

ENGLISH 84-01: ADVANCED POETRY-WRITING spring 2003
T Th 2:45-4:15
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Those that have it I do wrong
Whenever I remake a song
Should know what issue is at stake:
It is myself that I remake.
--W. B. Yeats

OVERVIEW

This course means to help folks seriously committed to the reading and writing of contemporary poetry as they create and rewrite their own work, and as they learn to appreciate and critique the work of others—both other students' poetry and other poets' work "out there" in the world. Each week offers a chance to examine other poets' poems in some detail, along with a workshop day for our own poems. You'll get chances near the start and the end of the class to bring in your own favorites and models; we'll also try hard to arrange for guest poets in person.

Over 13 weeks of class, you will turn in:

- at least 8 first drafts of new poems—at least 4 before spring break, at least 4 afterwards
- one first draft of a poetic sequence (at least three related poems or segments) after spring break
- one one-page single-spaced essay on one poems
- one 2-4 page book review
- a final portfolio with your own revised poems.

Each Tuesday you'll bring drafts of your new poems to class: you will need to bring **13** copies of your poems and pass them to everyone else (I'll take two). You will then take home poems by everyone else in the class, read them intently, comment on them assiduously, and get ready to discuss them for Thursday's workshop.

We will be using poetic assignments to get you going, but we won't peg them to specific weeks, as we would in an intermediate workshop: instead, you should take home the list of assignments at the back of this syllabus, pin it to your wall, and use it (along with our reading!) to generate

new work. (At least three of your new poems *must* respond to assignments on that list.)

REQUIRED BOOKS (all at Ruminator):

Laura Kasischke, *Fire & Flower*

Louise Bogan, *The Blue Estuaries*

Harryette Mullen, *Sleeping with the Dictionary*

George Oppen, *New Collected Poems*, ed. Michael Davidson

D. A. Powell, *Tea*

The New Oxford Book of 17th-century Verse, ed. Alastair Fowler

OPTIONAL BOOK (also at Ruminator):

C. D. Wright, *Steal Away: Selected Poems*

[I've ordered this book because I know several of you want it, and because she's coming to town on Feb. 13 to read at the Walker. We'll try to bring her to class the following day.]

ME:

I can be reached quite easily in my office, by phone, email, or door-knock: if you need to do so, you can also phone me at home, at 651 698 1238 (that number will likely change sometime this spring).

SCHEDULE

Tu Jan 28 Introit

Th Jan 30 BRING IN A POEM (by somebody who isn't you): be prepared to lead a short discussion!

Tu Feb 4 Poems you brought in, cont'd
Your own poems due for workshop

Th Feb 6 Workshop

Tu Feb 11 Kasischke, *Fire & Flower*
Your poems due

Th Feb 13 Workshop
C. D. Wright reading—7pm Walker Art Center

Fr Feb 14 Special class meeting with C. D. Wright, TBA

Tu Feb 18 *Seventeenth-Century Verse*: Greville, nos. 2-6;
Donne, esp. nos. 137-139; Drummond of Hawthornden, nos.

245, 246, 249, 256; Feltham, nos. 460-462; Lovelace, nos. 633, 637, 638. *These and all numbers for Seventeenth-Century Verse refer to poem numbers, not to page numbers.*

Your poems due

Th Feb 20 Workshop

Tu Feb 25 Bogan, *The Blue Estuaries*, parts I, II, VI
Your poems due

Th Feb 27 Workshop

Tu Mar 4 Bogan, parts III, IV, V
Your poems due

Th Mar 6 Workshop

Tu Mar 11 Mullen, *Sleeping with the Dictionary*
Your poems due

Th Mar 13 Workshop

Fr Mar 14 ONE-PAGE ESSAY DUE

SPRING BREAK

Tu Mar 25 Oppen: *The Materials, This In Which*
Your poems due

Th Mar 27 Workshop

Tu Apr 1 Oppen: *Of Being Numerous, Seascape: Needle's Eye, Myth of the Blaze*
Your poems due

Th Apr 3 Workshop

Tu Apr 8 Powell, *Tea*
Your poems due

Th Apr 10 Workshop

Tu Apr 15 *Seventeenth-Century Verse*: Corbett, nos. 210-211; Waller, nos. 490, 494, 499; Cartwright, nos. 571, 573; "Loving Mad Tom," no. 615; Traherne, no. 781; Ravenscroft, no. 802; Wright, no. 803; "Ephelia," nos. 812, 814; Rochester, no. 819; D'Urfey, no. 835; Pope, no. 861
Your poems due

Th Apr 17 Workshop

This meeting may be rescheduled due to religious holidays

Tu Apr 22 *Seventeenth-Century Verse: George Herbert, nos.*
375-411

Your poems due

Wed Apr 23 BOOK REVIEW DUE

Th Apr 24 Workshop

Tu Apr 29 TBA (either another contemporary book, or an
assortment of poems we collectively bring in)

Your poems due

Th May 1 Workshop

Tu May 6 Wrap-up

Th May 8 PORTFOLIOS DUE

THE LIST

Use these poetic assignments or projects to generate drafts of poems for our workshop—pick a new one each week, or every other week, and see where it takes you; try to use as many as you can! All the projects have some models in the books we'll read for this course; I've mentioned others in some cases.

- A literary song or ballad, with a chorus or refrain.
("Loving Mad Tom," "Tom O'Bedlam's Song")
- A poem whose last two lines reverse almost every assumption a reader has made. (Shakespeare, sonnet 116)
- A "cut-up" or collage poem assembled entirely from found texts. (Frank Bidart, "Adolescence")
- A poem alternating very long with very short lines.
(Campion, "Now winter nights enlarge"; Jonson, "Epitaph on S. P.")
- A poem whose nouns are all, or almost all, abstract.
(Greville)
- A poem whose nouns are all concrete; a poem containing nothing but description. (W. C. Williams)
- A poem of denunciation; a curse. (James Stephens, "A Glass of Beer")
- A palinode. (see Ann Carson, *Autobiography of Red*)
- An aubade.
- An echo poem (*Seventeenth-Century Verse*, no. 69)
- A prayer (Herbert)
- A poem which includes no complete sentences and makes no referential sense
- A poem in regular rhyming stanzas, in which each stanza reflects one stage in a journey or one step in an argument. (Donne)
- An invitation or a thank-you poem organized around a social occasion. (Jonson, "Inviting a Friend to Dinner"; Merrill, "Charles on Fire")
- A poem based on anaphora or iteration.
- A poem designed deliberately to offend. (Rochester)
- A poem meant for inscription on a durable surface
(gravestone, lintel, window)
- A poem based on a nonliterary document, such as a passport, a high school yearbook, or a restaurant menu (C. D. Wright, "Autographs")
- A poem closely imitating a style of music or a particular musical work.
- A deliberately inaccurate translation of a poem in another language.