

301 Intermediate Creative Writing: Poetry
Colgate 214
T/R 9.30-10.45
Colgate 214

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Wrt 301 is designed for writing of poetry, that is to say, re-awakening the sensitivity, imagination, and the sense of wonder (vide the photo), as well as the refining of craft and the capacity for focus, risk, and revision. This class is also concerned with submissions for publications, so we will practice writing the successful submission letters. On the top of it, I will ask you to research a literary magazine that fits your aesthetics and try your hand at submitting there.



Our classroom will revolve around various texts: both canonical and experimental, as well as various channels of communication: visual, electronic, hypertextual, performative, and literary discourse. We will write palimpsests of traditional forms, but will also play with syncopating, disjuncting, de-subjecting and de-familiarizing them. We will also have a fractal poetry project in which you will be asked to recognize patterns within the seemingly random and chaotic text. Then, you will study in groups the frequency and patterns of alliterations, repetitions, number of sentences in each paragraph and number of paragraphs. We will display the results on graphs and spreadsheets. After that we will see how and if our examples can be a fractal poem. Finally, you will come up with the idea of your own fractal poem.

In this course fall in love with words. Words have been often equated with breath, which is the origin of all creation. In tribal societies breath was considered to be the most powerful and life-giving force. As Edmund Carpenter pointed out, in Eskimo language the word designating the art of poetry is tantamount to breathing. Both words derive from *anerca*, the soul, that which is eternal—the breath of life. “A poem is words infused with breath or spirit. *Let me breathe of it*, says the poet-maker and then begins: *I have put my words in order on the threshold of my tongue*” (Carpenter, “Breath”). For Trobrianders, the word *nanola* means both intelligence and larynx. For society Islanders, thinking is “speaking in the stomach” and “thoughts are words in the belly.” We will discuss what *nanola* and words in the belly are.

Edward Hirsch says, “the reader of poetry is a kind of pilgrim setting out, setting forth” and “poetry is a way to inscribe the feeling of awe” (2-3). Without the sense of surprise, bewilderment and discovery there is no literature; there is no learning. If we think we already know what to write, we never encounter the subject of a poem or a story that should “write us.” Likewise, if we already know what we are reading, we never learn anything about literature. To write a good poem, Jorie Graham claims, one has to make contact with the subject of a poem (Graham, Personal Interview). The opening up of a subject is what Graham calls the “poem’s occasion”—when we let ourselves meander and encounter the subject which changes us (Graham, Personal Interview). Such writing is an event because through language it leads to an encounter with the other/Other which points beyond the limitations of language. Paul Celan says, “Poems in this sense too are underway: they are making toward something. Toward what? Toward something standing open, occupiable, perhaps toward an addressable Thou, toward an addressable reality” (Celan 396).

Reading and writing is an encounter (vide Montale encountering a hoopoe) which activates “the radical self in its uninhibited freedom”—the self discarded of all the layers of ego and super-ego,” a radical and uninhibited self which makes its owner capable of choosing his/her own life (358). I hope that by the end of this course you will have experienced at least once or twice your inmost center, that *scintilla animae*, that “apex” or “spark.”

Works Cited:

- Carpenter, Edmund. The Became What They Beheld. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1970.
- Celan, Paul. Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan. Trans. John Felstiner. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.
- Colombo, Gary. Mind Readings. An Anthology For Writers. New York, NY: Bedford, 2002.
- Graham, Jorie. “Introduction to Best American Poetry.” Best American Poetry 1990. Poets. Org 13 July 2006 <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16612>>
- . “Some Notes on Silence” By Herself: Women Reclaim Poetry. Ed. Molly McQuade. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2000.
- . Personal Interview. 26 June 2006.
- Hirsch, Edward. How To Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry. New York: A Harvest Harcourt, 1999.
- Hirshfield, Jane. Nine Gates. Entering the Mind of Poetry. New York, NY: HarperCollins
- Merton, Thomas. “Learning to Live.” Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master. Ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham. New York: Paulist, 1992.

Course Objectives and Outcomes:

By the end of this course you will:

- write at least 10 good poems
- learn how to write good submission letters for publication
- learn 7 poems by heart
- broaden your sensitivity for the words
- awaken your imagination and the sense of wonder
- refine capacity for focus, risk, and revision

Course Requirements:

I will ask you to learn twice a month one poem by heart in order to experience poetry inside you and be able to say it to yourself “in a place where silence reigns and the din of culture—the constant buzzing noise that surrounds us—has momentarily stopped” (Hirsch 1). We will give tribute to oral heritage by reciting and memorizing poems. I will introduce you to Favorite Poetry Project first started by one of American Poets Laureates, Robert Pinsky.

