

## ENGL 618: Poetry Workshop

Mary Ann Samyn

Spring 2013

Tuesdays 4-6:50 p.m.

223 Colson Hall

Office: 237 Colson Hall

Office hours: TR 11:15-12:45

[Maryann.samyn@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Maryann.samyn@mail.wvu.edu)

304-293-9730

### Course Description

In 1960, W.D. Snodgrass won the Pulitzer Prize for *Heart's Needle* and Robert Lowell won the National Book Award for *Life Studies*. That same year saw the publication of the now famous poetry anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*, edited by Donald Allen.

Other books published in 1960 include Gwendolyn Brooks' *The Bean Eaters*, Donald Justice's *The Summer Anniversaries*, W.S. Merwin's *The Drunk in the Furnace*, Charles Olson's *The Distances*, Anne Sexton's *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, and William Stafford's *West of Your City*.

In this version of ENGL 618, we'll consider "the year in poetry," from 1960 until about 1980.

Our craft focus this time around will be syntax. Or underlying theme will be ambition. We'll also read two collections from our most recent year in poetry—2012.

### Texts

Graham, Jorie. *Place*. New York: Ecco, 2012.

Revell, Donald. *Tantivy*. Farmington, ME: Alice James Books, 2012.

Upton, Lee. *Swallowing the Sea: On Writing & Ambition, Boredom, Purity & Secrecy*. North Adams, MA: Tupelo, 2012.

Voigt, Ellen Bryant. *The Art of Syntax*. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2009.

Plus whatever reading you'll need to do to report to the class on your "year(s) in poetry."

### Assignments/Expectations

- approximately 10 poems for workshop (this is a large workshop; we'll need to see what's do-able)
- two succinct presentations of a "year in poetry"—with handouts and an electronic version sent to me
- three brief but stunning essays: (1) analysis of a poem's syntax, (2) response to Graham & Revell (3) response to *Swallowing the Sea*
- (enthusiastic & thoughtful) participation in the workshop at West Preston Middle School
- (thoughtful & enthusiastic) participation in our workshop and in the discussion of the books
- final project: to be determined...

### **Evaluation**

You'll be evaluated on your prose, your poetry, and your overall contributions to creating a supportive atmosphere for the study of the craft of writing.

### **Attendance Policy**

I take attendance seriously, don't you? This is a graduate course; this is workshop; you won't want to be absent. But, if for some unavoidable reason you must be, you should let me know, ahead of time. I do grade down for absences and tardiness. And, seriously, more than one absence in a grad class is unacceptable. We only meet once a week. Be here, on time, ready to participate.

### **Attendance at Readings and other Creative Writing Events**

Hearing writers read is fun; bringing writers to campus is expensive. Plan to attend all department-sponsored readings. These events are put on by us *for you*, and as such they're part of the experience of getting an MFA here.

### **Social Justice**

WVU is committed to social justice, as am I. That means you can expect a learning environment that is constructive, based on mutual respect and non-discrimination. If you have any questions, please let me know.

### **Questions?**

Ask me. And of course you are welcome to come to my office, or email me, to discuss your work, publication, teaching, anything. That said, I also encourage you to visit the Carruth Center if you're having difficulties that go beyond the scope of my abilities. Figuring out how to write is good; figuring out how to live is better, and crucial.

### **Weekly Schedule** (subject to change)

#### **Week 1: January 15**

Course introduction

The year in poetry: 1960

Distribute poems

For next week: read and comment on all poems

For next week: Voigt to page 61

#### **Week 2: January 22**

Workshop

Voigt

For next week: preparing for workshop: from here on out...

For next week: read Voigt 63-97

*Monday, January 28: reading: Mark Brazaitis and Amanda Cobb, 7:30 p.m.  
Gold Ballroom*

**Week 3: January 29**

Workshop

Voigt

For next week: "The Year in Poetry" presentations begin

For next week: Voigt: 99-144

**Week 4: February 5**

Workshop

Voigt

1961: Melissa

1962: Ben

1963: Rebecca

1964: Jessica

**Week 5: February 12**

Workshop

Discuss syntax essay....

1965: Sara

1966: Xin Tian

1967: Hannah

1968: Patric

*Tuesday, February 12, Appalachian Prison Book Project benefit reading,  
w/ Jim Harms, Katie Fallon, Tony Christini & more, 7:30 p.m., 130 Colson Hall*

**Week 6: February 19**

Workshop

For next week: syntax essay due (discuss a poem from one of your years in poetry)

1969: Morgan

1970: Connie

1971: Tatiana

1972: Christina

**Week 7: February 26**

Workshop

**Syntax essay due**

1973: Sadie

1974: Jaci

1975: Melissa

1976: Ben

*Tuesday, February 26: reading: Kevin Oderman & Jessie Van Eerden, 7:30 p.m.,  
Robinson Reading Room*

**Week 8: March 5**

Workshop

Prepping for our workshop in Preston County

1977: Rebecca

1978: Jessica

1979: Sara

1980: Xin Tian

*Tuesday, March 5: reading: Valerie Boyd, 7:30 p.m., Robinson Reading Room*

*Friday, March 8: Writing Contest Deadline*

**AWP in Boston: March 7-10**

**Week 9: March 12**

Workshop

More prep for Preston...

1981: Hannah

1982: Patric

1983: Morgan

1984: Connie

**March 13 & 14: Workshop in Preston County**

**Week 10: March 19**

Workshop

1985: Tatiana

1986: Christina

1987: Sadie

1988: Jaci

For next class: read Graham & Revell

For next class: write an elegant essay in response to Graham & Revell

*Wednesday, March 20: reading: Mary Ann Samyn, 7:30 p.m., 130 Colson Hall*

**Spring Break**

**Week 11: April 2**

Workshop

Graham & Revell

**Essay in response to Graham & Revell due**

**Week 12: April 9**

Workshop

For next week: read Upton

**Week 13: April 16**

Workshop

Upton

For next week: finish Upton

For next week: write an elegant essay in response to Upton

*Wednesday, April 17: Department Awards Luncheon, 11:30 a.m., Gold Ballroom*

*Thursday, April 18: ENGL 418 Capstone Reading, 11:30 a.m., 130 Colson Hall*

*Thursday, April 18: Calliope reading, 7:30 p.m., 130 Colson Hall*

**Week 14: April 23**

Workshop

Upton

**Essay in response to Upton due**

*Thursday, April 25: MFA Reading, 7:30 p.m., Rhododendron Room*

**Week 15: April 30**

Workshop.

Final project due date tba.

Questions? Email me: [maryann.samyn@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:maryann.samyn@mail.wvu.edu)