

## **PROPOSAL FOR NEW CORE COURSE: AREA C1**

*ENGL 221: POETRY STUDIO FOR NON-MAJORS*

**Dean Rader, Department of English**

### **A) CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION**

This class offers an immersion in poetry, both as a reader and a writer. Designed for students not majoring in English, this class is an introduction to writing poems through the processes of reading poems and writing about the rich history of poetic expression.

### **B) SYLLABUS**

See Attached Syllabus

### **C) RATIONALE**

There is an increasing demand for more creative writing courses, but at present, there is no class for non-English majors that focuses on poetry. When I teach our core class Contemporary American Poetry, I offer an option for the students to produce a portfolio of their own poetry. Last time I made this offer, every single student in a class of 40 chose to create their own poetry manuscript, even though it was more work and involved more writing and less freedom than producing a final paper. On two previous occasions, I have taught a two-unit poetry symposium in the St. Ignatius Institute, and when I do, the class fills, and I get requests to open the class to all students. This class will appeal to students who want an immersive experience in poetry. It may also create interest in the English minor and boost lagging enrollments in the Humanities.

### **D) ASSESSMENT**

Aside from regular feedback on poems, students will be assessed through written assignments and an exam. The exam will come mid-term and the essay will come at the end of the semester. Between the introduction to the anthology, the reading reviews, the essay, and the introduction to the student's own portfolio, there will be 20-30 pages of expository writing. The writing and revising of the poems themselves will push the amount of formal graded writing well above 30 pages and close to 40.

## POETRY STUDIO

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### THE CLASS

What is poetry? What makes a poem a *poem*? Langston Hughes defined poetry as “the human soul entire, squeezed like a lemon or lime, drop by drop, into atomic words.” Emily Dickinson made even stronger claims: “If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry.” While it is unlikely your head will literally be taken off in this class, you will encounter poetry—both as a reader and a writer, with an emphasis on the latter. We will look at poems from all sides. We will pay close attention to the aesthetic, cultural, ethical, musical, intellectual, and emotional work poems do. You will read many different kinds of poems, both old and new with an emphasis on poetic craft (like language and form—two of the things that give poetry its magic). Assignments include reading and writing poems, responding to poems both critically and creatively, and formal writing, such as reviews and introductions. You will also write a lot of different kinds of poems; in fact, the class will culminate in a portfolio of your own poetry.

### CLASS POLICIES

**Attendance:** Come to class. If that is impossible, let me know. You will be allowed 3 absences with no penalty. If you miss four classes you lose a letter grade; if you miss five, you fail. The only exception is a serious illness or family emergency. University sponsored events don’t count against your absences.

**Class Participation and Presence:** Likewise, I expect you to arrive to class on time and to facilitate a healthy and productive working environment. Repeated tardiness and disruptions will result in poor class participation and presence, which can hurt or help your final grade. *Class participation includes: attendance, preparation, and contribution to class discussion and ethos, promptness, attitude, and group work.*

**Reading:** I also expect you to have done the assigned reading by the time you come to class. I’ll demand that you know the material well. Poetry does not take long to read but it can take a while to digest. I will expect you to have read every assigned poem *twice* before coming to class.

**Writing:** Writing a poem is unlike anything else. Do not hastily dash off a poem and then turn it in. All the magic of writing happens in revision. Give yourself time to tinker with words, lines, line breaks, typography, layout, etc. Formal writing must be typed and double-spaced and must adhere to guidelines.

**Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism:** Any kind of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism (including pulling papers off the web) or other forms of cheating are grounds for failure for this class and dismissal from the university.

**Late assignments:** Late assignment will cause you to lose up to five points per assignment. But even worse, they will make me angry. Meeting deadlines is critical for a writer.

