ENG 221-01 Writing of Poetry: Introductory
TR: 2:00-3:15
3204 MHRA Building

Professor: Terry L. Kennedy
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Course Description: This is an introductory yet intensive course in poetry writing. Students will be responsible for interpretive as well as creative work with half of the semester consisting of directed assignments and presentations. The remainder of the class will be spent critiquing and discussing work submitted by the members of the workshop. All students must have taken ENG 106: Introduction to Poetry PRIOR to enrolling. THIS COURSE IS FOR STUDENTS BEYOND THE FRESHMAN YEAR.

Student Learning Goals:
· To develop artistic abilities and ultimately produce a refined body of work by focusing intensively, under faculty guidance, on poetry.

· To learn sophisticated models for revision; sharpen reading, editorial, and analytical skills; and cultivate the ability to articulate matters of craft and literary theory.

· To become familiar with formal possibilities for writing and explore the historical development of prosody through a close study of the structure of poetry.

· To develop a broader knowledge base of contemporary works and of the literary canon.

· To enhance professional development with the support of a community of faculty, fellow students, and distinguished visiting writers.

UNCG Grading System:
A: Excellent - Indicates achievement of distinction and excellence

B: Good - Indicates general achievement superior to the acceptable standard

C: Average - Indicates acceptable standard for graduation

D: Lowest Passing Grade - Indicates work which falls below the acceptable standards

F: Failure - Indicates failure that may not be made up except by repeating the course
The UNCG Academic Integrity Policy is in effect for all courses activities including creative work. Please familiarize yourself with this policy: http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/

**Attendance:**
ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED! You are allowed ONE absence during the semester—no exceptions. If you miss two days, you will lose 10% of your achievement points from your final total; if you miss three days, you will lose 20%; four days, 30%; if you miss five or more days, you will automatically fail the course.

If you are late to class or leave early from class, it counts as 1/2 an absence.

Absences include illness, sporting events, music events, theater events, car accidents, acts of nature, etc. In other words, an absence is an absence is an absence. I do not need a note from the health center or police department, as it will make absolutely no difference at all.

If you are absent on the day of a conference, a presentation, a paper is due, a workshop, etc., you will not only receive two absences, you will also get a zero for the missed assignment.

**Mission Statement:**
In his lecture “In Defense of Poetry,” poet Maurice Manning relayed an anecdote detailing his mother’s distaste for poetry. “My high school English teacher told me I was stupid in front of the whole class because I didn’t know that poem about the lilacs in the barnyard was about Abraham Lincoln,” she said. “She humiliated me and left me in tears. And I decided then that I never wanted to read anything I didn’t understand. That’s why I have always hated poetry.”

Too often, the teaching of poetry focuses on symbol, at the expense of what makes poetry vibrant and important. Were we to explore our world only in symbolic terms, we would write allegories instead of poetry. Poetry is meant to be read, enjoyed, spoken aloud; our first approach to a poem should not be to figure out its socio-cultural relevance. We should look first at whether a poem affects us deeply. If so, we will want to approach the poem with the writer’s critical eye to learn what makes it powerful and effective. If not, we will want to understand where the poem came up unsuccessful.

This course will not belittle you with symbolic interpretation, but encourage you to look hard at a poem as a thing built, like an automobile, of pieces and parts, each serving some vital function, each assembled with sweat and no small effort on the part of the poet. What you write is not the most important thing about this course; what matters is how you write it, and how you approach the writing process. Daily reading and writing should become a part of your practice during this course, and my hope is that you will continue these habits for years to come.
The core assumptions of this course are as follows:
1. You cannot become an excellent writer until you become an excellent reader.
2. Every writer takes a different path to excellence. Every writer should be encouraged to take their own path, and should have freedom to change that path as his/her interests and reading tastes change.

“If you sit around thinking inspiration will come the 13th of every February or so, you’ll never get any writing done. You are a literary workman, and ought to work every day.”
–Thomas Wolfe

Texts:
The majority of our texts (including homework assignments and handouts) for the semester will be made available on-line via our class Blackboard site (http://blackboard.uncg.edu). It is YOUR responsibility to make sure that you have all of the required texts well in advance. Failure to bring the required texts to class will result in 1/2 an absence. (Note: I couldn’t get to the computer lab, my printer isn’t working, I couldn’t log onto the web, etc. are not valid excuses.)

(Note: All Blackboard texts are Adobe Acrobat documents.)

