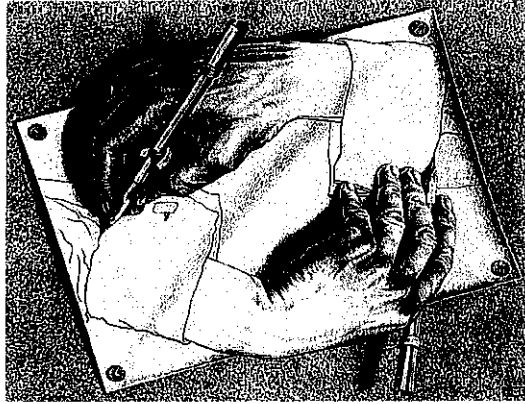


ENGLISH 206: WRITING POETRY

T/Th 11-12:15, Oddfellows 203



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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Our word "poet" originally comes from the Greek word for "maker" or "creator." In this course we will endeavor to remind ourselves of the materials, the conventions, the ideas, and the media out of which poems are made. It is easy to argue that the art of creation cannot be *taught*, but we will begin with the hypothesis that certain things about the craft of poetry can, in fact, through observation and imitation, be *learned*. Thus, we will spend a surprisingly large quotient of our time reading poetry, finding models and tuning our ears and eyes to them, learning what we can about their technical idiosyncrasies, memorizing their music. We will use our remaining time together to discuss your writing, much of it in the form of exercises and assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Most of the poems you write for this course will be produced under unusual and rather extreme conditions. You will be given deadlines that will afford little time for inspiration, brooding or procrastination. The good news is that (for the most part) you will be responding to assignments; this should take some of the "creative pressure" off of you. Take these assignments very seriously (you'll certainly learn something if you do), but also think of them as exercises, not instant masterpieces. Nevertheless, we will discuss your work both as exercises and as poems. More often than not, your work may succeed in the first of those capacities, but probably not in the second. But if you revise these exercises, and if you work hard and get lucky, you might very well have some poems by the semester's end.

The due dates for each poetry assignment are inflexible. Late poems will not be discussed or considered by the instructor. Students who fail to turn in poems on time will risk the chance of failing the course.

Since poetry places a particular kind of pressure upon language—by virtue of its intensity and meticulous compression—it is crucial that your poems are edited as well as, if not even more fastidiously than your prose.

No one can write good poetry without learning how to read good poetry first; therefore, your other assignment this term is to become a competent and enthusiastic reader of poetry. Readings from the anthologies, the Montesano volume, and the Richard Hugo book, are important parts of that assignment. Also, you will be prescribed an American poet whose work you are unfamiliar with.

Think of these assignments as real "prescriptions"; I will choose a poet for you whose work might be useful to your evolving sense of what a poem does. In your portfolio at the end of the term, you will include a carefully written "review/sketch" (appreciation, criticism, analysis, discussion, etc.) of that poet and/or a few of that poet's poems. Some research is appropriate preparation for such an activity, but it is more important that you try to approach the poet as a poet: lead us through some compelling poems, talk about the style and sound and texture of the poems, reveal the ideas present there, and tell us what you like about the poems. Models for this prose assignment are readily available; please do not hesitate to ask for them.

EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE:

The grade assigned to your work in this course will depend in part on your ability to produce and submit poems by the assigned due dates and to complete other assignments in a timely, professional and diligent manner. Since all creative work in this course will be considered "in progress," you need not worry about being "graded" on the success of individual drafts. Each of you will produce a portfolio of your poems (consisting of at least nine poems) by the end of the term. Most, if not all of those poems will be revisions of previously submitted work. Your final grade will, to a large degree, be determined by the other elements of this final portfolio and the quality of your final revisions. You will also be asked to provide spoken and written critiques on the work of your peers all semester long; your participation in this activity will be considered in formulating your final grade. And because you will benefit from coming into contact with living poets, your attendance at Single Voice Readings is mandatory. Written responses to those readings will be required.

Since the course is organized as a workshop, attendance and class participation are also mandatory. Students who miss more than four classes will find their grade lowered by as much as a full letter grade. Students who miss six or more classes should not expect to pass.

