

English 313  
Poetry Writing  
W/F 10:20-11:30  
Spring 2015

Office Hours: Tues. 1:30-2:30; Wed., 4-5; Thurs. 10-11; Fri. 11:30-12:30; and by appointment.

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*It is difficult  
to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day  
for lack  
of what is found there.*

*--William Carlos Williams*

*A poem provides “an experience of mind—mediated by memorable speech—that feeds and sustains the imagination and helps us make sense of our lives.”*

*--David Lehman*

### **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, spoken-word artists. 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. Students in this course will 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**

Kim Addonizio, *Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2009.

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Graywolf Press, 2014.

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.

**Additional Cost:** \$10 ticket for reading by Billy Collins at Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center, Tuesday, April 14, 2015 at 7:30 PM  
(<http://zoellner.cas2.lehigh.edu/content/notations-billy-collins>).

### **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 three absences (excused or unexcused) will automatically lower your final grade. Please arrive for class *on time*; if you are chronically late to class, I will begin to count latenesses as absences.

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.

**\*\*\*Note to English Majors:** In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save both digital and hard copies of your work for this class, including drafts with peer and instructor comments.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic & Disability Support, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office.

### **Evaluation**

**Portfolio I** **30%**  
Minimum of three poems, two revised as fully as possible within first 7 weeks\*  
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\*  
Self-assessment/explanation of revision choices (min. 2 typed pages)

\*Note that at least two of the minimum of seven draft poems written this semester must be attempts at two of the poetic forms (villanelle, sestina, pantoum, sonnet) that we will explore through our reading of chapters in Strand and Boland's *The Making of a Poem*.

**Notebooks/Reading Responses** **10%**  
Responses to assigned reading, including notes on pertinent technical information, terms and definitions, and a specific poem (or poems) included in assigned reading; further details of reading response requirements to be determined during first weeks of classes.

**Reports and presentations (Lunch & Learn; additional reading)** **10%**  
Black History Month Lunch & Learn event: Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 12 PM (UBC Room of the HUB); additional reading during week 13. All to be discussed further in

class and in a separate handout.

**Participation**

**10%**

Class discussions

Workshop contributions

Notes in response to student work submitted for workshop sessions

**Schedule**

Week 1

Wed. 1/21 Course introduction; Lunch & Learn handout.

Fri. 1/23 *NYT* Book Review pieces by David Lehman and David Orr (handouts); poem handouts; in-class exercises/writing.

Week 2

Wed. 1/28 Review of Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook; Citizen*, parts I-V (pp. 1-79); selection of topic for Lunch & Learn presentation on Feb. 3.

Fri. 1/30 Typed remarks for Lunch & Learn (250-300 words/one double-spaced page), plus copies of chosen poem; *Citizen*, parts VI-VII (pp. 81-161).

Week 3

**Tuesday, 2/3, 12 PM, UBC Room: Black History Month Lunch & Learn session (required).**

Wed. 2/4 Lunch & Learn re-cap. Strand & Boland (S&B), pages xiii-xxix and 3-4; Addonizio, Introduction and Part I, "Entering Poetry"; bring an early draft of a new poem.

Fri. 2/6 No class.

Week 4

**Tuesday, 2/10, 5:15 PM, Tracy K. Smith speaking at Moravian Academy Upper School (optional).**

Wed. 2/11 Yusef Komunyakaa, "Kit & Caboodle" and portions of Billy Collins, "Poetry, Pleasure, and the Hedonist Reader" (handouts), from David Citino's *The Eye of the Poet*; in-class exercises and poem ideas; discussion of reading response requirements.

Wed. 2/13 S&B, The Stanza (pp.136-155), and Part II: Meter (pp. 159-161); reading response notebook due; discussion of workshop format; poems distributed for Workshop 1.

Week 5

Wed. 2/18 Workshop 1.

Fri. 2/20 Workshop 1, cont'd.

## Week 6

Wed. 2/25 S&B, The Villanelle (pp. 5-20) and The Sestina (pp. 21-42); reading response notebook due.

Fri. 2/27 Addonizio, chosen chapters from Part II, "Inner and Outer Worlds" (read at least six); further discussion of The Villanelle and The Sestina; poems distributed for Workshop 2 (including one villanelle or sestina).

## Week 7

Wed. 3/4 Workshop 2.

Fri. 3/6 Workshop 2 cont'd.; plans/requirements for Portfolio I.

## SPRING BREAK

## Week 8

Wed. 3/18 **Portfolio I due**; Addonizio, chapters 22, 26, and at least two other chosen chapters from Part III, "The Poem's Progress."

Fri. 3/20 S&B, The Pantoum (pp. 43-54) and The Sonnet (pp. 55-72); reading response notebook due; poems distributed for Workshop 3 (including one sonnet or pantoum).

## Week 9

Wed. 3/25 Workshop 3.

Fri. 3/27 Workshop 3, cont'd.

## Week 10

Wed. 4/1 S&B, Open Forms (pp. 259-288); reading response notebook due.

Fri. 4/3 No class (Easter Break).

## Week 11

Wed. 4/8 Addonizio, chosen chapters from Part IV, "Toward Mastery" (read at least five); S&B, The Pastoral (pp. 207-239); reading response notebook due.

Fri. 4/10 Film or speaker; poems distributed for Workshop 4.

## Week 12

**Tuesday, 4/14, 7:30 PM: Billy Collins reading, Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University (required).**

Wed. 4/15 Workshop 4.

Fri. 4/17 Workshop 4, cont'd.

## Week 13

Wed. 4/22 Reports on topics chosen from following list:

S&B, The Ballad

S&B, Blank Verse

S&B, The Heroic Couplet

S&B, The Elegy  
S&B, The Ode  
Ekphrasis  
The Persona Poem  
Fri. 4/24 Reports cont'd.

Week 14  
Wed. 4/29 Film or speaker?  
Fri. 5/1 **Portfolio II due**; course evaluations.