Other texts:

*The Americans* by David Roderick

*Millennial Teeth* by Dan Albergotti

Grading Policies
Here’s one thing that bothers me about traditional assessment systems: they start with the assumption that everyone has a 100 and they lose points from there. And they tend to be pretty rigid—do what the instructor wants, when he wants it, and you’ll manage to not lose any of those points.
This course is designed to let you work your way to a goal, but gives you a variety of ways to get to that goal.

That said, you will see that the point values for the achievements reflect some of my beliefs. The course is structured so that you could, theoretically, get an A without ever attempting a quiz, but it’s very unlikely that you will.

**Points**
There are 64 possible achievements for a maximum score of 1,430 achievement points. The instructor reserves the right to add achievements throughout the semester.

- 1,359 or more = A
- 1,287 or more = A-
- 1,273 or more = B+
- 1,216 or more = B
- 1,144 or more = B-
- 1,130 or more = C+
- 1,073 or more = C
- 1,001 or more = C-
- 987 or more = D+
- 930 or more = D
- 858 or more = D-
- 857 and below = F

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Favorite Poem**
To get to know your tastes in poems, and to expose your classmates to your favorite poems, you have the option of bringing in one poem that you think is exemplary. Pick the poem you fell in love with as a child, or the poem that made you want to take this class, or a poem that you just read recently and thought, “Hey, this is awesome.”

**Favorite Poem** | 10 achievement points – Submitted your favorite poem to Blackboard.

**Explained It** | 20 achievement points – Attached a short paper (1-2 pages) detailing what about your favorite poem made it stand out.
Weekly Poetry Terminology Quizzes | 100 possible achievements - There will be a weekly online quiz covering the terminology in our “Poetry Terms” handout (Blackboard). Each quiz will be worth 10 points.

Weekly Poetry Collection Reading Quizzes | 120 possible achievements - There will be a weekly online reading quiz covering the poems in the two collections of poetry we will be reading this semester. Each quiz will be worth 10 points.

Abstracts | 60 possible achievements

Group Presentations | 60 achievements

Recitations

Everyone will do two recitations during the semester. One from David Roderick’s *The Americans* at midterm and one from Dan Albergotti’s *Millennial Teeth* at the end of the semester.

Flawless Recitation | 40 possible achievements – On a scheduled recitation day, recite a poem assigned by the instructor, achieving an instructor score of “excellent” or “outstanding” in every category. (See this rubric: http://poetryoutloud.org/uploads/fl/af34c39739/scoring%20rubric.pdf)

Strong Recitation | 20 possible achievements – On a scheduled recitation day, recite a poem assigned by the instructor, achieving an average class score of 4 or above in every category from classmates. (See this rubric, and convert “Very Weak” to 1 and “Outstanding” to 6. http://poetryoutloud.org/uploads/fl/af34c39739/scoring%20rubric.pdf)

“If you want to be a writer, then write. Write every day!” – Dr. Johnson

Scheduled Poem Checkpoints

The goal of a creative writing class is to get you writing. And write you shall! In fact, you should carve out some time to write each day, whether you’re writing new drafts of poems, revising existing poems, writing craft papers about poems you really enjoy to better understand how they work, or journaling and taking notes which can be used in your poems later.
However, just writing a lot of poems in rapid succession does not ensure that you’ll get better as a writer. Therefore, for the purposes of credit, you’ll turn in 10 poems during the semester to be considered for workshop. To ensure that I can get you useful and timely feedback, there will be set due dates for receipt of poems, called scheduled poem checkpoints. At each checkpoint, you may hand in one (and only one) poem.

The poems you hand in at each checkpoint a) become eligible to be workshopped during in-class discussion. You are not required to turn in poems at each scheduled poem checkpoint, but come on, you’re in this class to do some creative writing, so take advantage of all of these!

Poems must be posted in to Blackboard no later than 9:00 a.m. on the days listed on our schedule.

**Poem Achievements**

**Check-in Poems** | 100 possible achievements - Handed in a poem at each of the 10 scheduled poem checkpoints.

**Other Poems** | 40 possible achievements – Handed in additional “monthly” poems inspired by our daily writing prompts.

**Workshop Guidelines**

For some, poetry workshops are a vital and welcome part of the writing process. For others, they are a necessary evil, a burdensome but indispensable task. For some, they are a frustrating experience, an exercise in misunderstanding or being understood. If this is your first poetry workshop, perhaps this experience will set the tone for all your future workshop experiences.