TEXTS:

Required:

Keith Montesano, Ghost Lights, Dream Horse Press. 9781935716006

Under the Rock Umbrella, ed. Walsh. Mercer UP. Paper. 978 0 88146 047 6

The Triggering Town, Richard Hugo. Norton. Paper. 0 393 30933 9

Structure and Surprise, ed. Theune. Teachers & Writers. Paper. 0 915924 27 7

Encouraged:

After Greece, Christopher Bakken

Goat Funeral, Christopher Bakken

THE PORTFOLIO:

Most of your grade for this course will be determined by the portfolio you turn in at the end of the semester. This portfolio will consist of four items:

- 1) a prose "introduction" to your portfolio. This is your chance to say anything about your performance in the course, about the poems you did and did not make. A statement of your "aesthetic" is not necessary, but some account of what you attempted, what you succeeded in, what you failed at and what you learned would be appropriate here. The best of these will exhibit remarkable self-scrutiny and depth.
- 2) Nine revised poems with their 'original' drafts (the draft you submitted to the class and I returned to you with notations)
- 3) Your review/sketch of the poet assigned to you from the anthology.

Please submit your portfolio typed and assembled carefully in a three-ringed binder with your name on it. No illustrations or fancy covers please. Portfolios Due: 12pm, May 10th.

COURSE CALENDAR:

We will work on an alternating schedule: poems will be due about every other class meeting. The other classes will be dedicated to explaining assignments, discussing models for those assignments, and considering prose reading assignments. You will be required to bring enough copies (one for each of your peers plus one for the instructor) of each assignment to class on the due date. Arrive with these photocopies ready to be distributed! If your poem is not ready on the due date, it will not be distributed or discussed. Texts/Poems Listed Below must be read before you arrive in class.

January

19 First Day of Class: Course Introduction, First Assignment: "The The"

24 Dictation Exercise. Read Hugo, ch. 1 & 5.

26 Exercises and Models of Assignment One, cont. Read all poems in packet.

31 Exercises and Models of Assignment One, cont.

In RU, read Balk, "Dear Hippopotamus" [27]; Carbo, "Tuyo" [68]; Collier, "To a Chameleon" [70]; Doty, "Grackles on Montrose" [96]; Hollander, "California Roll" [173]; McGrath, "Snapdragons" [231]; Spires, "Snail" & "Snail, Revisited" [333-335]; Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read "The Blue Jay" and "Portrait Detail, with Pear."

February

2 "The The" poems due. Assignment Two: Praise Poem. In Structure & Surprise, read ch. 2, "The Emblem Structure." In RU, read Addonizio, "First Kiss" & "31-year-old Lover" [2]; Belieu, "I Heart Your Dog's Head" [44]; McGrath, "Xena..." [230]; Young, "Ode to Hangover" [427]. In Montesano, read: "Prayer: 3200 Hanover Ave." [24] and "Love Song for the End of the World" [68]. Andrew Hudgins, "Praying Drunk" [105].**

7 Disc. of "The The" poems.

9 Praise Poems Due. Assignment Three: Persona Poem. In RU, read: Jenks, "Saturday Morning" [190]; Marvin, "A Windmill..." [222]; Seibles, "Jimi's Blues" [314]. Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read; "Late Adam Thinking," "Ariadne (Postscript)" and "Last Words from Elpenor" & in *After Greece*, read "Burning the Turk" and "At Xanthos."

14 Disc. of Praise Poems

16 Persona Poem Due. Assignment Four: At/Locale Poem. Read Hugo, ch. 2 & 3. In Structure & Surprise, read ch. 7, "The Descriptive-Meditative Structure." In RU, read, "Cul-de-sac" [16]; Braggs, "La Deception" [57] & "Like a Rhinestone Cowboy" [60]; Dumanis, "The Death of Elegy" (108); Hicok, "Peoria" [164]; Wiman, "Clearing" [401]. In Montesano, read: "Watching Youngstown" [26]; "Poem Ending with..." [27]; "Going Home" [53]; "Service Plaza, Somerset" [57]; "Meditation at Pymatuning Lake" [61]. Optional: in *After Greece*, read "Samothraki", "Dion", "Kelifos" & "The Maenad at Perea." & in *Goat Funeral*, read "Ohio Elegy."