## ASSIGNMENTS + GRADING

**1. poems:** you will submit poems based on assignments designed to introduce you to a variety of styles, forms, lengths, and subject matter. All poems must be typed in a non-goofy 12-point font (like Garamond, Times, Bookman, Baskerville, etc). Every poem should have a title and be single spaced unless you are doing something with spacing for effect. **10% of final grade**

**2. anthology:** You will assemble an anthology of 10 poems. Your anthology, which you are free to decorate, design, and produce, must be typed and professionally assembled. You will also write a 5-7-page introduction in which you explain why you included the various poems and why they are important to you as a poet. At least one of your poems must have been written before 1900. **10% of final grade.**

**3. readings:** you will attend a minimum of two poetry readings over the course of the semester and write a one-page review of the event. Your review should not just summarize or recount the reading. It must evaluate the poems, the poet, and even the event itself. **10% of final grade.**

**4. exam:** at mid term, you will take an exam comprised of poetic terms, forms, and techniques. **20% of final grade**

**5. essay:** toward the end of the semester, you will each write a 5-7 page essay in which you do a close-reading of a poem, paying attention to the poem's many formal characteristics as well as considering its theme or themes. **20% of final grade**

**6. final manuscript:** This will be a short manuscript of 10 poems, at least 8 of which must be poems you wrote for assignments in the class. Included in these 8 poems must be: a sonnet, a villanelle, a parody, a poem written in response to another poem, a cento, a poem about a place, and a poem that rhymes). All poems must be revised. Include at the back of your manuscript the first versions of each of the poems. You must also write a 4-5-page preface to your collection in which you explain to your readers your goals for the book, what your poems are trying to accomplish. **20% of final grade.**

**7. class participation and presence:** This includes in-class writing, preparation, workshop comments, discussion, and contribution to class ethos. **10% of final grade.**

## TEXTS

Kim Addonizio, *Ordinary Genius* (Norton)

Terrence Hayes, *Lighthouse* (Penguin)

Gwynn/Linder, Eds. *Contemporary American Poetry* (Penguin)

Class Handouts (CR)

## LEARNING OUTCOMES & HOW THEY WILL BE MET

### **1. Students will acquire a basic understanding of the literary, historical, social, or cultural influences that inform poetry, poetry writing, and poetry criticism.**

Students will read poems from a number of different time periods and in various forms in order to show how historical moments can determine meaning, influence, and even how a poem looks on the page. For instance I will teach Gerard Manley Hopkins' famous "The Windhover" alongside James Tate's almost as famous "Goodtime Jesus." Hopkins' poem was written in 1877 and is a rhymed and metered sonnet. It is also a poem of praise, as it is dedicated "To Christ Our Lord." "Goodtime Jesus" was published 100 years later in 1978. It is a prose poem and is funny and irreverent. The two poems are about the same topic but couldn't be more different in terms of tone and form—yet both are poems that embrace life. They also are poems that reflect the time in which they were written. We will look similarly at poems written in heroic couplets from the 18<sup>th</sup> century alongside poems written in experimental couplets in the 2000s, just as we will look at poems written in various

historical periods, paying close attention to the kinds of things that were emblematic of that time. See week one for examples of this as well as week thirteen. To measure these things and others, students take an objective exam of literary terms, and they are required to identify in a poem where examples of things like a volta occurs or where assonance and alliteration happen or where a metaphor is. Lastly, students will learn how certain themes and forms arise out of specific literary movements. For example, the importance of rhyme, symmetry, and wit to Renaissance writers; Romanticism's tendencies to foreground nature, imagination, and the primacy of the individual; the proliferation of the Dramatic Monologue and the embrace of other elaborate forms during the Victorian period; the significance of fragmentation, allusion, and improvisation for Modernist poets; and the iconoclastic, formlessness, collage-friendly, media-heavy tendencies of postmodernism.

**2. Regardless of the language of the texts or the language of instruction, students will have articulated in writing and discussion their responses to literary texts.**

I have students do several different kinds of writing in response to literary texts. For example, all students have to write a poem that responds or mimics one of the poems we read (see the assignment during the Terrance Hayes week). They also have to write a parody of a famous poem. In addition, they have to write an essay in which they give a close reading of a poem. Students also have to write an introduction to an anthology of poetry they have themselves put together. They must talk in specific detail about why they chose certain poems, in effect, justifying their decisions with concrete examples of the poems' merit. Obviously, we will also do a great deal of class discussion and even two weeks of workshopping at the end of the semester, by which time, the students should be comfortable with the terms of poetic discourse.

