

Not much to say. I think most of you know the drill, and while I've not had the pleasure of teaching you (bar one or two) in other classes, a lot of you come recommended, and I'm eager to meet you and read you.

One unusual feature, though, for the semester: instead of reading only recent or contemporary work, I thought I'd assign a couple of foundational twentieth century poets, in Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) and Constantine Kavafy (1863-1933). I think you may as well learn what a *Dinggedicht* is, and about writing obliquely about the present from the archival past (in addition to the legendary series of "Days of..." poems). These writers will give focus and alignment to our writing and thinking about writing; I hope they give you a taste for poetry in translation as well, and for other cultures in general. A third book will be by the late Polish poet (and greatly admired friend of your teacher's) Adam Zagajewski (1945-2020), who sadly died last year. It will show you not just what and how to write, but what and how to be.

(I may as well give you my three tips right now. They are: Read. Walk. Switch off your gadgets.)

We'll take the books in order, about 4 weeks each. Remember, these poets are among the very great voices of their day – our day – and I commend them to you. We are lucky to have them to read. Try and get your copies as soon as possible, and read the books through, once, twice, many times, each week. Come prepared to talk in some detail about individual poems.

As well as poems, I'd like you to write short, detailed, informal papers/ appreciations/ analyses on 1 (or 2?) poem(s) by each of the poets. Say, 2-3 pages. (Perhaps in your off-weeks, when you can't manage or don't feel like a poem? Remember, though: the earlier you write these, the more choice you have, because otherwise the class and I will have trampled over them.) Expect to read these aloud to the class.

I will grade these; final grades will be based on a combination of these response papers; presence and participation in class; and my overall sense of the worth and improvement in your own poems (individual poems will not be graded).

From time to time I may mix things up by bringing in other materials myself. Sometimes I will set a subject or approach or limitations; oftentimes not. Try, if you can, to follow these hesitantly given prompts; I think you will enjoy your 'freedom' more if you work with, though I hope not under, compulsion.

Last, and alas not least, I have no idea what form the semester will take: physical meetings in CBD, ZOOM, or some unstable combination of the two. Having been away last year myself, and not being a dab hand at these things, I had hoped we might meet, old-style, and pass out poems, etc. etc. I don't want to rule that out, not least as I'm not back in the States yet, and have no sense of conditions there. Obviously your chances – and all our chances – are improved by vaccination and other sensible precautions; I note that UF is once again asking for masking within buildings. What I can ask you to do for now, is look out for emails from me, and stay posted for Canvas as well (which I haven't managed to access from here). It seems I can't with any certitude rule anything in or out. Let's just hope we all get through the semester, and have some illuminating literary experience on the way.

I'm thinking of having office hours on Tuesdays, 1-4 pm. 4211-D.

Michael Hofmann  
<mhofmann@ufl.edu>