

Melissa Atkinson  
ENGL 213, Section 001  
Fall 2012  
MWF 1:30-2:20pm  
Eiesland Hall G27  
matkins4@mix.wvu.edu  
304-293-3107 (messages only)  
Office: 307 Colson Hall  
Office Hours: Mon. and Weds. 12:30-1:20pm  
or by appointment

### **English 213: Creative Writing--Poetry**

We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.  
--William Butler Yeats

Poetry must have something in it that is barbaric, vast and wild.  
--Denis Diderot

Poetry is the most direct and simple means of expressing oneself in words.  
--Northrop Frye

#### **Course Description**

Welcome to English 213, a class all about poetry: reading it, writing it, studying it, becoming immersed in it, etc. This class will explore the vast possibilities of contemporary poetry; you will be asked to constantly evaluate (and re-evaluate) all that sound and line and voice can do. You will learn a range of poetic terminology to aid you in discussing and developing work throughout the semester. You will analyze the work of famous and contemporary poets in order to understand more about how poetry works, and how you can use these tools to develop your own poetic voice.

This course is a creative writing workshop, meaning that we will work together as a classroom community to hone the creative potential of each individual. The workshop format requires each of you to learn the vocabulary necessary to enter into discussions of poetry, to be actively involved in class discussions every day, and to be willing to invest time and care--not only into the crafting of your own work, but also into critiquing the work of your fellow classmates.

Keep in mind that poetry is an academic discipline. This class is about studying it, learning the tools and the options that we can use to craft truly beautiful, and unique, poetry. Famous poets have a lot to teach us. Throughout the semester, we will read and discuss an array of accomplished poets and contemporary poems in order to understand how we might be able to achieve some linguistic magic of our own.

We also have a lot to learn about ourselves: what our true material is, as well as how exactly we want to go about expressing that material. We will engage in freewriting and other activities as a method of generating material. Workshopping will help each poem (and poet) work towards achieving exactly what it (he/she) wants to achieve.

## **Texts**

Andrews, Tom. *The Hemophiliac's Motorcycle*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994. Print.

Garren, Christine. *Among the Monarchs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Print.

Howe, Marie. *The Good Thief*. New York: Persea Books, 1988. Print.

Koch, Kenneth and Kate Farrell. *Sleeping on the Wing: An Anthology of Modern Poetry with Essays on Reading and*

*Writing*. New York: Vintage Books, 1982. Print.

Wright, Franz. *Walking to Martha's Vineyard*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf/Random House, 2003. Print.

## **The Workshop**

Poetry, and all creative writing, requires a lot from us as individuals. We put a lot of ourselves on the line: our thoughts, our emotions, our way of thinking about the world. As a result, respect and care are of the utmost importance. We all have the chance to communicate ideas and images that matter to us and our goal here is to help everyone excel in crafting the material that compels them. Failure to treat each and every member of the class with respect is, of course, a breach of the university's core values/social justice policy. It also violates the central tenants of a creative writing workshop. Let's not do that.

Always offer thoughtful and respectful critiques; put in the time to pinpoint, to the best of your ability, what exactly you believe is or is not working about each of your classmates' poems. Help the poem become a better version of itself. Don't try to change the poem, or the poet, into something that it (or he or she) is not.

## **Attendance:**

Be here, prepared and on-time. Since you're choosing to take a poetry class, I assume that you want to make the most of the opportunity. Poetry is a craft. It takes time and dedication. It takes showing up.

You may miss up to three class days. Use these for family emergencies, illness, car accidents, zombie attacks, etc. Each additional absence will significantly lower your final grade and, once you reach six absences, you fail the course. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to ensure that all assignments are still completed and turned in on-time. Late work is not accepted. If you anticipate a problem with an approaching deadline, it is your responsibility to talk to me before the assignment is due. (Keep in mind that when your poem is scheduled to be workshopped, turning it in involves bringing in enough copies for the entire class.)

## **Course goals**

--Actively engage in the writing community; carefully complete all work (readings, writings, responses) on time and share your insights with your classmates.

--Become comfortable with the mechanics of poetry.