17 Diana Joseph Reading. 8pm, Tillotson Room.

21 Disc. of Persona poems.

23 Response to Joseph reading due. In class exercise.

28 In class exercise. Prescriptions Distributed.

March

2 "At..." / Locale poem Due. Assignment Five: Ekphrastic poem.

Optional: in *After Greece*, read "Terra Incognita" and "Landscape with Kore" & in *Goat Funeral*, read: "Detail from the *Martyrdom of St. Mauricio*."

- 7 Disc. of "At.."/Locale poems.
- 9 Ekphrastic Poem Due. Assignment Six: Sonnet. In RU, read Agoos, "February" [61]; Bakken, "Alexandroupoli" [25]; Barot, "Elegy" [31]; Campo, "On Valentine's Day" [66]; Cooley, "Triage Sonnet" [76]; Davidson, "Cockroaches" [92]; McCombs, "Stephen Bishop's Grave" & "Cave Mummies" [226]. Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read: "The World Reduced to One Thing," "Purgatory, a Postcard," "Coleridge in Valletta," and "Last Words from Elpenor" & in *After Greece*, read: "Cliff Lullaby," "Dido," "Melisses," "Santorini," & "A Concert of Ancient Music."
- 10 Montesano/Murphy reading. Spm. Tillotson Room.
- 14 Montesano/Murphy response due. Disc. of Ekphrastic poems.
- 16 Sonnet due. Assignment Seven: Short Poem or Ironic Structure poem. In Structure and Surprise, read ch. 1, "The Ironic Structure." In RU, read Alexie, "Migration, 1902" [12]; Dove, "In the Bulrush" & "Eighth Juror" [98-99]; Espada, "DSS Dream," "Sheep Haiku," & "When the Leather..." [117-118]; Hall, "Properties" [148]; Rohrer, "Map of Lament" [299]; Streckfus, "Ode" [337]; Trinidad, "Reruns" [369]; Wiman, "A Field..." [402]; Wright, "Birthday" [416]. Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read "Parenthesis" & in *After Greece*, read: "Behind the Theatre, Limenas."
- 21 Spring Break
- 23 Spring Break
- 28 Disc. of Sonnets..
- 30 Short poem/Ironic Structure poem due. Assignment Eight: Substructure. In Structure & Surprise, read ch. 9, "Substructure" and browse "Endless Structures" [187-223]. In RU, read Bateman, "Poetmaster 1, 4 & 9" [32-34]; Cooley, "Suspicion" [74]; Duhamel, "Embarazar" [104]; Gyls, "Personal" [146]; Hoagland, "My Country" [167]; Jarnot, "Hound Pastoral" [187]; Walsh, "In Anticipation of..." [378]. Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read "Minimalist Eclogue" & "Anatomy."

April

- 4 Disc. of Short/Ironic structure poems
- 6 Substructure poems due. Assignment Nine: Self-Portrait. In Montesano, read: "Self-Portrait Ending with the Last..." [62]; "Self-Portrait Ending with a Slow..." [65]. In RU, read: Gyls, "My Father's Nightmare" [146]; Hicok, "Man of the House" [163]; Lee, "Night Mirror" [209]; Merrill, "Doppelganger" [235]; Webb, "I Never Had..." [392] & "Congratulations..." [394-6]. Optional: in *After Greece*, read "Proteus" & "Philoctetes." In *Goat Funeral*, read "Anamnesis" & "Duet with Fernando Pessoa."
- 7 Kirk Nasset reading. Spm, Tillotson Room.
- 11 Close-reading of Prescribed Poet due. Disc. of Substructure Poems.
- 13 Self-Portrait Due. Assignment Ten: "Days of" poem. In Montesano, read: "Days of 1994" [15]. In RU, read, "Girl with Blue Plastic Radio" [229]; Roripaugh, "Loneliness" [302]; Soto, "Dizzy Girls" [327] & "The Wrestler's Heart" [329]; Townsend, "Mall Life" [359]; Trinidad, "Song" [366]; Weaver, "Sin, 1969" [390]; Wojahn, "Days of 1994" [410]. Optional: in *Goat Funeral*, read "Days of 1987."
- 18 Disc. of Self-Portraits.
- 20 Days of..." Poem Due. Read Robert Frost.
- 25 Disc. of "Days of" poems. Revisions due.
- 27 Speed workshop.

May

- 2 Final reading.

Portfolios Due: 12 pm, May 10th