

ENGLISH 92: READING AND WRITING POETRY

Fall 2017, MW 1:30-3:20

Instructor: Margaret Ross

mkross@stanford.edu

Office Hours: MW 11:45-1:15

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class serves as an introduction to reading and writing poetry. We'll study elements of poetic craft, including diction, syntax, sentence, rhetoric, rhythm, image, metaphor, line, stanza and structure. We'll discuss how such elements cohere into meaning, create tone, enact thought, produce emotion and generate response. We'll read poems ranging from the ancient to the contemporary, acquainting ourselves with poets' diverse strategies across time and approaching each text as a guide to expand our own poetic practice. In this spirit, writing exercises will focus on techniques demonstrated in the reading. These exercises will help you broaden the scope of your art and generate fresh work through experimentation. Workshops will begin several weeks into the quarter and will not only provide you with feedback, they'll offer you the chance to be inspired in new directions by the work of fellow poets in the class.

One learns to write by reading, and writing itself can be called a kind of reading: a way of seeing the world and recognizing the myriad relations between people dead and living. It doesn't take talent to write a strong poem. It takes ongoing commitment to authentic perception and the refusal of presuppositions.

Our objective, always, is to hone our powers of attention, on and off the page; to write true and necessary poems and never to poeticize; to build together a writing community grounded in trust and mutual support.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

Course Reader: Available for purchase at Copy America.

Writing Notebook

Pen or Pencil

Folder: You are required to hold onto all handouts, drafts, written responses and poems. Please designate a folder specifically for this class.

Copies: Please allot sufficient time to print and make copies before coming to class. You are responsible for bringing in copies of your poems for workshop (one copy for each member of the class). You are also responsible for bringing in two copies of each feedback letter (one for the poet whose poem you're responding to and one for me). All written assignments must be printed and submitted to me in hard copy.

REQUIREMENTS

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation 20%
Leading Discussion 20%
Writing Exercises and Poems 20%
Written Critiques 10%
Recitation 5%
Attendance at Readings 5%
Final Portfolio 20%

Participation: Your participation is the most important part of the course. I ask you to arrive in class each week having prepared to speak thoughtfully on both the assigned reading and the workshop poems. You're expected to read with a pen and make copious notes on all texts before class to ensure that you'll have material to draw on during discussion. Vigorous engagement in discussion is mandatory. Please be ready to share your insights and to respond to questions. Remember, too, that participation does not just mean speaking, it means listening to your classmates with generosity and respect.

Writing Exercises and Poems: Each class will begin with an in-class writing exercise. Once workshops begin, you will regularly bring in poems for workshop discussion. These poems may grow out of writing exercises and/or class discussion.

Leading Discussion: Each member of the class will be responsible for leading class discussion once during the quarter. You'll receive a handout detailing expectations and guidelines.

Written Critiques: After every workshop, you'll write a constructive critique for each poem workshopped. Critiques must be substantive, thoughtful responses to the poem at hand. You'll bring in two copies of each critique to the subsequent class (one for me and one for the poet).

Attendance at Readings: The department requires all English 92 students to attend at least three readings during the quarter. The calendar for readings can be found on the Creative Writing website: <http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list>. After attending a reading, email me a brief reflection (approximately 150 words) within 7 days. What struck you while listening? What stuck in your memory? What did you notice about the way the poet read? Could you hear the shape of the poems on the page in the poet's voice?

Recitation: You will memorize a poem of at least 14 lines to recite in class.

Final Portfolio: Four revised poems with earlier draft(s) and a prose reflection will be due at the end of the course.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are permitted two absences during the quarter. Beyond that, each additional absence will cause your final grade to drop by one full letter (eg: from an A to a B). Arriving more than 10 minutes late to class or leaving more than 10 minutes early will count as being absent.

ELECTRONICS

Please refrain from using electronics (including laptops, tablets and phones) in class and please silence all devices before class begins.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

The highest possible grade for a late assignment is a C. Completed assignments that aren't copied or printed on time will be considered late.

OFFICE HOURS

You're strongly encouraged to attend office hours, where we can look more closely at your poems, strategize revisions, spend more time with the readings and talk through any concerns or questions you might have about the course.

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. That they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. That they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code;
3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code;
4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE), providing all required documentation. Professional staff will evaluate the request, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible, since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (voice: 723-1066, TTY: 723-1067, <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>).