Course Title: Writing Poetry: From Inspiration to Form  
Course Code: POET 23 W  
Instructor: Allison Davis

Course Summary:

In POET 23 W, students will read a combination of creative and critical poetry texts. In response to the readings, students will complete weekly writing assignments and participate in online discussions and revision of class work. Upon completion of the course, students will have a comprehensive understanding of why they value poetry, the ability to appreciate and utilize a diverse range of poetic styles, and a collection of poems reflecting feedback from the instructor and an engaged community of writers.

Required Texts:

Mary Oliver, A Poetry Handbook, ISBN 9780156724005

All other required reading materials will be provided online.

Grade Options and Requirements:

You have three options:
1) No Grade Requested: This is the default option. It allows students to control and pace their writing and reading commitment.
2) Credit/No Credit: Your participation in discussion and response forums and the completion of five poems will account for full credit.
3) Letter Grade: Your participation in discussions, weekly responses, comments on your classmates’ work, and poems will account for 100% of your grade.

The Breakdown for Letter Grades:
Writing Assignments: 35%
Over the quarter, you must build a portfolio of 6 out of the 9 weekly writing assignments plus one revision. These weekly assignments must be submitted on time.
Participation: 65%
Active and insightful contributions to all weekly discussion forums and peer feedback forums are required.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

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Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1: Sep. 21-27  
**Introductions**  
**Sound**  
Anthology: Gertrude Stein (26-27), Harryette Mullen (518)  
Poetry Handbook: “Introduction” through “More Devices of Sound” (1-34)  
Submit poem 1

Week 2: Sep. 28-Oct. 4  
**The Line and Meter**  
Anthology: Robert Frost (12-22) and John Berryman (167-169)  
Submit poem 2

Week 3: Oct. 5-11  
**Syllabics and Rhyme**  
Anthology: Marianne Moore (73-75) and Gwendolyn Brooks (181-187)  
Submit poem 3

Week 4: Oct. 12-18  
**Free Verse**  
Anthology: Wallace Stevens (31-37), Langston Hughes (127-129)  
Essay Excerpt: “A Retrospect” by Ezra Pound, 1918*  
Poetry Handbook: “Verse that is Free” (67-75)  
Submit poem 4

Week 5: Oct. 19-25  
**Voice and Tone**  
Anthology: Frank O'Hara (250-252), Allen Ginsberg*  
Essay: “Personism: A Manifesto” by Frank O'Hara, 1961*  
Poetry Handbook: “Diction, Tone, and Voice” (76-91)  
Submit poem 5

Week 6: Oct. 26-Nov. 1  
**Narration and Observation**  
Anthology: Philip Levine (282-286) and Natasha Tretheway (558-560)  
Essay: “Pocketbooks and Sauerkraut” by W.S. Di Piero, 1993*  
Submit poem 6

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Week 7: Nov. 2-8

Setting and Imagery
Anthology: James Wright (277-279), Reetika Vazirani (555)
Submit poem 7

Week 8: Nov. 9-15

“What’s in a Name” and Revision
Anthology: Sherman Alexie (556-558), Marilyn Chin (534-537)
Poetry Handbook: “Revision” (109-111)
Submit poem 8

Week 9: Nov. 16-22

Poetry and the Utility of Language
Anthology: Audre Lorde (322-323) and Sylvia Plath*
Essay: “Poetry is not a Luxury” by Audre Lorde, 1985*
Submit poem 9

[Note: No class Thanksgiving Week]

Week 10: Nov. 30-Dec. 4

Staying Inspired: Navigating Reading, Writing, and Publishing
Anthology: select any poet from the anthology
Poetry Handbook: “Workshops and Solitude” and “Conclusion” (112-122)
Submit poem revision

Note: online readings indicated by asterisk (*)

Navigating Canvas:

Module: In the Module section, you will find weekly craft lectures, occasional online poems and critical readings to complement our texts, weekly discussion questions based upon the readings, and weekly writing prompts.

Discussion: In the Discussion section, you will find three types of forums:
- Discussion: space to respond to discussion questions
- Workshop Groups A-E: space to post weekly poems
- Instructor Workshop: space to post five poems for my review

Announcements: I’ll occasionally post updates and reminders in this section

Weekly Schedule:

Friday afternoon: I will update the Module with a new lecture, reading assignment, discussion questions, and writing prompt.
Monday morning: Discussion forums open. Respond to the discussion questions by Friday afternoon.
Wednesday by 9:00 pm (Pacific Time): Submit a poem to a Workshop Group (A, B, C, D, or E). Five times during the course of the quarter, please also submit a poem to the Instructor Workshop.

