writing is revision. (Say it again: writing is revision. It should be one of your mantras.) I also want a brief self-analysis of your work: your strengths, your weaknesses, your intentions, etc.

GRADING
How will I grade creative work? It’s subjective, of course, but I give you some ground rules in both format and content that should clarify what I’m looking for. Effort counts, too. I don’t know who said it, but art really is 98% perspiration, 2% inspiration. Perspire a little—no, perspire a lot—and you’ll get an A. If you are spectacularly gifted and turn in sloppy work, you won’t get an A. The race isn’t won by the naturally swiftest; it’s won by the runner who trains the most productively. This course is for the writer-in-training. Consider me a coach.

Oh, the University has asked us all to include information on the WH grade. I rarely use it; the circumstances would have to be extreme.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Please contact me if you are having any difficulties with the material due to a documented disability. I’m more than willing to accommodate you in a reasonable manner to help you succeed in this course. Many, many writers have blossomed despite physical, mental, and/or emotional hurdles. Just let me know and we can figure it out with the help of the University’s various and impressive resources. Here’s SFA’s official information on it:

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

AND NOW FOR SOME GRUMPY WARNINGS:
I will fail the following...
Missing your own workshop discussion
Incomplete work
Poems and essays not typed in expected format
Work with an abundance of uncorrected misspellings or typos (more than 2 per page)—professional editors have no patience with thoughtless errors.
Neither do I.

Always keep copies of what you write for your own protection in the event your work should be lost or misplaced. It probably won’t be, but the general rule is save everything just in case.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR (UNIVERSITY POLICY)
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

PLAGIARISM
I don’t know why anyone would take a creative writing class and then not use that as an opportunity to do their own work, but, hey, stranger things have happened.
So, just to remind you, claiming something as your original work when someone else wrote it is called PLAGIARISM, which means using without credit the ideas or expressions of another. The penalty for plagiarism will include failure of the plagiarized assignment and possibly failure for the course. In all cases, it will include notification of the Dean’s office. SFA takes it seriously and so do I. Here’s the official word on it:

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at:
http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**WHEW. DONE WITH THE GRUMPY STUFF. BUT SOME LAST WORDS...**

If you don’t know, ask. If you can’t remember, ask. If you panic, talk to me before the night before. Most importantly, relax.

The great British Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in his essay, “In Defence of Poetry,” that “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” This might be overstating it for our world, but the sentiment is correct. When you learn to view the world through a poetic lens—the attention it demands when you confront the world—you can make observations that are both profound and important. Give yourself that space, that gift. Henry James advises writers to “try to be one of those on whom nothing is lost.” Yes, that’s your goal: observe everything, lose nothing, take chances, make art.
TENTATIVE SYLLABUS
Spring 2018

WEEK ONE
1/16 T  Introduction to course; go over syllabus, policy statement.
        HOMEWORK: Review handouts.

1/18 TH  Get to know each other.
        HOMEWORK: Read handout on poetic terminology.

WEEK TWO
1/23 T  Discuss terms. (This should be review, right?)
        HOMEWORK: Read poems in handout.

1/25 TH  Terminology quiz. Discuss workshopping
        HOMEWORK: Read assigned poems. Write Poem #1 (open form).

WEEK THREE
1/30 T  Turn in Poem #1. Discuss workshopping/line editing.
        HOMEWORK: First presenters prepare.

2/1 TH  First 3 presentations.
        HOMEWORK: Read Large Group Workshop poems.

WEEK FOUR
2/6 T   LGW #1.
        HOMEWORK: Read Large Group Workshop poems

2/8 TH  Last day of LGW #1.
        HOMEWORK: Read sonnet handout.

WEEK FIVE
2/13 T  Talk about Sonnets.
        HOMEWORK: Second group of presenters prepare.

2/15 TH  Turn in Poem #2. Second 3 presenters.
        HOMEWORK: Read LGW #2 poems.

WEEK SIX
2/20 T  LGW #2.
        HOMEWORK: Read LGW #2 poems.

2/22 TH  LGW #2.
        HOMEWORK: Read poetry handout.
WEEK SEVEN
2/27 T  Discuss poems.
**HOMEWORK:** Third group of presenters prepare.

3/1 TH  Turn in Poem #3 (open form). Third group of 3 presentation.
**HOMEWORK:** Read LGW #3 poems.

WEEK EIGHT
3/6 T  LGW #3.
**HOMEWORK:** Read LGW #3 poems.

3/8 TH  Last day of LGW #3.
**HOMEWORK:** Read villanelle handout.

WEEK NINE
3/13 T  Spring Break

3/15 TH  Spring Break

WEEK TEN
3/20 T  Turn in Poem #4 (villanelle).
**HOMEWORK:** Presenters prepare.

3/22 TH  Fourth group of 3 presentations.
**HOMEWORK:** Read LGW #4 poems.

WEEK ELEVEN
3/27 T  LGW #4
**HOMEWORK:** Read poems in handout. Read LGW #4 poems.

3/29 TH  No Class.
**HOMEWORK:** Read poems in handout. Read LGW #4 poems.

WEEK TWELVE
4/3 T  Last day of LGW #4. Discuss poems in handout.
**HOMEWORK:** Sixth group of presenters prepare. Write Poem #5.

4/5 TH  Turn in Poem #5. Sixth group of 3 presenters
**HOMEWORK:** Read LGW #5 poems

WEEK THIRTEEN
4/10 T  LGW #5
**HOMEWORK:** Read LGW #5 poems

4/12 TH  Last day of LGW #5
**HOMEWORK:** Read Pantoum handout.
WEEK FOURTEEN
4/17 T  Discuss handout
   HOMEWORK: Write pantoum (Poem #6).

4/19 TH  Turn in Poem #6 (the pantoum).
   HOMEWORK: Seventh group of 3 presenters prepare

WEEK FIFTEEN
4/24 T  Last presenters.
   HOMEWORK: Read LGW poems #6.

4/26 TH  LGW #6
   HOMEWORK: Read LGW poems #6.

WEEK SIXTEEN
5/ 1 T  Last day of LGW #6.
   HOMEWORK:

5/3 TH  Final discussion.
   HOMEWORK: Polish your portfolio.

There is no final exam for this course.
Portfolios are due in my office on Thursday, May 10th by noon.

** I do not accept late portfolios under any circumstances. **

Congratulations. You’re done. Have a wonderful summer!