**3. Students will have developed a basic critical ability to identify, interpret and evaluate the ideas and formal features of an integrated body of literary texts.**

In this class we do a *lot* of close readings of poems, which involves working through a poem line by line and paying attention to its formal qualities like rhyme, rhythm (how many beats per line), whether or not there is a controlling metaphor, whether the poem is end-stopped or enjambed, whether the poem is written in closed or open forms, if the diction is pitched high, like a Shakespeare sonnet or low like a Bukowski poem, if the poet uses complicated syntax a la Wallace Stevens or T. S. Eliot or more straightforward language like Mary Karr or Jane Hirshfield. We talk a great deal about "theme" or "message" but pay just as close attention to literary form, as in poetry, form and content go hand-in-hand. The close-reading essay is a great example of the kind of assignment that forces students to evaluate the ideas and formal features of a poem.

**4. Students will have developed sensitivity to the plurality of meanings and cultural values within a literary text.**

Poetry is legendary (notorious?) for carrying multiple meanings. One assignment we will do in week eleven is look closely at the famous Emily Dickinson poem "My Life had stood—a loaded Gun." I split the students into five groups and give each group a different fake document. One group gets a document informing them this poem is about slavery; another learns the poem is about sex and sexuality; one learns it's about women's empowerment; one learns it is about an authoritative father figure; one learns it is about the liberty of poetic expression. I ask each group to demonstrate to the class how the poem reveals the "theme" they have been given. Each group is incredibly convincing, as the poem elicits at least this many variant interpretations. We also talk about how when students write poems readers will often get different meanings than what the author intends. Lastly, we read a number of poems by African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latino/a poets and discuss how, say, Navajo writers might try to communicate *Diné* values in their poems.

## THE BREADTH REQUIREMENT

- Students will read poets from many of different countries like Hopkins (Irish); Shakespeare (England), Rilke (Austria); Rumi (Persia); Neruda (Chile); Atwood (Canada); Lorca (Spain); Akhmatova (Russia). Students will also read poems by Native American, African American, Asian American, Chicano/a, and Arab American poets.
- Students will read poems spanning over a thousand years, including Sappho (600s BCE); Rumi (1200s); Shakespeare (1500s); Donne (1600s); Wordsworth (1700s); Whitman and Dickinson (1800s); and a whole passel of writers from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
- Students will read poems by a diversity of writers in a huge diversity of poetic forms, like sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, centos, odes, monologues, heroic couplets, parodies, and elegies. Best of all, students will write most of these kinds of poems as well as love poems, political poems, and poems about place.
- Students will learn about the historical roots of poetry and poetic and rhetorical terms. For instance, volta is Italian for “the turn.” They will learn about the Italian roots of the Petrarchan sonnet or the British roots of the Elizabethan sonnet. They will learn about the great Middle eastern form, the ghazal, and the various Asian forms of haiku and tanka. They will also learn how many Greek terms like *anaphora*, *dactyl*, *spondee*, *iamb*, *anapest*, *apocope* and *aphesis* have worked their way into poetic terminology.

## TENTATIVE READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

### **Week One**

Introduction: what is poetry? What is “poetic?” What is “good?”

Hopkins, “The Windhover” + Tate, “Goodtime Jesus” + T. R. Hummer, “Where You Go When She Sleeps + Rebecca Foust, “Thirteen” + Victoria Chang, “The Boss,” + Melissa Stein, “Blessings” + Mary Ruefle, “Cold Pluto”

**write:** a poem in 4-line stanzas of between 8 and 12 syllables per line. No more than 16 lines. The poem must be about a car or a song or a shoe.

### **Week Two**

What You “know”

**read:** *Ordinary Genius*, 19-92;

**read:** *Contemporary American Poetry* Sherman Alexie, “The Exaggeration of Despair” (474); Robert Hass, “Forty Something” (266); Charles Bukowski, “my father” (15); W. S. Merwin, “For the Anniversary of My Death” (138) & “The Last One” (139); Phillip Levine, “Animals are Passing from Our Lives” (149) & “You Can Have It” (151); Anne Sexton, “In Celebration of My Uterus” (156); Robert Bly, “For My Son, Noah, Ten Years Old” (126); Sylvia Plath, “Daddy” (197); Pinsky, “ABC” (261); Toi Derricotte, “On the Turning Up . . .” (271); Gladys Cardiff, “Combing” (293); Ellen Bryant Voigt, “Daughter” (309); Rita Dove, “After Reading Mickey in the Night Kitchen . . .” (425);

