Course Title: The Essential Poem  
Course Code: WSP 53  
Instructor: Maya Khosla

Grade Options and Requirements:
- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - All assignments will be graded on a completed / not completed basis.
    - Attendance 20%
    - In-class writings 20%
    - Outline 20%
    - In-class discussions/feedback 20%
    - Revisions 20%
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - A passing grade (for "Credit") = at least 70% of expectations accomplished

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.

Nuts and Bolts:
The outline (below) lists sources that will be used for readings and discussions. Listed materials will anchor our in-class sessions, and may be expanded to include new materials. All will be invited to share work, and to exchange feedback and insights with others, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Workshops do tend to evolve with the momentum of the class discussions, and we may be surprised at the results that emerge.

Outline:
Preparations Before Workshop 1

“We are fortunate as human beings…to recognize and experience ourselves in this welter of terror and beauty…” – Pattiann Rogers, talking about writing in The Dream of the Marsh Wren.

The following materials will prepare us for Workshop 1. These recommended listening and watching materials are optional. All are invited to experience the works presented.

Listening/Watching Material (Optional):
Pattiann Rogers speaks on writing poetry about the sciences: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKCQYIv2XJg

A Preview of Poetry, directed by Chang-Dong Lee (Winner, 2010 Cannes Film Festival Award for Best Screenplay):  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i71mVx4qOA

A preview of Shakespeare in Love (winner of 7 Academy Awards in 1999): 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3Zi2N1Q8-Y

Terry Tempest Williams incorporates poetic language in her speech at Bioneers: A Love That Is Wild: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doh_bCaBtdo

Lucille Clifton reads “Won’t You Celebrate with Me?” 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q_DUk5wU

Philip Levine reads “Belle Isle, 1949” 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKRnlE_z_OM

Writing Assignment (Optional): 
All are encouraged to write a few lines that can be used to shape a poem during class. Please feel free to draw from any of the above works. If it works for you, focus on a single piece, structured so each line intensifies the last. The lines can be presented in any form. All are invited to bring the above lines or a previous poem (or both) to Workshop 1.

Workshop 1: Saturday April 9, 2016

“The fog has settled/around us. A faint redness/where the maple was.” – Haiku by Claire Pratt.

All discussions that could take time, in addition to the allotted period, will be saved for the end of in-class sessions.

Morning Session, 10 am-12 noon
Texts discussed: The Haiku Anthology (edited by Cor Van Den Heuvel) and Poetry of the American West (edited by Alison Hawthorne Deming).

Excerpts from both books will be handed out in class. Our readings and discussions will be based on the power of the haiku form and on poems about the beauty of the American West, and its people. In addition, we will talk about poets whose works have been applied to other genres including music and film.

We will spend the first part of the morning sharing and discussing haiku poems. After a short break, we will be invited to spend about 15 minutes on writing in class. Class participants can
select among the techniques discussed, to develop work of their own.

The remaining time will be spent discussing ways in which poetry and poetic language have been used in other genres. Our discussions will include examples from works by Sherman Alexie and poetry by Joy Harjo.

Afternoon Session, 1-4:00 pm
Journey of the Poem

First hour: The afternoon session will open with a writing session. All are encouraged to build on previously written materials. We will be invited to share our writing in an atmosphere of mutual respect, followed by a short break.

The second part of the afternoon will open with a single sequence from the film Smoke Signals (screenplay by Sherman Alexie), which is an adaptation of his short story “This is what is means to say Phoenix, Arizona” from his book The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. We will also share Joy Harjo’s song, “Fear,” an example of her work in poetry, and music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAYCf2Gdycc

The final hour will be spent on discussions of writing by James Galvin, whose poetic language is a powerful part of his nonfiction book, The Meadow.

The afternoon session will conclude with an invitation to bring new work to Workshop 2.

Preparations Before Workshop 2


“Thousands of fish are moving along in the shallows: a flock, a flight under the weight of the water…” Mary Oliver, Blue Pastures

The following materials will prepare us for Workshop 2. Listening/watching materials and reading materials are all optional. All are invited to bring writing from Workshop 1 to Workshop 2.

Listening/Watching Material (Optional):
A reading from The English Patient, by Michael Ondaatje, and Ondaatje speaking about music:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_uLwvHELNuM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLeD97p9gcQ

A reading by Mary Oliver (Wild Geese)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv_4xmh_WtE
Readings and conversations by Mary Oliver: [https://vimeo.com/11384221](https://vimeo.com/11384221)

**Workshop 2: Saturday April 16, 2015**

All discussions that could take time, in addition to the allotted period, will be saved for the end of in-class sessions.

*Morning Session, 10 am-noon*
Finding Music: Poetry and Prose by Michael Ondaatje and by Mary Oliver

We will spend the first part of the morning session discussing poetry and prose by Michael Ondaatje. Excerpts of his work will be handed out in class.

After a short break, we will be invited to spend time expanding our writing from Workshop 1 into the beginnings of a larger piece. Writers are welcome to use techniques, even particular lines, used by authors who have been discussed.

The remaining time will be spent discussing the poetry and prose of Mary Oliver.

*Afternoon Session, 1-4 pm*
The Power of Unexpected Juxtapositions and Narratives

During the first part of our afternoon, we will focus on discussing poetry that features unusual juxtapositions, including works by Arthur Sze, Brenda Hillman, and Tsering Dhompa. After a short break, all will be invited to write. We will choose among the techniques learned and develop our own writing. We will be invited to share work in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The third part of our afternoon will include discussions of works by Philip Levine, Ellen Bass, and Ruth Schwartz.

We will conclude by considering tools that allow for a closer look at our own work, with the goal of further developing our drafts.