

## IMAGINATIVE WRITING OF POETRY

**Book:** Ramazani, Ellmann, O'Clair eds. *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, vol. 2 (contemporary). The book is required and must be brought to each class; please do not depend on your fellow students to loan you the text during class.

**Course objectives:** The course is essentially a workshop; that is, the emphasis will be upon your own creative work. The goal of the course is to improve your writing, in terms of the standards by which poetry published in nationally recognized journals is judged. In addition, you should emerge with better critical skills for improving both your own work and that of your classmates. We will work on the assumption that a poet writes for both herself and others.

**Turning in work:** During the first class, we will use the e-mail addresses of the other class members and myself to establish a group mailing list.. Each week **I** will go over the assignment for the following week and will e-mail this to you as well. No later than the following Sunday at noon, each student should send the others and me a copy of his or her poem. Please send these as attachments in docx format, and if this does not work, in rtf format. Double-space your poem, so that **I** can comment more easily. **Include your name on the attachment as well as on the message.** **I** will comment in writing on each poem and return it in printed form during the following class. **Save these copies**, because **I** will want to see them again at midterm and at the end of the course as well, when you turn them in along with your notebook. You may occasionally wish to turn in a poem or two in addition to the assignment, perhaps only for my comments, and that is perfectly okay; but as a rule only one poem by each student will be discussed each week. We may not be able to cover a poem by every student, so **I** will try to make sure we discuss work by the persons whose poems were missed as soon as possible. This does not apply to students who consistently turn in work late, and students who do this more than a couple of times will have their grade adversely affected. **If** you have a reason to request that the poem you turn in for a particular week *not* be discussed in class, or remain anonymous, please make a note to that effect on the poem you turn in to me.

About half of the assignments are specific exercises with ground rules, while about half are "open" assignments where you are simply asked for a poem. I will e-mail the assignment to the class during the week before class, in addition to discussing the assignment with you in class. E-mail me or speak to me in class if you have any questions. I expect that most poems will be somewhat less than a page in length, double-spaced.

After you have received your classmates' poems, you should read them carefully, write some useful comments on them, look up any unfamiliar words or allusions, and otherwise do your best to become the ideal reader. Everyone should have plenty to say about any poem if called upon, and I will ask everyone to give the poets their annotated copies at the end of class. You should not, however, ask the poet to explain or comment on his or her poem before we do so in class. In general, we will first discuss each poem without the participation of the poet, only afterward turning to the writer for clarification, discussion, or help. This is not a game where a prize will be

awarded to the first person to guess the meaning of a particularly obscure piece of writing.

In the first part of class we will discuss poems by the writers assigned for that week, we will discuss your experience in attempting the exercise for that week, and we will discuss the particular writing assignment or exercise (if any) for the following week. I will also mail each student the assignment on the class listserv. You should be familiar with the poems from the anthology assigned that week; unless I state otherwise, read all the selections for each poet. From time to time we will have in-class exercises designed to help your writing and explore technical possibilities.

**Absences:** You are allowed two absences, which must be cleared in advance with me; e-mail me or call me at the office and leave a message. Any *uncleared* absence (including significant lateness) lowers your grade by half a letter. You are responsible for finding out the details of any assignments you miss. If you miss a class, your work for the following week is still due at the ordinary time.

**Grades:** I will give you an idea of the grade you can expect (assuming you continue working at the same level) when we meet around midterm; at the end of term I will collect from you a notebook with copies of all your work, including my comments, and your own revisions of whichever poems you wish. Up to a point, the more poems you revise successfully, the more positively I am impressed. There are no papers and no exams, and poems and exercises will not be graded individually. Your final grade will be determined by the quality and/or improvement in your writing; by your attendance and participation in class, including your demonstrated preparedness; and by the wit, passion, and seriousness you bring to writing.

An A grade indicates either the quality of your writing and the carefulness and imagination with which you fulfilled each of the assignments or the substantial improvement in your writing from the start to the end of the course, as well as the quality of your contributions to class. A B grade will be given for work that is above average but fails to show either remarkable achievement or remarkable improvement. A C grade indicated that you simply fulfilled the basic assignments without any of the work being exceptional. A D grade or an E indicates substantial failure to fulfill the assignments and/or an unusual number of absences coupled with below-average work. Grade appeals must be documented with the relevant class material, and should be made to Stephanie Smith, Associate Chair. Appeals may result in a grade being improved, unchanged, or lowered.

#### **SCHEDULE:**

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| Aug. 21  | Introduction.  |
| Aug. 28  | Gwendolyn Brooks. <b>Pregnant Object assignment.</b>                           |
| Sept. 4  | William Stafford. <b>Dictionary poem.</b>                                      |
| Sept. 11 | Kenneth Koch. <b>Open assignment.</b>  |
| Sept. 18 | Maxine Kumin, <b>End-word exercise.</b>  |
| Sept. 25 | Elizabeth Bishop. <b>Open assignment. Arrange appointments for next week's</b> |

**assessment.**

- Oct. 2 Frank O'Hara. **Revision.** ASSESSMENT THIS WEEK.
- Oct. 9 Donald Justice. **Sonnet.**
- Oct. 16 John Ashbery (choose several poems). **Openassignment**
- Oct. 23 Mark Strand. **Sestina.**
- Oct. 30 Seamus Heaney. **Openassignment.**
- Nov. 6 Richard Hugo. **Create your ownexercise.**
- Nov. 13 John Berryman. **Vocabulary exercise.**
- Nov. 21 James Dickey, **Open assignment.**
- Nov. 27 No class (Thanksgiving).
- Dec. 4 NOTEBOOKS DUE. CelebratoryReadings.

**University Policy on Academic Honesty:**

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code.

*Cheating.* The improper taking or tendering of any information or material which shall be used to determine academic credit. Taking of information includes, but is not limited to, copying graded homework assignments from another student; working together with another individual(s) on a take-home test or homework when not specifically permitted by the teacher; looking or attempting to look at another student's paper during an examination; looking or attempting to look at text or notes during an examination when not permitted. The tendering of information includes, but is not limited to, giving of your work to another student to be used or copied; giving someone answers to exam questions either when the exam is being given or after taking an exam; giving or selling a term paper or other written materials to another student; sharing information on a graded assignment.

*Plagiarism.* The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one's own thought, whether the work is published or unpublished, or simply the work of a fellow student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on an exam, term paper, homework, or other written materials or oral presentations for an academic requirement; submitting a paper which was purchased from a term paper service as your own work; submitting anyone else's paper as your own work.

For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student—honor—code.aspx>

**Students with Disabilities:**

I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will then provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this document to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

**Statement on Harrassment:**

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>