



W203: Introduction to Poetry

Associate Instructor: **Yael Massen**

Section: **3628 1:00-2:15 TR BH 011**

Office Hours: **Eskenazi Museum of Art Gift Shop (2nd Floor) T 12:00-1:00, R 12:00-1:00 (or by appt.)**

Email: **ymassen@indiana.edu**

INTRODUCTION:

This course will focus on writing and learning to read poetry closely: your own, your peers', and the work of exemplary poets, with a focus on living poets of color, female-identifying authors, queer writers, writers differently abled, and the traditions that influence them. You will consult contemporary craft essays that correspond to particular skills and tasks for each week relevant to a specified set of reading materials. All of these readings will serve as models and foundational texts for creating your own work, polishing and revising, and submitting poems to be workshopped in class. We will discuss the required texts in class, and you will prepare a reflection on these readings to consult during in-class discussion and deepen your exploration and understanding of the texts.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS:

Course Packet (Print out from Canvas)

See list of pre-approved poetry collections (attached)

Poetry Foundation Glossary of Terms: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-terms>

You are encouraged to read voraciously on your own. I would be more than happy to provide you with book recommendations.

GRADING:

Grading Breakdown

30% - Final Portfolio

30% - Ten poems written during the semester

10% - Nine sets of weekly questions (three questions a week) and annotations on corresponding readings

10% - One 800-word final essay on a poetry collection

20% - Participation

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN:

Portfolio— You will revise and turn in eight poems for the final portfolio. You must include multiple drafts of your eight poems in your portfolio. You will also write a 300-word artist's statement. In this artist's statement, you will explain your creative process, the craft decisions you made over the course of the semester, and any additional information you believe should be included in your artist's statement.

Weekly poems– You will write ten poems throughout the semester. You are responsible for printing enough copies for your classmates on the day each poem is due. You are obligated to provide verbal feedback on poems during workshop. In order to provide this feedback, it is strongly recommended that you annotate your peers’ poems prior to workshop. You must read workshop poems before the day of workshop. All of the poems will receive some written feedback, but only some will be brought to workshop. Most weeks, you will be provided with an assignment prompt with specific tasks to accomplish that correspond to that week’s set of readings. While assignment prompts may feel restrictive, I want you to feel free to write on whatever topic you wish, and to use the prompt as a means of experimenting, exploring, and if you so choose, subverting the lessons and issues in poetry we have discussed for that week. Each poem must be (1) typed, (2) stapled if longer than one page, (3) turned in on time, and (4) include your name, a clearly marked title, and an indication of the corresponding assignment (i.e. Poem #4). Poems that fail to follow these requirements will be given deductions accordingly.

Weekly Discussion Questions– You are required to bring to class three questions composed in response to your weekly readings. Your readings should be thoughtfully annotated, and I reserve the right to check your annotations for credit at any point in the semester. In your discussion questions, you are required to integrate insights/musings/wonder gathered from a corresponding craft essay with the essay’s corresponding poems. You may focus on one specific poem assigned for that day, or more than one. Your annotations on poems and craft essays are meant to provide you with a written reference for classroom discussion, when you and your classmates will pose these discussion questions to one another. You must use evidence from each essay to support your observations/positions in your verbal responses, as well as written positions in your discussion questions. In addition to evidence from the poems, you are expected to use appropriate craft terminology. You will become more familiar with these terms over the course of the semester. I suggest bookmarking the following link from the Poetry Foundation’s Website: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-terms?category=techniques-and-figures-of-speech>.

Final Essay– You will write a final essay of at least 800-words in length. Your essay will be a reflection on a collection of poetry of your choosing from the pre-selected list I have provided. The poems you focus on in this reflection may include some of the poems we have discussed in class, but you are not to parrot back to me already-discussed ideas and conversations—I want to see how you as an independent thinker have generated insights about the collection you’ve chosen. You are encouraged to incorporate some of the material from craft essays we have read throughout the semester, and draw comparisons/contrasts with the works of other poets we have read in this course. As with your weekly reflections, in your final essay you must use textual evidence and appropriate craft terminology to support your observations/positions in your responses. You must use in-text citations to cite the material your reference in your responses, and are expected to include a works cited page.

Participation– You must come to class prepared. The basic level of “prepared” is comprised of showing up on time with the appropriate materials for the day read and annotated. If you do not have class materials, or if you have not read the day’s readings, the instructor reserves the right to ask you to leave class. If materials for this course are unavailable (i.e. the link is not working, the pdf is not posted on Canvas), it is your responsibility to contact the instructor ahead of class. Beyond this basic level, your grade is based on your active participation in classroom discussion, both in spoken comments and written responses on your classmates’ poems for workshop.

