

English 313
Poetry Writing
M/W, 11:45-12:55
Spring 2011

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Office Hours: Mon., 1-2; Tues., 1:30-2:30; Wed., 10:30-11:30; and by appointment.

Course Goals and Structure

Our primary goals in this course will be (a) an enhanced understanding of, and appreciation for, the art of poetry and (b) a focused attentiveness to the richness of language (its history, sounds, textures, and enormous flexibility). The world of contemporary poetry is rich and varied, with works ranging from meticulous “new formalist” poems to the more overtly political works of, for instance, various performance poets. In this course we will read and respond to a range of poems, both historical and contemporary; we will also examine various poetic forms and work to enhance our awareness of a poet’s vocabulary and range of options. In keeping with Moravian’s focus on China during this academic year, we will also examine the rich history of Chinese poetry. Students in this course will also write and revise a series of their own poetic works, presenting their poems in multiple workshop sessions, and responding to one another’s poems with critical care.

Required Texts

Kenneth Rexroth, *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese*. New Directions, 1971.
Li-Young Lee, *Behind My Eyes*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2008.
Mark Strand and Eavan Boland, eds. *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.
Handouts provided by instructor
Multiple copies of students’ poems for distribution to class

Recommended Text

Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*. Harcourt, 1994.

Attendance Policy, and a Note on Plagiarism

We will meet twice a week (sometimes only once a week) for fourteen weeks; that isn’t much time when you consider all we have to do. If you are serious about writing, you will show up on time, every time. More than two absences (excused or unexcused) will automatically lower your final grade.

I would hope that it goes without saying that any work you submit for this course must be your own; to plagiarize in an upper-level writing course is to convey a shocking disrespect for writers and their work. Refer to the College’s policy on academic honesty (available in the Student Handbook) for any needed clarification.

Evaluation

Portfolio I 30%

Minimum of four poems, two revised as fully as possible within first 7 weeks*

Editor's responses to two students' work

Self-assessment/explanation of revision choices (min. 2 typed pages)

Portfolio II 40%

Min. of four new poems, two revised as fully as possible within last 7 weeks*

Editor's responses to two students' work

Self-assessment/explanation of revision choices (min. 2 typed pages)

*Note that at least one of the minimum of eight draft poems written this semester must be an attempt at one of the forms (villanelle, sestina, pantoum, sonnet) explored in Strand and Boland's *The Making of a Poem*.

Journal entries 20%

Responses to assigned reading, including summary of pertinent technical information, relevant terms and definitions, and responses to a predetermined number of assigned poems; further details of journal requirements to be determined during first weeks of classes.

Small-group presentation and reading

5%

Discussion of material from assigned sections in Strand & Boland, along with reading of selected poems, during week 11.

Participation 5%

Class discussions

Workshop contributions

Notes in response to student work submitted for workshop sessions

**Also included as part of Participation: Required attendance at the following campus events: (1) Chinese film: either "Sunflower" (Thursday, Jan. 27 at 7 PM in Prosser) or "Up the Yangtze" (Monday, Jan. 31 at 7 PM in the UBC Room)--or both! (see descriptions at end of syllabus); and (2) performance of the MCTC/Touchstone Theatre production of "The Whitman Piece" (April 7-10, The Ice House on Sand Island).

Schedule

Week 1

Mon. 1/17 Course introduction; in-class exercises.

Wed. 1/19 Yusef Komunyakaa, "Kit & Caboodle" (handout), from David Citino's *The Eye of the Poet*; in-class exercises and poem ideas; discussion of journal requirements.

Week 2**

Mon. 1/24 Reading/review of Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook*; Strand & Boland

(S&B), pages xiii-xxix and 3-4; Journal 1 to be written in class; guidelines for responding to each other's work; reading and discussion of first poem drafts.

Wed. 1/26 S&B, The Stanza (pp.136-155), and Part II: Meter (pp.159-161); Journal 2 due; continued reading and discussion of first poem drafts; discussion of workshop format.

** Films: "Sunflower" (Jan. 27; 7 PM), "Up the Yangtze" (Jan. 31, 7 PM).

Week 3

Mon. 1/31 Workshop 1; S&B, The Villanelle (pp. 5-20) and The Sestina (pp. 21-42); Journal 3 due

Wed. 2/2 Workshop 1 cont'd.

Week 4

Mon. 2/7 Workshop 1 cont'd.; S&B: The Pantoum (pp. 43-54) and The Sonnet (pp. 55-72); Journal 4 due.

Wed. 2/9 Workshop 1 re-cap and continued discussion of S&B reading; Editor's responses (to Workshop 1 poems) due: one copy to writer, one to instructor.

Week 5

Mon. 2/14 Workshop 2; Rexroth, Introduction plus poems by Tu Fu (including Notes on pages 135-139); handout on classical Chinese poetry; Journal 5 due.

Wed. 2/16 NO CLASS.

Week 6

Mon. 2/21 Workshop 2 cont'd.

Wed. 2/23 Guest speaker: Peter Lighte (see <http://www.peterlighte.com/blog/pieces-of-china/>).

Week 7

Mon. 2/28 Workshop 2 cont'd.; S&B, Open Forms (pp. 259-288); Journal 6 due.

Wed. 3/2 Workshop 2 re-cap and continued discussion of reading and guest speaker; Editor's responses (to Workshop 2 poems) due: one copy to writer, one to instructor.

SPRING BREAK

Week 8

Mon. 3/14 **Portfolio I due**; S&B, The Pastoral (pp. 207-239) and remaining poems and notes in Rexroth; Journal 7 due.

Wed. 3/16 Continued discussion of Rexroth, etc.; in-class exercises and poem ideas; assigning of S&B report/reading groups.

Week 9

Mon. 3/21 Workshop 3; Li-Young Lee, Part I.
 Wed. 3/23 Workshop 3, cont'd.; continued discussion of Lee.

Week 10

Mon. 3/28 Workshop 3, cont'd.
 Wed. 3/30 Workshop 3 re-cap; Editor's responses (to Workshop 3 poems) due: one copy to writer, one to instructor.

Week 11**

Mon. 4/4 Small group reports on/readings from S&B, The Ballad (pp. 73-100),
 Blank Verse (pp. 101-120), The Heroic Couplet (pp. 121-136), The Elegy
 (pp. 167-206), and The Ode (pp. 240-255).
 Wed. 4/6 Small-group reports/readings, cont'd.

**April 7-10 MCTC/Touchstone Theatre performances of "The Whitman Project."

Week 12

Mon. 4/11 Workshop 4; Li-Young Lee, Part II.
 Wed. 4/13 Workshop 4, cont,'d.; continued discussion of Lee.

Week 13

Mon. 4/18 Workshop 4, cont'd.; Li-Young Lee, Part III.
 Wed. 4/20 Workshop 4 re-cap; Journal 8 due; Editor's
 responses (to Workshop 4 poems) due: one copy to writer, one to
 instructor.

Week 14

Mon. 4/25 No class (Easter break).
 Wed. 4/27 **Portfolio II due**; course evaluations; plan for final reading.

Finals Week

End-of-class reading (in lieu of exam).