Required Texts

- a 2-volume set from Norton ed. by Ramazani, Ellman & O’Clair:
Modern Poetry (vol 1) & Contemporary Poetry (vol 2)
- large, unabridged dictionary of your choice
- notebook

Suggested Texts:

- Any dictionary of literary terms, possibly “**The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics**
- Kim Adonizio& Dorianne Laux. The Poet’s Companion
- Michelle Boisseau, Robert Wallace. Writing Poems
- Brian Kiteley. The 3 A.M. Epiphany.
- Hirsch, Edward. How To Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry.
- Wendy Bishop Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Poem

Grading:

Journals

10% of your grade

Please purchase a little notebook which will be a record of your reading and writing discoveries. You will write down the ideas for writing, maybe a line that pops into your head, or snippets of overheard conversations that you want to use in your poetry. You can keep the track of your “found” poems there.

*Your Favorite Poetry Project Presentation,
attendance of two poetry readings & the report on a literary
magazine*

20%

I will ask you to find one poet that you want to present in the class and memorize a few of his/her poems. We will get acquainted first with Robert Pinsky's favorite poetry project, so you have some models and ideas to follow. You can simply recite your poem with a short presentation (15 min max), but you can also videotape yourself or record it with music, or, use other channels of communications—website, hypertext, collage, painting, etc.

You will be also asked to attend two poetry readings this semester and keep a record of these events in your journal.

Finally, you will ask a short report on a literary magazine or journal and share it with the class.

Workshops/ Class Participation/Reading and writing assignments

25% of your grade

In this class after having written the poems, we will be workshopping them. You will be responsible for posting your poem to the blackboard before the assigned workshop and also for bringing enough copies of your poem for everybody in the class. You will remain silent while your poem is being workshopped until all comments are shared.

We will also have a collaboration with graphic design students in our attempt to practice the art of ekphrasis.

There will be also a short interview that you will conduct with other poets, writers, or artists that you will find in the classroom or outside of the classroom.

Home-take exam

15%

This will consist of a short analysis of a poem.

In which you will display the knowledge of basic literary terms most of which you will find in the Pocket Definitions Reprinted at the end of Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Poem and in Glossary of The Sincerest Form.

Final Portfolio

30%

Your portfolio will consist of revised 10 poems out of all the poems written ones for this class. Throughout this semester you will submit unlimited number of poems once a week. You will leave them on my door on Fri by 2 pm + post them to your electronic folders. I will then go through your poems and choose one or two for class work-shopping.

Grading Standards

F indicates unacceptable performance. Little if any understanding of basic facts has been demonstrated and requirements clearly have not been fulfilled. No college credit is given for this grade.

C- and D grades indicate performance that is barely acceptable. Very little critical thinking, reflection, or application of knowledge has been demonstrated. Writing and communication skills often are inadequate. Some requirements may not have been fulfilled, and very little knowledge of facts and principles has been demonstrated. These are the lowest grades for which academic credit is given. A cumulative GPA at this level will place the student on academic probation and may eventually result in suspension.

C and C+ indicate adequate performance. Critical thinking, reflection and application of knowledge have been demonstrated at a competent level. Writing and communication skills also are at a competent level. Requirements of the course have been fulfilled and an understanding of facts and principles has been demonstrated.

B grades indicate good performance. A substantial amount of critical thinking, reflection, and application of knowledge has been demonstrated. Writing and communication skills are well developed. Requirements have been fulfilled, and a substantial knowledge of facts and principles has been demonstrated, though clearly not to an “A” level.

A grades indicate exceptional performance. A high degree of critical thinking, reflection, application of knowledge, and creativity has been demonstrated. Writing and communication skills are highly developed. Requirements have been fulfilled, and extensive knowledge of facts and principles has been demonstrated.

--from the 2005-2006 Colby-Sawyer College Catalogue, pages 168-169.

Numeric Equivalencies

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------|
| A+ | 100 | C+/C | 2.15 | 76.5 | |
| A+/A | 98 | C | 2.0 | 75 | |
| A | 4.0 | 95 | C/C- | 1.85 | 73.5 |
| A/A- | 3.85 | 93.5 | C- | 1.7 | 72 |
| A- | 3.7 | 92 | C-/D+ | 1.45 | 70 |
| A-/B+ | 3.45 | 90 | D+ | 1.3 | 68 |
| B+ | 3.3 | 88 | D+/D | 1.15 | 66.5 |
| B+/B | 3.15 | 86.5 | D | 1.0 | 65 |
| B | 3.0 | 85 | D/D- | 0.85 | 63.5 |
| B/B- | 2.85 | 83.5 | D- | 0.7 | 62 |
| B- | 2.7 | 82 | F | 0.0 | 0 |
| B-/C+ | 2.45 | 80 | | | |
| C+ | 2.3 | 78 | | | |

