

English 313

Mary Ann Samyn, ENGL 313, Fall 2006, Poetry Workshop

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Office hours: TR 1:30-2:15 p.m., W 3:15-4:00 p.m. and by appt.

English 313: Poetry Workshop

Fall 2006

Wednesday 4-6:50 p.m.

46A Stansbury

Texts

- Ashbery, John. Where Shall I Wander?
- Bishop, Elizabeth. Edgar Allen Poet & The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts & Fragments
- Garren, Christine. Among the Monarchs.
- Hass, Robert. Praise.
- Lawler, Patrick. Feeding the Fear of the Earth. (handouts)
- Olds, Sharon. Strike Sparks: Selected Poems, 1980-2002.
- Wright, Charles. Negative Blue.

Other Resources: interesting and helpful. . .

- [The Academy of American Poets](#)
- [Poetry Society of America](#)
- [The Associated Writing Programs](#)
- [Poetry Daily](#)

- [Poets & Writers Magazine](#)
- [Web del Sol](#)

Course Description

In this workshop, I assume that you have taken English 213 (introductory poetry workshop) and are here now to hone your craft as a poet. To do so, we will learn to read as writers; that is, we will read with an eye toward identifying the inner workings/architecture/music/image patterns/risks of a poem. This class assumes that you've done a fair amount of reading and writing already and that you hunger for more. English 313 should simultaneously satisfy that hunger and fuel it.

Course Requirements

Because critical thinking and creative writing go hand in hand, this class will require you to respond, via critical responses/explications and via imitations, to a variety of contemporary poets. You will also write other poems, respond to the work of your peers, and take an active role in class discussions and activities. You will also take one exam. The final project will draw on all of this work and reflect your best efforts as a poet.

Since we only meet once a week, our time together and your time working independently need to be as productive as possible and your final grade will be reflection of all your work (graded and not), your readiness for class, your participation, and your general attitude. As has often been remarked, the main reason to take a writing workshop is to save some time. That is, if you turn yourself over the demands/structure/community of the class (both your peers and your teacher), you just might learn a thing or two more quickly than if you did things on your own. That'll be our aim here, and to that end, you'll need to be willing to read, write, revise, and give and receive honest/constructive criticism. A bit of kindness and a positive attitude might come in handy too.

Attendance

I take attendance seriously; so should you. This class is, I assume, something you're choosing to take, so attendance shouldn't really be an issue. In case it is, however, here's the policy: you're allowed (but not entitled!) to two absences (remember: we only meet once a week!). Beyond that, your final grade will go down 1/3 for each absence. Once you reach five absences (1/3 of the semester), you will fail the course no matter how "well" you are doing. Excessive tardiness (as defined by me) and lack of participation (again, as defined by me) will also result in a

lowered final grade. If you are absent for some unavoidable reason, it's your responsibility to contact me and/ or a classmate and keep up with all assignments.

Grading

This is a rigorous course. An advanced course. My aim is to give you many chances/ways to learn the craft of poetry: through reading and writing, creative critical thinking and critical creative expression.

It should go without saying that high level work is always on time, fully proofread, sophisticated in thought and careful in execution. Some "talented writers" can and do produce very sloppy work; conversely, some "less talented writers" can and do excel because they take care with assignments.

An "A" level critical response would be a full-page, single-spaced; would answer the question fully and with examples; would quote and cite those examples appropriately; would provide an answer that is clearly the result of sustained interaction with the text and sophisticated reflection upon it. It would also be enjoyable and interesting to read.

"B" level work would probably demonstrate less insight/sophistication and/or might make errors in poem analysis or citation.

"C" level work would merely go through the motions, answering the question in minimal and likely more obvious ways. There would probably be various errors in terms of grammar or citations. There may be few examples and/or the question might not be fully answered.

"D" level work would show sub-par effort in several of the mentioned categories.

Poems (including the imitations) will be not be graded, but they are considered assignments with definite due dates. Late poems are neither accepted nor workshopped. Imitations need to be just that: imitations. We'll discuss what this means during the first week of class. In order to be successful in this class, your work does need to show improvement. That means listening to the suggestions from workshop and resisting the impulse to stay with what's comfortable.

The exam, given approximately 2/3 of the way through the semester, will require you to use terminology correctly and analyze poems that we have not discussed extensively in class. You may also be asked to do some quick creative writing.

The final project, to be announced at a later date, will require that you show increasing sophistication as a writer and reader.

Your final grade will, of course, be the composite of all these assignments along with your participation, general readiness for class, and attitude.

If you have any questions about the grading policies or any other aspect of this course, I encourage you to speak with me.

I consider this course to be a joy—as should you. If it sounds otherwise, you may need to ask yourself what you were expecting.

Social Justice

WVU is committed to social justice, as am I. That means you can expect a learning environment that is constructive, based on mutual respect and non-discrimination. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, as you no doubt know, is passing off someone else's work as your own. Please don't do this; it will only complicate my life and quite possibly change the trajectory of yours in very serious ways.

Schedule

Please note: changes can and will occur. It is your responsibility to keep in touch with me if you are absent and to complete all assignments on time.

Week 1: August 23

Course introduction.

For next week: read Olds and write a response (see below for instructions). Also, do an imitation of Olds for Tuesday, August 29

Week 2: August 30

Olds response due: Identify at least three distinguishing characteristics of Olds' poems and describe how each contributes to the poems' meaning. One page, single-spaced, typed.

Olds imitation due: workshop: PLEASE EMAIL YOUR POEM TO THE CLASS BY TUESDAY, AUGUST 29 AT NOON.

Week 3: September 6

Lawler response due: What kinds of juxtapositions does Lawler set up in his work?

Lawler imitation DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

Poem #1 assigned

Week 4: September 13

Poem #1 DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

September 15: Deadline for submissions to the Sturm Writer-in-Residence, Patricia Henley (fiction)

Week 5: September 20

Garren response due: Garren's poems only seem simple. Discuss.

Garren imitation DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

September 21: Tony Grooms reading

Week 6: September 27

Hass response due: If you were going to select one poem from this book as being typical of Hass' work, which poem would you choose and why?

Hass imitation DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26.

Poem #2 assigned

Week 7: October 4

Poem #2 DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

Week 8: October 11

Wright response due: Like most poets, Wright writes essentially the same poem over and over. Yet, there are subtle shifts. Choose two poems that seem at first quite similar and discuss both their similarities and, more importantly, their differences.

Wright imitation DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10

October 11: Department pizza party, 11:30-1:30 p.m.

Week 9: October 18

Ashbery response due: Ashbery is often considered difficult. But not by you, right? Describe how readers should focus their attention as they read Ashbery's work.

Ashbery imitation DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

October 16-20: Sturm Writer-in-Residence in Patricia Henley on campus. Reading on Monday.

Week 10: October 25

EXAM

Poem #3 assigned

October 25: Alumni Career Forum: E. Moore Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Week 11: November 1

Bishop response due: This book is, basically, a series of outtakes, near-misses, bright snippets, and quick deflations. How do these "failed" pieces compare to what you know (or will soon scurry around to find out) about the rest of Bishop's work? In other words, discuss how dazzling happens.

Poem #3 DUE VIA EMAIL BY NOON ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

Week 12: November 8

Bishop activity

Revision: bring copies of all your poems from the semester (with my comments on them)

Week 13: November 15

Final project. TBA

Week 14: November 29

Revision/Final project

Week 15: December 6

Final project workshop

Final project due December 8 by noon in my mailbox. No exceptions.