

Professor Ange Mlinko

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Office hours: Thursday 10-11 or by appointment

**Required Texts:** *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*, 5th Edition, ed. Mason & Nims

**Course Description:** In this poetry workshop, we will read a variety of American, English, and Irish poems, mostly from the 20th century. The first part of the semester will occupy you with reading and exercises that will build up your skills; we will do classroom workshopping of student poems in the second half of the semester. There will be a short quiz at the beginning of each class to ensure that everyone does the reading. The quiz will mainly be vocabulary, so if you don't know a word or a place-name in the reading, you must look it up. When a prompt is given, you must follow the prompt. Title each poem and put the prompt in brackets at the bottom of the page.

We will assume Horace's dictum, that poetry should delight and instruct. Wallace Stevens put it a little differently; he said that "It must give pleasure" but he also said "it must change" and "it must be abstract." Robert Frost called it "a momentary stay against confusion," and Marianne Moore said poetry is ideally "an imaginary garden with real toads in them." All this is to say that poetry is a unique category of speech: an intensification of ordinary language, requiring close attention and strong composition skills: the vocabulary, syntax, and usage of ordinary language is given a rigorous workout in this course.

75% of your grade will depend on participation, which includes:

- 1) **Attendance.** The success of the class depends on the presence of everyone. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will depreciate by half a letter grade for each subsequent absence. (If you are chronically late, 3 latenesses will count as one absence.)
- 2) **Submission of work with care and precision.** All submissions to workshop must be:
  - 1) brought to class in hard copy, typed on paper, with correct grammar, usage, and spelling. Your name must appear on every page. Use Times Roman 12 for your font, single-spaced;
  - 2) also emailed to me by beginning of class.

3) **Response.** The second half of the semester will be devoted to workshop. There are two tiers of readerly response: verbal (in our classroom discussions) and written (mark-up of poem at hand). You will also fill out a form answering questions about your classmates' poem to facilitate workshop discussion, then you will hand the form to me.

Your final portfolio is 25% of your final grade. It will consist of all the work you've done for your prompts, with at least 5 of them revised and polished as satisfactory poems, taking the feedback of your professor and classmates into consideration.

**There will be no open screens in the classroom.**

### **Calendar and Assignments**

January 11 In-class discussion: The image: Sylvia Plath (511), James Merrill (500), Charles Simic (518)

Prompt: Write 300 words (in sentences and paragraphs, not verse) using a strong image from your childhood, using the third person singular, as if the speaker were not yourself. Repeat the story using a completely different style. Example: the first time, you wrote it as if you were telling it to a friend (colloquial style). The second time, you will write it using a thesaurus to make the words more precisely describe the scene (formal style). Try to make the second version as different as possible from the first version.

January 18 *Holiday*

January 25 Discussion on Chapter 12: Sentences

Anthology: Robert Frost (438), Marianne Moore (449)

Prompt: Write 5 sentences with one central image or action at the heart of each sentence. Each sentence must be 40 syllables long.

February 1 Chapter 13: Stanzas

Anthology: William Blake (397), W.B. Yeats (431)

Prompt: Write a 300-word report on the different meanings of the word "line" in the Oxford English Dictionary. Use as many different historical definitions as possible, and try to use at least 10 words that you don't normally use in daily conversation. This assignment is also composed in sentences, no line breaks.

February 8 Chapter 6: Words

Anthology: Robert Lowell (481), Alice Fulton (551)

Prompt: Write 5 sentences on the loss of something dear to you. Each sentence must be 40 syllables long, separated by paragraph breaks. It must be put in the third person singular.

- February 15 Chapter 5: Emotions  
Anthology: Ezra Pound (448), Gjertrud Schnackenberg (558), Anthony Hecht (492)  
Prompt: Find Shakespeare's Sonnets online. Examine the final couplets: choose 5 that represent the idea of paradox or irony. Write them down in isolation from the rest of the sonnet. Between each one, write a sentence that illustrates a paradox you have encountered in life (use precise detail). Put the sentence in 20 syllables.
- February 22 Chapter 4: Paradox & Irony  
Anthology: Rodney Jones (546), Rita Dove (550)  
Prompt: In stanzas, using line breaks, write five verses about a walk you took outdoors. Each stanza must be 40 syllables long.
- Feb 29 *Spring break*
- March 7 Discussion of chapter 2: Simile, Metaphor, and Other Figures  
Anthology: Wallace Stevens (444)  
Prompt: Write a poem called "The Fish," but make it about more than just a fish: make it a symbol. 140 syllables total.
- March 14 Chapter 3: Symbolism  
Anthology: Elizabeth Bishop (472)  
Prompt: Using a thesaurus, write 140 syllables in verse about a musical instrument or an animal that makes a particular cry. Make the words imitate the instrument/cry.
- March 21 Chapter 7: Sounds  
Anthology: Seamus Heaney (522)  
Prompt: Using internal rhyme, not end-rhyme, write 140 syllables on the ocean or the wind.
- March 28 Chapter 8: Rhyme  
Anthology: Kay Ryan (534), Emily Dickinson (422)  
Prompt: Write 140 syllables about a journey you have taken in Gainesville, on foot or on bicycle. Preferably, write it on the hoof, using the sights and sounds around you, but building rhythmically up to a climactic final line.

- April 4 Chapter 9: Rhythm  
Anthology: ST. Coleridge (399), TS. Eliot (453), Frank O'Hara  
"The Day Lady Died" (online)  
Prompt: Write 140 syllables on a tree. Find out its name. Use  
spondees fourteen times in the course of the poem.
- April 11 Chapter 10: Meter  
Anthology: W.H. Auden (465), Gerard Manley Hopkins (428)  
Prompt: Go to Harn Museum, write 140 syllables about a painting  
there.
- April 18 Chapter 15: Inspiration & Effort  
Anthology: Poems after paintings (Plates 1-8)  
Meeting at Harn Museum. Final portfolios due.