I understand speaking in classroom is difficult for some people. This is a challenge you must all confront with courage. We are not in this classroom to judge who has “the right” responses or is “better, smarter, louder, etc.” than the other students. We will listen to one another as carefully as we read. Additionally, if

content in this course is unfamiliar to you (i.e. “I am unfamiliar with a word in this poem,” “this poem makes reference to an artwork outside of the text,” “this word is in another language”), you are to make use of your resources (books, search engines, other human brains) and try to establish an understanding with what was once foreign to you.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Attendance

You may miss up to three classes without any point-value impact on your grade. The content you miss is on you, and your responsibility to catch up on by contacting a peer. Attending office hours is not an appropriate method of making up missed class time. Each subsequent absence after the three-class emergency absences will result in your grade being dropped a value (i.e. A- to B+). Three tardies will count as one absence. Late work is not accepted, and work will not be accepted in any form except for printed copy, unless otherwise stated. If you know you will be absent on a day an assignment is due, you must take appropriate measures to ensure your assignment is handed in early or on time.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism refers to the act of submitting someone else's writing or ideas as your own. The policy concerning plagiarism is simple: plagiarism will result in an F for the course and probable further disciplinary action will be taken by the powers that be in IU's administration. All students are required to read and sign a copy of the IU policy concerning plagiarism.

Additional Notes on Grading Policies

Failure to turn in poems on scheduled due dates will result in your final course grade being lowered by 10% per poem. Moreover, you cannot pass the class without turning in a final Portfolio.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any point in the semester.

Student Resources

The following links are resources that may or may not be of assistance to you or someone you know (they've helped me in the past):

IU Student Advocates Office: <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-advocates/> (812) 855-0761

IU CAPS: <http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/> (812) 855-5711

IU SACS: <http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/services/sexual-assault.shtml> (812) 855-8900

IU Dean of Students: <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/dean-students/> (812) 855-8187

IU Disability Services: <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/disability-services-students/> (812) 855-7578

Poetry Collection Options for Final Essay

Hadara Bar-Nadav: *Fountain and Furnace* (chapbook)

Lucie Brock-Broido: *Stay, Illusion*

Heather Christle: *What is Amazing*

Natalie Diaz: *When My Brother Was an Aztec*

Tarfia Faizullah: *Seam*

Nick Flynn: *Some Ether*

Ross Gay: *Catalogue of Unabashed Gratitude, Bringing the Shovel Down*

Aracelis Girmay: *Teeth*

Matthea Harvey: *Modern Life*

Ilya Kaminsky: *Dancing in Odessa*

Ada Limón: *Bright Dead Things*

Adrian Matejka: *The Big Smoke*

Steve Scafidì: *The Cabinetmaker's Window*

Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon: *Black Swan*

Ocean Vuong: *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*

Recommended Literary Journals

Indiana Review

Iowa Review

Kenyon Review

American Poetry Review

Gulf Coast

Prairie Schooner

Poetry Magazine

The Southern Review

The Massachusetts Review

The Offing

Blackbird

DIAGRAM

Waxwing

jubilat

Colorado Review

Copper Nickel

New England Review

The Adroit Journal

32 Poems

Ninth Letter

Fence

Black Warrior Review

A Public Space

The Journal

Crazyhorse

Southern Indiana Review

Mid-American Review

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Note: Items are listed on dates they are due/will be discussed in class. Prepare accordingly.

Week 1: Introductions & openings, tools & techniques

8/23 – Introductions/Syllabus, Canvas Readings (Richard Siken “Scheherazade,” Ilya Kaminsky “Author’s Prayer,” Audre Lorde “A Litany for Survival”), Watch reading on YouTube (Ilya Kaminsky at Berkeley Lunch Poems, 00:06:10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1iOgYxFkGc&feature=youtu.be&t=6m10s>)

8/25 – Questions due, Canvas (Denise Levertov “Technique and Tune-up,” “Linebreaks, Stanza-Spaces, and the Inner Voice,” Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon “Lost,” Tarfia Faizullah “1971”), Watch on YouTube (Lyrae Van-Clief Stefanon at Berkeley Lunch Poems, 00:11:19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfy7M93H26Q&feature=youtu.be&t=11m19s>)

Week 2: Seeing, to the point of discomfort

8/30 – Questions due, Canvas (Jeanette Winterson “Art Objects,” Ross Gay “Bull Dragged from Arena,” Hadara Bar-Nadav “Thumb,” “Oven”) Watch reading on YouTube (Ross Gay, Cave Canem at the New School, 00:21:00-00:21:35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w6FlzwQzjA>)

9/1 – Meet in Eskenazi Museum of Art atrium; Poem 1 due, Canvas (Alice Fulton, “Close”)

Week 3: The life of the mind is not always so orderly

9/6 – Workshop Poem 1

9/8 – Questions due, Canvas (Carl Phillips “Association in Poetry,” Lucie Brock-Broido “Concerning the Possible Music of Your Hair,” Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon “The Buffet Dream,” Matthea Harvey “Snowglobe Hypothesis,” “Baked Alaska, A Theory of,” Joni Wallace “Valentine” series, Aracelis Girmay “Self-Portrait as the Snail”)

