

CRW 4906

The Art of the Sonnet / Spring 2019

Professor Ange Mlinko

amlinko@ufl.edu

Turlington 4211-E

Office hours: Monday 2-3:00 pm or by appointment.

It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous work.—Ezra Pound*“Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length.”*—Robert Frost

“Men use their vocal cords for speech, that is, to communicate with each other, but also, under certain conditions, a man may feel, as we say, “like singing.” This impulse has little, if anything, to do with communication or with other people. Under the pressure of a certain mood, a man may feel the need to express that mood to himself by using his vocal cords in an exceptional way. ... In no other art can one see so clearly a distinction, even a rivalry, between the desire for pattern and the desire for personal utterance, as is disclosed between instrumental and vocal music.”
—W.H. Auden, “Music in Shakespeare”

These quotations should give you a sense of the aesthetics behind this class on the sonnet. “Sonnet” is just a word meaning “little song” and is strongly associated with themes of love, but it has also appealed to the cerebral side of poets attracted to its compactness and its mathematical ratios. Thus it has acquired a reputation as being the perfect form for a single “thought” (what Pound called “logopoeia,” “the dance of the intellect among words”). It is also the most stylish of forms, invented by Italians and honed, in our own language, by Renaissance courtiers. The sonnet makes life more bearable by its beauty.

Required Texts:*The Penguin Book of the Sonnet* (ed. Phillis Levin)*The Art of the Sonnet* (Burt/Mikics)**Recommended Texts** (and oral presentation projects):*New Poems* by Rainier Maria Rilke (Austro-German, 20th C)*Notebook 1967-68* (or *History/For Lizzie and Harriet/The Dolphin*) by Robert Lowell (American mid-20th century)*John Berryman’s Sonnets* (American mid-20th century)*American Sonnets* by Wanda Coleman (American, contemporary)*American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* by Terrance Hayes (American, contemporary)*Repast: Tea, Lunch, and Cocktails* by D.A. Powell (American, contemporary)*Nomina* by Karen Volkman (American, contemporary)*Horse Latitudes* by Paul Muldoon (Irish-American, contemporary)*Portobello Sonnets* by Harry Clifton (Irish, contemporary)*40 Sonnets* by Don Paterson (U.K./Scotland, contemporary)

If something else from either anthology strikes you, see me about it. For instance, you may have a historical interest in the following: Edna St. Vincent Millay’s love sonnets, George Meredith’s *Modern Love*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Italian Sonnets*, The “Terrible Sonnets” by Gerard Manley Hopkins (19th C English), “Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty” by William Wordsworth (19th C English), “Holy Sonnets” by John Donne (17th C English), or *Astrophel and Stella* by Philip Sidney (16th C English)

The requirements are as follows:

- 1) Attendance (with materials) is mandatory. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will depreciate by half a letter grade for each subsequent absence (I will only accept a doctor’s note if there is an extended absence). If you are over 5 minutes late, or are missing your printed materials, I will give you only half credit for attendance that day.
- 2) There should be no open screens in the classroom without my permission.

- 3) You will write a sonnet every week and bring copies for everyone in class. All poems must be brought to class on paper: poems shall be typed, single-spaced, in Roman 10 or 12 font, with your name on it. We will be looking to see if the sonnet follows the constraints of form that I specify; if it is clear and if not, why not; and whether it has a particular flair in its expression or imagery. You will be tasked to come up with inventive concepts. As we get further into the semester, you will be asked to turn in two then four sonnets, to build a sonnet sequence or “crown.”
- 4) Bring your book(s) to class each session. When I send handouts of individual poems and essays on PDF or links via Canvas, you must print them out, read them **with a pencil in hand and a dictionary at hand**, and bring them to class for discussion. Please be prepared when I ask you for meanings of obscure words. (See oed.com for the most authoritative source on English meanings and usage; if you connect through UF, you will have no problem accessing it.)
- 5) After spring break, you will give a twenty-minute presentation of a book of sonnets or sonnet sequence, chosen from the list of recommended texts above, and then lead a class discussion of it. The presentation will involve uploading individual sonnets on an overhead screen with commentary—literary criticism as well as biographical information. A written outline of the presentation will be handed in as well.
- 6) You must memorize two sonnets, to be recited before spring break and on the last day of class, respectively.
- 7) Your final grade will consist of 50% attendance and participation, 25% oral presentation, 25% final portfolio of eight sonnets, plus all prose commentary you have written for the class. Please note that participation includes following the prompts I give you.

Here is the calendar for the semester (subject to change). Each week your assignment will consist of something to read, and something to write. I suggest that you start thinking about the assignment the minute you leave the classroom. You should not wait until the weekend to write a first draft. You should draft something by Wednesday or Thursday, and revise it on the weekend. Give yourself plenty of time to let the poem gestate.