--Hone your analytical skills; understand how poetry works and why. Become comfortable using poetic terminology to discuss how line, sound, voice, image, etc. are operating in a given poem.

- Develop your poetic material and voice. As Rilke advises, write
- Learn how to engage in, and benefit from, constructive criticism about your work (and the work of others). Use workshop comments, and your own evaluations, to facilitate revision.
- Engage with poetry as a way to understand the world around you.

### **Online Resources:**

The Academy of American Poets: [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)  
Poetry Society of America: [www.poetrysociety.org](http://www.poetrysociety.org)  
The Associated Writing Programs: [www.awpwriter.org](http://www.awpwriter.org)  
Poetry Daily: [www.poetrydaily.org](http://www.poetrydaily.org)  
Poets & Writers Magazine: [www.pw.org](http://www.pw.org)  
Poetry Foundation: [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)

### **Evaluation**

**50%** Daily Work: poems, close reading essays, reading responses, poetry discovery project, etc.  
**25%** Participation: workshop preparation, quizzes, classroom discussions, presentations, etc.  
**25%** Final Portfolio: compilation of poems, major revisions of at least three poems, and a final analytical essay.

### **SCHEDULE OF WORK**

\*\*Subject to change according to progress

#### **Week 1: August 20, 22, and 24**

Course introduction. Free-writing/Discovery Activities. Read Whitman and Dickinson. Imitation Poem #1.

#### **Week 2: August 27, 29, and 31**

Poetic terminology. Workshop basics. Read Yeats, Rilke, Stevens, and Apollinaire. Imitation Poem #2.

#### **Week 3: September 5 and 7 (Monday, Sept. 3--Labor Day/University Holiday)**

Quiz on readings and terminology. Read Williams, Lawrence, and Pound. Imitation Poem #3.

#### **Week 4: September 10, 12, and 14**

Image, sound, and line. Free-writing/Discovery Activities. Read Eliot, Cummings, and Lorca. Poem #4.  
Close Reading Essay #1.

#### **Week 5: September 17, 19, and 21**

Poetry as observation. Workshop. Read O'Hara, Ashbery, Snyder, and Jones. Poem #5.

#### **Week 6: September 24, 26, and 28**

Poetry Discovery Projects.

#### **Week 7: October 1, 3, and 5 (Midterm Week)**

In-class writing exercises. Reflection. Read Andrews. Poem #6.

**Week 8: October 8, 10, and 12**

Workshop. Finish Andrews. Reading Response.

**Week 9: October 15, 17, and 19**

Read Garren. Poem #7.

**Week 10: October 22, 24, and 26**

Workshop. Finish Garren. Close Reading Essay #2.

**Week 11: October 29, 31, and November 2**

Read Howe. Poem #8.

**Week 12: November 5, 7, and 9**

Workshop. Finish Howe. Reading Response.

**Week 13: November 12, 14, and 16**

Read Wright. Poem #9.

**--Thanksgiving Break--**

**Week 14: November 26, 28, and 30**

Workshop. Finish Wright. Reading Response.

**Week 15: December 3, 5, and 7**

FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7 IN CLASS--NO EXCEPTIONS

***Eating Poetry***

--Mark Strand

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.  
Her eyes are sad  
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.  
The light is dim.  
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,  
their blond legs burn like brush.  
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand.  
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,  
she screams.

I am a new man.  
I snarl at her and bark.  
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

**Postcard from Lake Mendota**

--Oliver Bendorf

The isthmus cracks between my teeth tonight. When  
I was small I sugared bananas on the stove for you.  
We thumb-struck to songs like our bodies were the ones

fretted and strung. Now I have this paradise, but the absence  
has your crescent. I drink hops off the spine with a teacher  
who grins too wide. Remember being landlocked, how even then

we found it hard to surprise one another? Where is the wood  
that heats the coal that whitens the rock that cooks the clam?  
My shell won't crack on its own, but you brush your teeth

in another sink these days, hang your jacket on a hook I did not  
mount. Open the door, close it. These lakes are full of smaller  
lakes, and I am alone with windows on three sides of me.

## **The Red Wheelbarrow**

-William Carlos Williams

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

## **In a Station of the Metro**

-Ezra Pound

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.