Week 4: The poem as a bodily thing

9/13 – Poem 2 due, Meet-the-Poet: Ross Gay classroom visit, reading, and Q & A

9/15 – Questions due, Canvas (Todd Davis “The Poem as a Bodily Thing: An Interview with Ross Gay,” Ross Gay “Bringing the Shovel Down,” “Again,” “Within Two Weeks the African American Poet Ross Gay Is Mistaken...,” “Ode to Sleeping in My Clothes,” “Ode to Buttoning and Unbuttoning My Shirt,” Lucille Clifton “Wishes for Sons”)

Watch on YouTube (Ross Gay, From the Fishhouse, 00:05:30-00:09:49; 00:36:04-00:41:11

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qhgm_FWpmbI; Ross Gay at Notre Dame 00:20:50-00:22:16

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jdoNiOhwQs>; Ross Gay at Furious Flower 00:20:41-00:23:00

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O57q5xbLTg4>)

Week 5: Invisible architecture

9/20 – Workshop Poem 2, Poem 3 due

9/22 – Questions due, Canvas (Rebecca Hazelton “Why Write in Form?”, Barbara Guest “Invisible Architecture,” Rickey Laurentiis “Ghazal for Emmett Till,” Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon “Bop: The North Star” “RR Lyrae: Will,” “Maul,” “RR Lyrae: Supernova,” “Notes for *Open Interval*,” Natalie Diaz, “Abecedarian...,” Yehuda Amichai “Infinite Poem,” Joy Harjo “She Had Some Horses”)

Week 6: Moves & trends

9/27 – Workshop Poem 3, Poem 4 due

9/29 – Questions due, Canvas (Elisa Gabbert, “The Moves: Common Maneuvers in Contemporary Poetry,” Heather Christle “Self-Portrait with Fire,” Cori Winrock “Portrayal, X-Ray,” “Anterior of a Razed Room,” “Bridal Pyre,” Kien Lam “Big Bang Theory,” “Theory Theory,” Emily Skaja “My History As”)

Week 7: Writing & revising

10/4 – Workshop poem 4, Poem 5 due

10/6 – No Class, Fall Break

Week 8: Invention, new wor(l)ds

10/11 – Conferences

10/13 – Questions due, Canvas (Audre Lorde “Poetry is not a Luxury,” Matthea Harvey “The Inside Out Mermaid,” “The Objectified Mermaid,” “The Straightforward Mermaid,” “On Intimacy,” Fatimah Asghar “Pluto Shits on the Universe,” Danez Smith “Dinosaurs in the Hood,” Cate Lyrurgus “Conditional”), in-class writing exercises

Watch on YouTube (Danez Smith, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJwiOTeKDOQ>; Fatimah Asghar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7E_WXGSHF7A)

Week 9: Audience & the epistle

10/18 – Workshop poem 5, Poem 6 due

10/20 – Questions due, Canvas (Hannah Brooks-Motl “Learning the Epistolary Poem,” Robyn Schiff “Dear Ralph Lauren,” Bernadette Mayer “The Way to Keep Going in Antarctica,” Aracelis Girmay “For Estefani Lora, Third Grade, Who Made Me a Card,” Solmaz Sharif “Reaching Guantanamo,” “Dear Intelligence Journal,” Elana Bell “Letter to Jerusalem,” Yael Hacoen “I Never Saw a Wild Thing Sorry for Itself”) Watch on YouTube (Aracelis Girmay, “The Poetry Project: For Estefani Lora...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZIsUugRg3Y&feature=youtu.be>)

Week 10: Writing & revising & lineating

10/25 – Workshop poem 6, Poem 7 due (Student reading at Boxcar Books with Special Guest Ross Gay, 7:00 PM, I will have Donuts!)

10/27 – Questions due, Canvas (Denise Levertov “On the Function of the Line,” Brigit Kelly “Song,” Ilya Kaminsky “A Toast,” Natalie Diaz “My Brother at 3 AM,” Cate Lyrurgus “Self-Indictment, with Arrhythmia,” Tarfia Faizullah “100 Bells,” Patrick Rosal “You Cannot Go To...”)

Watch on YouTube (Tarfia Faizullah, 00:18:01-00:20:10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10k-NWYJYKq&feature=youtu.be&t=18m1s>)

Week 11: Writing & revising & reading away

11/1 – Workshop poem 7, Poem 8 due

11/3 – In-class writing exercises, bring in poems found in literary journals

Week 12: Surprise Week!

11/8 – TBA...Field trip? Guest lecture? (Outcome: Student-led idea to bring in poems of their own choice from literary journals, present to class with visual/aural aids)

11/10 – TBA...Student readings? Improv? (Outcome: Students bring in poems of their own choice from literary journals, present to class with visual/aural aids) (Class Cento/Community Art Project Final Draft!)

Week 13: Talking through our poems

11/15 – Workshop poem 8, Poem 9 due

11/17 – Conferences

Week 14: Giving thanks

11/22 – Thanksgiving break, no class

11/24 – Thanksgiving break, no class

Week 15: Writing & revising & running to the end

11/29 – Workshop poem 9, Poem 10 due

12/1 – Final Essay due

Week 16: Where we part

12/6 – Last day of class: Portfolios due