**write:** a poem of no more than 20 lines with no more than 10 syllables per line about some aspect of your family

### **Week Three**

What “You” Know and What You Don’t Know

**read:** *OG*, 127-144

**read:** *CAP*, Wilmer Mills, “Ghost Story” (480); Sylvia Plath “Lady Lazarus” (201); Denise Levertov, “The Secret” (58); W. D. Snodgrass, “After Experience Taught Me” (93); Robert Bly, “After Drinking

All Night . . . (125); Ted Kooser, "Selecting a Reader" (250); Stephen Dunn, "A Secret Life" (251); Tom Disch, "The Rapist's Villanelle" (253); Robert Pinsky, "The Want Bone" (261)+ Marilyn Hacker, "Ghazal on Half a Line by Adrienne Rich" (301); James Tate, "Teaching the Ape to Write Poems" (318); Molly Peacock, "Why I Am Not A Buddhist" (345); Ai, "Child Beater," (352); Joy Harjo, "She Had Some Horses"

**write:** two poems: a persona poem + a poem on thing, topic, person or place about which you know nothing.

## **Week Four**

### The Poetry of Place

**read:** *OG*, 145-146; 187-198.

**read:** *CAP*, Richard Wilbur, "Love Calls Us To The Things of This World" (20); Allen Ginsburg, "America" & "A Supermarket In California" (121); Carolyn Forché, "The Colonel" (385) & "The Expatriate" (386); Robert Hass, "Meditation at Lagunitas" (264); Mark Strand, "Eating Poetry" (207) & "Keeping Things Whole" (208) & "The Tunnel" (209) + Shirley Geok-lin Lim "Pantoum for Chinese Women" (321) & "Riding Into California" (322); Kay Ryan, "Drops in the Bucket" (328); Molly Peacock, "Buffalo," (344); Amy Uyematsu "Lessons from Central America" (351); Jorie Graham, "At Luca Signorelli's Resurrection of the Body" (389); poems I email you

**write:** a poem about a place of more than 10 lines but less than 30 that alternates between 7 and 11 syllable lines

## **Week Five**

### The Erotic (and All Its Problems)

**read:** *OG*, 99-126

**read:** Robert Hass, "Forty Something" (266) & "A Story About the Body" (265); Kumin, "Bitch" (90); James Dickey, "Adultery" (40); Ginger Andrews, "Primping in the Rearview Mirror" (461); Forrest Hamer, "Erection" (462); Adrienne Rich "Living in Sin" (163); Anne Sexton, "Cinderella" (159) + Galway Kinnell, "After Making Love We Hear Footsteps" (128); Robert Bly, "The Scandal" (127); Allen Ginsburg, "Howl" (114); Pattiann Rogers, "Foreplay" (257); Marilyn Hacker, "Wagers" (300); Louise Gluck, "Mock Orange" (306) & "The Reproach" (307); Alberto Rios, "The Purpose of Alter Boys" (429); PDF of poems

**write:** two poems: a love poem or an anti-love poem or an erotic poem or an anti-erotic poem + a parody of either of these kinds of poems. The poem must be less than 8 lines but each line must be between 15 and 20 syllables.

## **Week Six**

### Metaphor

**read:** *OG*, 179-186; 217-225

**read:** *CAP*, James Wright, Kim Addonizio, Yusef Komunyakaa, Sharon Olds

**read:** poems or songs sent to you by your fellow poets

**write:** a poem of no more than 30 lines that uses a controlling metaphor

## Week Seven

### The Music of Poetry

**read:** *OG*, 237-248

**read:** *CAP*, “Riprap (187); “Daddy” (197); “In the Tank” (174); “Drops in the Bucket” (328); “Any Lit” (435); “Supernatural Love” (441) + handout

**write:** a poem of less than 20 lines of between 8 and 12 syllables per line that makes sound and/or music its main focus

## Week Eight

**exam!** + The Music & terminology of Poetry, cont.

## Week Nine

### The Serious & The Comic

**read:** *OG*, 249-255; 156-163

**read:** *CAP*, “Oysters” (472); “Pimping in the Rearview Mirror” (461); “First Poem for You” (448); “The River in Spate” (447); “After Disappointment” (421); “From 33” (382); “I Know” (372); “Duchy and Shinks” (324); “Riding Into California” (322); “Hardy” (211); “Final Notations” (169); Russell Edson (213-214); Mark Strand, “Eating Poetry” (207); Billy Collins (266-269); James Tate, “Teaching the Ape to Write Poems” (318); “Bra” (192); “I Was Stolen” (239); “Maybe Dats Your Pwoblem Too” (347); “Leaning Against the Bar” (263) + handout