Workshop is an integral part of the honors experience, so we will begin early in the semester and refine as we go. However, workshop will not be successful if we do not observe the following guidelines:

§ **You must read and make notes on all poems in advance of the workshop date.** Coming to a workshop unprepared is rude and will invariably lead you to say something you’ll later regret. I expect to see comments, thoughts, line edits, scribbles, and other markings on your classmates’ poems when you come to workshop. You’ll hand back your copy of the poem after it is discussed (signed, so they can find you if they have questions).
§ The poet may not speak during workshop unless specifically addressed by the instructor. The class must be free to speak without hearing the author. If you are tempted to clarify an issue, recognize that telling the class what you intended does not help your poem as it appears on the page. In fact, you now know how best to revise! A few minutes will be provided at the end of the session for the author to ask questions.

§ Set aside personal tastes. The primary goal of the workshop is to discover the work’s intention.

§ Try not to speak first each time or dominate the workshop. But make sure you speak; silent people end up unhappy with their participation grades. If speaking in class makes you uncomfortable, write out your comments in advance so you can read them aloud.

§ As the workshop begins, attempt to describe the work. Often, the greatest service we can do for a writer is to observe what is on the page—the process may illuminate areas where the poet’s intention did not turn out.

§ A first reading may raise more questions than comments. Likewise, the author’s questions are often answered through the perceptions of other readers.

§ Comments should be precise and refer to evidence found in the text.

§ Once the work has been described, the next step is to identify what works well. Passages, devices, and choices that make evident the intention of the poem are key to the author’s understanding of how the poem is actually working.

§ Workshop is a dialogue. Feel free to respond to each other and let the conversation—and your understanding of the poem—unfurl. Just...

§ Don’t be argumentative. Everyone reads a poem differently. Sure, you may think that someone else in the class has missed the point entirely, but is the author well-served by ten minutes of bickering about whether the flower should be red or orange?

§ Comments should always be about the work on the page, never about the author. First, consider that while we may know each other well, other potential readers may not. We must sever our knowledge of the author from the text with which we are presented. Second, remember these sage words: “Writers, above all others, should be most vigilant about the power, privileges and protection of the imagination.”
Other achievements

**Formal Critiques** | 400 possible achievements – In addition to returning an annotated and signed copy of a workshop poem to me at the end of class, post a formal, typed critique to Blackboard and have it accepted. Formal critiques accepted for credit will:

- Demonstrate understanding of the poem.
- Add *significant* new information to the analysis, either by highlighting points that were not mentioned in workshop, or by tracing an element of craft that the author did not focus on.
- Include citations in the correct format.
- Be respectful at all times of author and of other commenters.

My hope is that by writing formal critiques of your classmates poems, two things will happen:

1. You will become interested in forms and strategies that are not natural to you, perhaps informing your choices while writing later poems.
2. You will use your classmates’ observations on form, style, and craft to identify elements in your own work that can be sharpened.

(Can be repeated for 2 poems from each workshop for a total of 400 achievements)

**Saw a Reading** | 40 possible achievements - You **must attend at least one public poetry** reading during the semester by a publishing poet. Your report, a minimum of one double-spaced page, should note details about poems read (and any observations on craft you make), poet, audience, and setting. The more details you include the better, as the objective of this assignment is for you to *consider the elements you must pay attention to* when the time comes for you to read. Your paper should address what you think an ideal poetry reading might look like and which elements of the reading you attend meet those criteria. This must be handed in no later than one week after the reading. (Can be repeated twice before midterm and twice after midterm for a total of 40 achievements.)

**Chapbook** | 140 achievements – Complete the final chapbook assignment. Directions for completion will be given in November; the final chapbook is due in place of our final exam.

**Anthology** | 140 achievements - Assemble an anthology which includes at least fifteen different poets we’ve read over the semester. Write a short preface to the collection, and a short introduction to each poem. The anthology should have some governing logic, both in terms of the poems selected (a theme, a specific geography, a unique form, a specific image) and the order in which they appear; the anthology is due in place of our mid-term exam.
Attend a Conference | 140 achievements – Attend the North Carolina Writers’ Network Fall Conference in Charlotte. Submit a short summary of key points that you learned. http://ncwriters.org/

Other Important Things to Remember:

This is a university level course. If you fail to meet the expectations of the class (which will undoubtedly have a negative effect on your grade) it is solely your responsibility. I will not hound you to live up to the course policies and requirements. If you are having problems meeting the class or assignment requirements, it is your responsibility to make an appointment to see me.

THE USE OF CELLPHONES, TABLETS, AND LAPTOPS DURING CLASS IS PROHIBITED!