ATTENDANCE

Your success in this course relies heavily on regular participation in class activities. Missing classes will affect your performance and, consequently, your grade. In-class work will involve WORKSHOPS, DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS, JOURNAL ENTRIES etc., which are extremely difficult to make up for outside of the class environment. In exceptional cases, when missing class is inevitable, you are responsible for contacting me at least 24 hours in advance and making every possible effort to make up for the class promptly. If you have missed more than **2 classes**, I have a right to lower your grade or assign you additional work. If you happen to miss any class due to some illness or other serious circumstances, I expect you to contact me and your peers in order to catch up with whatever we were working on. I will keep your attendance record. Not only do I require from you to be in the class, but also to have your homework assignments with you and on time. I will not respond to late assignments unless they are justified. If you happen to be late with any of your assignments, you will be responsible for scheduling a conference meeting with me in order to fulfill this requirement. You will lead the discussion at these conferences which basically means that you should come prepared to discuss what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of whatever assignment you are assigned to work on and how you see your work developing, as well as what ideas you have for further revision. After the meeting, you will send me a brief memo describing what was discussed. I will sign off on that and then you will have fulfilled the requirement. I strongly encourage you to stay on schedule to facilitate your progress throughout the semester.

Technology in Class:

It is important that enroll in this course Blackboard site. I will provide you with the quick Start Guide and the Tip Sheets.

Disabilities Policy

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Academic Development Center (3714)

Classroom Behavior

I am excited to be working with all of you this semester, and I want our classroom environment to be one of acceptance and friendship. To facilitate that, I will expect you to use appropriate, unbiased language and to respect the views and opinions of one another. It also means that I expect you to do your own work and not plagiarize. If you are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult Blair Handbook (pp 364-368).

I really do look forward to the coming semester and to getting to know each of you. If you ever have any difficulties or questions at any time during the semester, please feel free to stop by my office and chat.

A Final Note

I reserve the right to modify this syllabus.

Course Schedule:**Week 1****Sep 11**

Introduction to the course

What is poetry?

Ars Poetica examples

Favorite Poetry Project

Announcements:**WORD ORDER**

Literary magazine for extra credit (Mike McMahon)

Humanities Seminar 28th

Jack Kerouac's scrolls (Restless Minds Trips) first week of Oct

Assignment:

1. Enroll in Blackboard and read syllabus again
2. Favorite Poetry Project – find a poem you like
3. Find a poem on poetry

4. Read:

Frost's A Figure a Poem Makes (Norton 1, 984)

Sep 14

Favorite Poetry Project

Ars Poetica

Assignment:

1. Prepare first batch of your poems
(leave it on my door by Mon 10 am)
2. Read Heaney's Feeling into Words (Norton 2 1097)
and Digging (Norton 2, 720)

Week 2**Sep 18**

Workshop #1

Assignment:

Bring a bad poem of yours to class

Find example of poetry that you like but you find alien to your writing

Sept 20

Workshop

Assignment:

Submit your poems (Fri by 2 pm)

Week 3**Sep 25**

Workshop

Assignment:

TBA

Sept 27

Defamiliarization

Shifting the Perspective

Craig Raine “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home”

Assignment:

1. Write a First-Person Poem From the Point of View of a Non-Human Other [animal, insect, crustacean, plant, machine, etc] include a research on that creature.

2. Submit your poems by Fri

Humanities Seminar 28th

Week 4

Oct 2

Field trip?

Oct 4

Workshop

Assignment:

Submit your poems (by Fri)

Week 5

Oct 9

Presentation & Workshop

Oct 11

Workshop

Assignment:

Submit your poems

Week 6

Oct 16

Workshop

Presentation

Assignment:

Read Fractal project (Blackboard)

Oct 18

Fractal Project

Assignment:

Midterm, TBA

Week 7

Oct 23

No Class

Oct 25

Fractal Project

Assignment:

TBA

Week 8

Oct 30

Fractal Project

Assignment:

TBA

Nov 1

Final Fractal Project

Assignment:

Write your fractal text

Week 9

Nov 6

Workshops

Nov 8

THE ART OF EKPHRASIS

Assignment:

Find an image, a reproduction of painting that might provoke you into writing a poem or a prose poem.

Week 10

Nov 13

Visit to Graphic Design/Digital Art Class –cooperation

Assignment:

Set up your appointments with graphic design students

Nov 15

Workshop

Assignment:

Submit your poems

Week 11

Nov 20

MEDITATION AND SOUND

Analysis of Stevens and Cummings (“Snowman,” “Of Mere Being”

Assignment:

1. Find your own example of a meditative poem
2. Write a free-verse poem.
3. Submit your poems

Nov 22 Thanksgiving

Week 12

Nov 27

Meditation and sound continued

Cummings “Somewhere I Have Never Traveled Gladly Enough”)

Nov 29

Workshops & presentations

Week 13

Dec 4

Workshops & presentations

Assignment:

Interviews

Dec 6

Discussion of final projects
Presentations

Week 14

Dec 11

Workshops & presentations

Dec 13

Final projects due

I reserve the right to modify THE COURSE SCHEDULE.