**write:** a sonnet (or two)

## Week Ten

### Case Study: Terrance Hayes

**read:** *Lighthouse*

**write:** a poem inspired by a poem from *Lighthouse*—either in form (preferably) or in theme

## Week Eleven

### “Good” Poems (Rumi, Rilke, Neruda, Dickinson, Lorca, Stevens, HD, Ondaatje, Atwood, etc)

**read:** handout

**write:** a good poem—be ambitious!

## Week Twelve

### Making It Good, Perhaps Even Great – On Revision

**read:** *OG*, 274-284; 199-203

**write:** a new, updated version of two older poem.

**due:** your anthology

## Week Thirteen

### The Community of Poetry: the homage, the parody, the cento

**read:** handout

**write:** a parody or a cento

## **Week Fourteen**

### Workshop

**read:** your peers' poems

**write:** smart, professional, useful comments to each writer getting workshopped

**write:** a poem of at least 14 lines but no more than 30 lines that uses an ABAB CDCD etc rhyme scheme. At least half of the rhymes need to be enjambed. Also feel free to use off rhymes.

## **Week Fifteen**

### Workshop

**read:** your peers' poems

**write:** smart, professional, useful comments to each writer getting workshopped

**write:** a prose poem

## ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND RESOURCES

### Academic Integrity

As a Jesuit institution committed to cura personalis—the care and education of the whole person—USF has an obligation to embody and foster the values of honesty and integrity. USF upholds the standards of honesty and integrity from all members of the academic community. All students are expected to know and adhere to the University's Honor Code. You can find the full text of the code online at [www.usfca.edu/academic\\_integrity](http://www.usfca.edu/academic_integrity). The policy covers:

- Plagiarism — intentionally or unintentionally representing the words or ideas of another person as your own; failure to properly cite references; manufacturing references.
- Working with another person when independent work is required.
- Submission of the same paper in more than one course without the specific permission of each instructor.
- Submitting a paper written by another person or obtained from the internet.
- The penalties for violation of the policy may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the course, and/or a referral to the Academic Integrity Committee.

### Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or disabling condition, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact USF Student Disability Services (SDS) at 415 422-2613 within the first week of class, or immediately upon onset of disability, to speak with a disability specialist.

If you are determined eligible for reasonable accommodations, please meet with your disability specialist so they can arrange to have your accommodation letter sent to me, and we will discuss your needs for this course. For more information, please visit: <http://www.usfca.edu/sds> or call (415) 422-2613.

### Behavioral Expectations

All students are expected to behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies (see <http://www.usfca.edu/fogcutter/>). Open discussion and disagreement is encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. There are also a variety of behaviors that, while not against a specific University policy, may create disruption in this course. Students whose behavior is disruptive or who fail to comply with the instructor may be dismissed from

the class for the remainder of the class period and may need to meet with the instructor or Dean prior to returning to the next class period. If necessary, referrals may also be made to the Student Conduct process for violations of the Student Conduct Code.

### **Learning & Writing Center**

The Learning & Writing Center provides assistance to all USF students in pursuit of academic success. Peer tutors provide regular review and practice of course materials in the subjects of Math, Science, Business, Economics, Nursing and Languages. Other content areas can be made available by student request. To schedule an appointment, log on to TutorTrac at <https://tutortrac.usfca.edu>. Students may also take advantage of writing support provided by Rhetoric and Language Department instructors and academic study skills support provided by Learning Center professional staff. For more information about these services contact the Learning & Writing Center at (415) 422-6713, email: [lwc@usfca.edu](mailto:lwc@usfca.edu) or stop by our office in Cowell 215. Information can also be found on our website at [www.usfca.edu/lwc](http://www.usfca.edu/lwc).

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

Our diverse staff offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call 415-422-6352 for an initial consultation appointment. Having a crisis at 3 AM? We are still here for you. Telephone consultation through CAPS After Hours is available between the hours of 5:00 PM to 8:30 AM; call the above number and press 2.

### **Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct.

