Course Title: Writing Poetry: Freedom and Form
Course Code: POET 20 W
Instructor: Chanda Feldman

Required Texts
Title: The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms, Mark Strand and Eavan Boland

All other required reading materials will be provided

Grading
Letter Grade:
Writing Assignments: 35%
Weekly writing assignments must be submitted on time; and, 7 out of 10 weekly writing assignments must be submitted.

Participation: 65%
Active and insightful contributions to all weekly discussion forums and peer feedback forums are required.

Credit/No Credit: Participation; defined as responding to peer work in forums and contributing to all weekly online discussion forums in a timely manner.

No Grade Requested: The "no grade" option is popular with many students and allows for being accountable to one’s self for one’s own writing commitment.

Tentative Schedule
Week 1 (June 22-28): What to Write About: Pantoum and Sestina
Week 2 (June 29-July 5): Rhyme and Refrain: Villanelle and Triolet
Week 3 (July 6-12): Line and Meter: Sonnet
Week 4 (July 13-19): A Poet’s Tone, A Poem’s Mood: Ghazal
Week 5 (July 20-26): Blues and Ballad: Point of View

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
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continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Week 6 (July 27- August 2): Haibun and Tanka: Figurative Language

Week 7 (August 3-9): Revision and Polish

Week 8 (August 10-16): Elegy and Ode: Imagery and Abstract Language

Week 9 (August 17-23): Open Forms and Inventing Forms

Week 10 (August 24-28): The Poetry Market and Publishing

**How This All Works**

Each week will begin with an introductory craft lecture located in the Schedule section of the Canvas online classroom. To enrich and expand this discussion, I will ask you to read selections from *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*. I will also assign readings that appear online; you will be provided with URL links. The readings for each week will be listed under This Week’s Reading. Under Topics for Discussion I will pose questions based on the reading to help you think about how the craft techniques and poetry forms are actually being used in published poetry and how you can use them in your own writing. Under Writing Assignments, you’ll find a different writing prompt each week designed to allow you to focus on an aspect of style or poetic form. Our group conversation begins when you post your insights and thoughts in the Discussion bulletin board. Using the Canvas bulletin board, we’ll have ongoing conversations about your work, the readings, and craft topics. This is where you’ll post your work, and where our workshop will take place.

**Weekly Schedule**

Each Monday, I will post a new lecture, reading assignment, writing assignment, and discussion points. Your poems are due each week on Monday, 9:00 pm (Pacific time). You will always be able to access course materials for the current week and the upcoming week to allow you to work at your own pace and to accommodate those of you who like to work ahead or need to plan ahead.

The class will continue to discuss each round of poems and discussion questions until the next round of poems are due (on the following Monday). I will seldom be in the classroom over the weekend, but you’re welcome to start posting for the next week whenever you’re ready. The classroom is always open!

**Reading Assignments**

Each week I will assign poems for you to read. Reading is crucial for developing a writer’s skills. I want you to enjoy the reading assignments for
the pleasures of reading—the beauty, surprise, and deep engagement. In addition, I want you to practice reading as a writer, and ask questions of the poems. How did the writer compose the text to produce its effects? Reading in this manner helps us uncover the architecture of another writer’s work, and helps us understand how craft choices alter a reader’s experience.

Bringing your emotional awareness (How did this poem make me feel?) and your analytical awareness (What formal choices has the writer made that could explain the way I’m feeling?) can help guide your understanding of the text.

Timely reading of each week’s material is essential for a thriving class discussion, so try your best to keep up with the readings. I encourage you to join the discussions early and participate often, as the discussions benefit when more people participate and offer their opinions and ideas.

**Writing Assignments**

I’ll ask you to write and share one poem every week. Writers develop by writing, writing, and writing some more. Each week, my prompts will focus on particular forms or aspects of style, and I encourage you to try them because they are designed to expose you to fundamental craft techniques, but the prompts are optional: you are welcome to write in any style, about any subject if the inspiration hits you.

If you complete all of the weekly writing assignments, you will finish this 10-week course with ten to twelve poems. I know, however, there may be weeks when turning in a poem may not be possible, so it is acceptable to “take a pass” three weeks out of the ten.

Once you have written your poem each week, you will post it on Canvas where your classmates will discuss it.

**Feedback on Weekly Assignments**

**Your Feedback:**

Please find time to engage with your classmates’ work. As you will see when you post your own writing, even a one- or two-sentence reply from a fellow writer is a gift; all of us wrestle against the fear that we’re sending our work into a void. The more conscientious you are in your feedback, the more diligent your classmates will be about responding to your work. When responding to assignments, don’t worry obsessively about grammar. The discussion of the assignments should be thoughtful, but it doesn’t need to be formal.

Since there are 16 other students in the course, and a new assignment every week, you won’t be able to respond to every assignment, but you will need
to comment on the work of at least three to four classmates per week, and, over the duration of the course, try to share your attention among the work of as many classmates as possible. If you see a classmate has already received three or four comments on the weekly writing assignment, please give your attention to someone else’s work. Writers whose postings have received less attention from the class will particularly appreciate your time. How much feedback is enough? 3 to 5 sentences per assignment are plenty.

When giving feedback to your peers, it’s helpful to read submissions twice. Remember, your job is not to tell them what you would write, but to consider what they are trying to do and to offer constructive feedback via a critique (see “Critique” below) on how they could better accomplish that task. The first time through, read for pleasure, get a sense of how the poem works and track your reactions: when you’re riveted, when you’re less engaged. The second time, be more systematic and try to figure out why the writing had its effects upon you. As a general rule, in providing your written feedback you should identify: (1) strengths, (2) areas for improvement, and (3) any areas of confusion.

If you write a particular poem that is deeply personal and you would rather not expose it to criticism, you can email the poem to me personally, and forgo posting to Canvas.

**Instructor Feedback:**
Each student may choose seven assignments over the ten-week course on which to receive instructor commentary and criticism. If you would like me to comment on a poem, please post your poem both in the regular Workshop thread and in the Instructor Workshop thread. If, toward the end of the course you find that you would prefer to receive my comments on an earlier poem you had not originally elected for criticism, please just let me know and I will be happy to return to it. I will write a short (several-sentence) response to every writing assignment that is posted in the Forum. I read and respond to writing in the order in which it gets turned in, doing as much as I can on a given day, then returning where I left off the next time I log on. Again, in order to keep the momentum of the course moving forward, I typically do not respond to late assignments.

**Chat**
Chat for this course will be held weekly beginning in Week 2, day and time: **TBA**. If you’re unable to make it to chat, a recording of the chat will be available for viewing. In addition, you can always post questions to the forum and/or email me.

A Final Important Note
Although many students take online courses with the absolute best intentions of doing every last assignment, "real life”—family, illness, and professional deadlines—often has a way of making that impossible. Sometimes, the frustration this causes prompts a student to drop completely out of the class. Rather than adopting an "all-or-nothing" approach to your participation in this course, I recommend simply doing what you can, when you can. If there are a few weeks where you don't get to the reading, that's okay. If you have to skip a couple of exercises, this is also okay. As long as you're continuing to work steadily on your poems and commenting on your classmates' submissions, you'll be fine. And remember – if you DO have to take a couple of weeks completely away from the class, you can always come back!