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Thursday-Friday: Respond to the three other poems in your forum.

Reading Assignments:

In this class, we will approach poetry as both readers and writers. We will practice critical reading by questioning the texts—how did each poem make you feel, and what craft choices did the writer make to produce the poem’s formal, sonic, and thematic qualities?

Each Friday afternoon, I will assign anthology poems that we will discuss as a class the following week. I will complement the reading with a craft lecture from The Writing Handbook and/or an essay written by a poet providing a working view of the composition process. Our text is one of the more affordable, wide-ranging anthologies available, and I hope you continue to explore it beyond our class.

For each set of readings, I will post questions to Topics for Discussion. In response, each student should post one short paragraph (around 5 sentences) a week to the Discussion Bulletin Board. Participation is the foundation of a writing community. Though not required, I encourage you to read and comment on the responses of others. I will read every response and participate when I see an opportunity.

Writing Assignments:

I ask you to write and share one poem every week. The weekly prompts will be in thematic or formal conversation with our weekly readings. While I hope the reading assignments and writing prompts invigorate and challenge your writing practices, you are welcome to write in any style and about any subject.

Each Wednesday, you will post one poem in one of the forums (A, B, C, D, or E) by 9 PM Pacific Time. Up to four students are welcome in each forum. Once four poems have been posted, you must choose a different forum. This will ensure you experience the poetry of different students each week.

If you complete all of the weekly writing assignments, you will finish this ten week course with nine poems and at least one revision.

Poem Format
Poems must be typed in a standard 11 or 12 point font—Times New Roman or Garamond are best. Please left justify the margin unless the justification is part of your poem’s formatting. Microsoft might automatically capitalize each new line—please enable or disable this function to reflect your preference.

Feedback on Writing Assignments:

Your Feedback:
Online classes allow poets from a variety of places and perspectives to learn from each other. This is an exciting opportunity, and I have designed the class to maximize community interaction. Weekly, the four poets who post to a forum will leave constructive feedback on each other’s work. Poets who leave thoughtful critiques often receive thoughtful critiques in return. Please note which types of feedback are encouraging to you as a poet and extend similar commentary to others—sometimes just a few careful observations jumpstart revision. Please complete all feedback by Friday evenings or earlier. Aim for a paragraph of at least five sentences.

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In *The Art of Recklessness*, poet Dean Young notes that the key to thoughtful feedback is careful reading: “As critics of each other’s work we must be very careful making assumptions, constructing interpretations, and making recommendations for revision before we actually know what it is we are looking at. An emerald necklace is indeed a very poor piece of birthday cake” (88). Remember, your job is not to make other poets write more like you. Your job is to understand a poem’s goals and then offer its poet constructive feedback to make those goals a reality. Here are some questions to consider when providing feedback:

1. Who is the speaker of the poem, what does he/she/it say?
2. How would you summarize this poem?
3. What tone(s) does this poem use?
4. What is the pattern or organization of the poem? How are the ideas ordered?
5. What is the poet’s intention?
6. What are notable examples of imagery/sounds/poetic effects?
7. What is the most memorable part of the poem to you and why?
8. What is one question you have after reading the poem?

The most exciting part of this class is building an encouraging and thoughtful poetry community that fosters confidence and creative risk-taking. While critical reading and commentary is encouraged, harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

**Instructor Feedback:**
Each student may choose five assignments on which to receive in-depth instructor commentary and criticism. One assignment may be the revision. Please post these five poems in both the regular Workshop thread and in the Instructor Workshop thread. I will read and respond to writing as quickly as possible in order of submission. In order to keep the momentum of the course moving forward, I typically do not respond to late assignments.

**Online Meetings:**
Online meetings for this course will be held weekly beginning in Week 2, day and time to be announced. If you’re unable to attend, a recording of the meeting will be available for viewing. In addition, you can post questions to the forum and/or email me.

**A Note on Time Commitments:**
Sometimes daily responsibilities take priority over writing. Please do what you can, when you can. If you miss a discussion one week or don’t have time to write a poem, please stay encouraged. You can always return to last week’s discussion board. The submission of five poems is required for credit, and while I encourage you to write more, please don’t feel pressured to write every week. On weeks you need to prioritize, start by leaving thoughtful feedback for other poets in one of the forums.

Our mutual respect for poetry resulted in this a unique community, and the insights we can provide each other with are the most valuable part of the course. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to e-mail me. I’m grateful for the opportunity to read your poetry, and I look forward to working with you.

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