

ENGLISH 313: POETRY WORKSHOP

Fall 2012

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:15 p.m.

223 Armstrong Hall

Mary Ann Samyn

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*email is always best

Office hours: TR 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Course Description

Enrolling in this class means that you have successfully completed 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.

Texts

Andrews, Tom. *The Hemophiliac's Motorcycle*.

Hayes, Terrance. *Lighthouse*.

McKinney, Irene. *Unthinkable*.

Pinsky, Robert. *The Sounds of Poetry*.

Spaar, Lisa Russ. *Satin Cash*.

Stafford, William. *Writing the Australian Crawl*.

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.

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 three absences. Beyond that, your final grade will go down 1/3 for each absence. Once you reach six absences, 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.

Attendance at Department-sponsored Readings

Although attendance at readings is not required, I certainly encourage you to come whenever possible, and, moreover, I assume you'll want to and I look forward to seeing you there.

Fall 2012 Readings

Jonathan Coleman (Jerry West's co-author; nonfiction): Thursday, September 13, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair

Kathleen Ryan (reading from an anthology she edited; various genres): Wednesday, October 3, 2012, 7:30 p.m., 130 Colson Hall

Michael Blumenthal and Bruce Bond (poetry): Wednesday, October 17, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library

Jaimy Gordon (Sturm Writer-in-Residence; fiction): Monday, October 29, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library

Ethel Morgan Smith (nonfiction): Wednesday, November 7, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair

Grading

This is a rigorous course. An advanced course. My aim is to give you many 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 address the prompt 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** 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.

Carruth Center

If you ever find yourself overwhelmed with work or emotions or are just in general need of assistance, I urge you to get help at WVU’s Carruth Center: 293-4431. Figuring out how to write is good; figuring out how to live is better, and crucial.

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.)

Date	The day's activity	For the next class
Week 1: Tues, Aug 21	Course intro	Begin reading McKinney
Week 1: Thurs, Aug 23	Discuss McKinney. Discuss essential material. Review the elements of craft.	Essay #1: What would you describe as McKinney's essential material AND what three elements of craft especially embody that material. That is: what does she write about and how. <i>One-page, single-spaced, fully proofread.</i>
Week 2: Tues, Aug 28	Essay #1 due. Discuss the art of imitation and the rationale for doing so	Poem #1: imitation of McKinney with copies for the class
Week 2: Thurs, Aug 30	Poem #1 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems. Begin reading Stafford.
Week 3: Tues, Sept 4	Workshop	Finish reading Stafford. Essay #2: the most compelling idea you learned from Stafford. <i>One-page, single-spaced, fully proofread.</i>
Week 3: Thurs, Sept 6	Essay #2 due & discussion	Read Andrews
Week 4: Tues, Sept 11	Discuss Andrews	Essay #3: Andrews writes several different line lengths, employs various stanza patterns, and demonstrates different understandings of the space of the page for different poems. Choose one poem and discuss how his choices in these areas are related to how that poem makes meaning. <i>One-page, single-spaced, fully proofread.</i>
Week 4: Thurs, Sept 13	Essay #3 due & discuss Andrews	Poem #2: Andrews imitation with copies
Week 5: Tues, Sept 18	Poem #2 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems
Week 5: Thurs, Sept 20	Workshop	Read Spaar & poems on eCampus (Dickinson, Hopkins, WCW).
Week 6: Tues, Sept 25	Workshop/catch up	Essay #4: One of Spaar's blurbs describes her work as a combination of Williams and Dickinson/Hopkins. In what

		ways is this true? Please mention all three poets when discussing Spaar's work. <i>One-page, single-spaced, fully proofread.</i>
Week 6: Thurs, Sept 27	Essay #4 due & discuss Spaar	Poem#3: Spaar imitation
Week 7: Tues, Oct 2	Poem #3 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems
Week 7: Thurs, Oct 4	Workshop	Read Hayes. Essay #5: Choose one poem that you think is representative of the book's concerns/stylistic choices and articulate what makes that poem representative. <i>One-page, single-spaced, fully proofread.</i>
Week 8: Tues, Oct 9	Essay #5 due & discuss Hayes	Poem #4: Hayes imitation
Week 8: Thurs, Oct 11	Poem #4 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems. Begin reading Pinsky.
Week 9: Tues, Oct 16	Workshop	Continuing reading Pinsky
Week 9: Thurs, Oct 18	Discuss Pinsky	Re-reading Pinsky
Week 10: Tues, Oct 23	Writing sonnets	Poem #5: sonnet
Week 10: Thurs, Oct 25	Poem #5 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems
Week 11: Tues, Oct 30	Workshop	Choose a poem for sound & line analysis & bring it to class with copies for all of us
Week 11: Thurs, Nov 1	Discuss Essay #6: sound and line analysis	Draft of Essay #6
Week 12: Tues, Nov 6	Essay #6 drafts due & workshop	Revise Essay #6 AND Poem #6: your choice
Week 12: Thurs, Nov 8	Essay #6 due Poem #6 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems
Week 13: Tues, Nov 13	Workshop Exam review	Prep for exam
Week 13: Thurs, Nov 15	EXAM	Poem #7
Thanksgiving Break		
Week 14: Tues, Nov 27	Poem #7 due & workshop	Finish reading & commenting on all poems
Week 14: Thurs, Nov 29	Workshop	
Week 15: Tues, Dec 4	Discuss Final Project poems & essay	Draft of essay
Week 15: Thurs, Dec 6	Draft of final essay due & small group workshop	
FRI, DEC 7, NOON	FINAL PROJECT DUE	

Questions? Email me at any time: maryann.samyn@mail.wvu.edu

Re-cap of major writing assignments & their due dates

Essay #1: McKinney	Aug 28
Poem #1: McKinney	Aug 30
Essay #2: Stafford	Sept 6
Essay #3: Andrews	Sept 13
Poem #2: Andrews	Sept 18
Essay #4: Spaar	Sept 27
Poem #3: Spaar	Oct 2
Essay #5: Hayes	Oct 9
Poem #4: Hayes	Oct 11
Poem #5: sonnet	Oct 25
Essay #6: sound & line	Nov 8
EXAM	Nov 15
Poem #7: "in your manner"	Nov 27
Final project	Dec 7