Until further notice, you will constrain your sonnets to a tetrameter, pentameter, or hexameter line, and keep it to 14 lines, with a volta after the 8th line. Regular rhyme is not required, although subtlety and experimentation with pararhyme and internal rhyme is something you should be developing throughout the semester.

CALENDAR

Date	In Class	Assignment
January 7	Introduction to class. Introduction to sonnet and types. Themes and rhetorical tropes. Diction: Antique vs. contemporary, colloquial vs. literary. Thinking in images and paradoxes. “Memorability.” Enjambment.	Read Phillis Levin’s introduction to the Penguin Book of Sonnets as well as the Petrarch/Chaucer “Proem.” Read the Mikics/Burt introduction and the Thomas Wyatt entry. Now read Phillis Levin’s sonnet “Final Request” (p. 320), and write a sonnet based on a paradox as Wyatt and Levin do (Model yours on Levin’s contemporary idiom). Maintain iambic pentameter (or ten-syllable lines) or tetrameter (or 8-syllable lines) with minimal enjambment. Don’t strive for a rhyme scheme (yet).

Date	In Class	Assignment
January 14	Workshop paradox sonnets.	Read Levin's Shakespeare selection, and then Burt/Mikics Shakespeare sonnet/essays. Now read "Sway" and "Passengers" by Denis Johnson (p. 305) and write a contemporary love sonnet.
January 21	Holiday	
January 28	Workshop contemporary love sonnets.	Read Levin's selection of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and Burt/Mikics on Donne's 2 sonnets. Now read Carol Ann Duffy's "Prayer" (p. 322) and write a prayer in the form of an iambic pentameter sonnet. Play with assonance and internal rhyme, but don't force end-rhyme.
February 4	Workshop prayer sonnets.	Read Levin's selection of Ashbery & Berrigan, Burt/Mikics' selection of Berrigan. Handouts of Raymond Queneau and Anne Carson. Write two cento sonnets, collaging lines that have the same meter from sonnets in the Levin anthology.
February 11	Workshop cento sonnets.	Read Burt/Mikics on Rilke, Yeats, Merrill and Powell. Write two sonnets on Greek myth.
February 18	Workshop myth sonnets.	Revise two of your previous sonnets which speak to each other in some way, trying to incorporate edits from workshop as well as bringing more structure into the form. Experiment with rhyme scheme.
February 25	Workshop revisions. Recitations.	Write a sonnet crown of at least four sonnets; you may use one or more of your previous sonnets as a basis for further exploration of an idea.
March 4	Spring Break	
March 11	Workshop sonnet crowns. Presentation #1 & 2	Pick a sonnet of your choice from the Levin anthology for reading aloud; note what drew you to the sonnet in a 250-word paragraph.
March 18	Workshop sonnet crowns. Presentation #3	Pick a sonnet of your choice from the Levin anthology for reading aloud; note what drew you to the sonnet in a 250-word paragraph.
March 25	Workshop revised sonnet crowns. Presentation #4	Pick a sonnet of your choice from the Levin anthology for reading aloud; note what drew you to the sonnet in a 250-word paragraph.
April 1	Workshop revised sonnet crowns. Presentation #5	Pick a sonnet of your choice from the Levin anthology for reading aloud; note what drew you to the sonnet in a 250-word paragraph.

Date	In Class	Assignment
April 8	Workshop revisions. Presentation #6	Pick a sonnet of your choice from the Levin anthology for reading aloud; note what drew you to the sonnet in a 250-word paragraph.
April 15	Workshop revisions. Presentation #7	Prepare portfolios.
April 22	Portfolios and 2nd recitations due.	

Boilerplate:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Additional Resources for Students: Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, (352-846-1138) <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> (Links to an external site.)

The Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road (352-392-1575) <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/ewe/> (Links to an external site.)

Academic Honesty

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> (Links to an external site.)

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.
3. (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code. The University Writing Program takes plagiarism very seriously, and treats instances of plagiarism as dishonesty and as a failure to comply with the scholarly requirements of this course. You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own.

Important tip: There should never be a time when you copy and paste something from the Internet and don't provide the exact location and citation information for the source.

If a student plagiarizes all or any part of any assignment, he or she will be awarded a failing grade on the assignment. Additionally, University policy suggests that, as a MINIMUM, instructors should impose a course grade penalty and report any incident of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students. Each student's work may be tested for its originality against a wide variety of databases by anti-plagiarism sites to which the University subscribes, and negative reports from such sites may constitute PROOF of plagiarism. Other forms of academic dishonesty will also result in a failing grade on the assignment as a minimum penalty. Examples include cheating on a quiz or citing phony sources or quotations to include in your assignments.