Advanced Poetry Workshop

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.830.003
Advanced Poetry
Mondays 11:00—1:30
Instructor: Matthew Rohrer
mr167@nyu.edu
Office: 311 Lillian Vernon Creative Writing Center,
58 West 10th Street

This course is designed to plunge students head-first into the world of contemporary poetry. Besides workshopping each others' poems, students will read a different book of contemporary poetry each week. We will discuss the book as writers, not literature students; we'll want to figure out what each poet is doing, how he or she does it, and how we can do that. Writing exercises derived from the readings will help us get into the poets' heads. Each week students will write a poem based on or totally ripping off the book assigned for that week. These poems, and the discussion thereof, will help us generate our discussions each week.

This is an advanced course, and students will be expected to do all of the reading, participate in the discussions, and generally contribute towards that elusive thing which is a workshop environment that is constructive and critical and ultimately generative for everyone.

Course Objectives

The goal of the course is for students to engage with the work of their peers and their contemporaries in a critical and hungry manner which will lead to a greater understanding of how their own poetry is working.

Requirements

- The class will be a combination of discussion and workshop. In terms of weekly assignments, you will be required to turn in two poems a week when you are being workshopped (your "real" poem and your poem based on that week’s reading). That means you’ll turn in 6 poems for workshop and 12 poems based on the readings, for a total of 18 poems this semester! Can you handle it?

Your grade will be based on:

- In-class participation, including attendance. The class is a workshop; it’s about the process of working through each others’ poems. This means being an active participant in our discussions and doing the presentations.
• Writing a poem based on the week’s reading, incorporating the following from the reading: some formal concern; some thematic/content concern. These, along with our discussion, will be my evidence that you’ve done the reading for the week. Please come prepared to discuss HOW and WHY you did what you did. Ask yourself: what are the big ideas? The formal concerns? The methods?

• Turning in 1 poem for workshopping each time you’re up. This will probably be every other week.

Photocopies of your workshop poem are due the class before you are to be workshopped. **THIS IS INFLEXIBLE.** No late poems. If we don’t get all the poems for the next week, the next class will be short. And somber. And swirling with unspoken disappointments. Emailing the poems late is a slippery slope and is not acceptable.

THE ONLY EXCEPTION is if you are absent the day your hard copy poem is due to be handed out--- you may email it to the class (via NYUCLASSES or however you want) until 5PM THAT DAY. Otherwise, it’s late, and we won’t workshop it. Unless you have an extremely good excuse with documentation. Like your brain explodes and you have pictures.

• Finally, writing up a short paragraph for each students’ poem to be workshopped. Bring 2 copies of this to class. Please actually type this out, and don’t just write your comments on their poems. If you don’t hand in the copy to me, you don’t get the points for it.

**POINT BREAKDOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance: 20%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page on your colleagues’ poems: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poem based on reading: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poems for workshop: 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation: 20%</td>
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<td>Weighted Equally</td>
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**Should You Drop This Class?**

This is a serious class; I take it seriously and most of your classmates are here to take it seriously too. This is not a required course, and since it is an advanced course, I expect and assume all of you are here because you care about poetry and are up for taking it, and the discussion of it, seriously. Also you will turn in 18 poems this semester. If you aren’t here to do that, this might not be the class for
you, and you’re not going to enjoy it – sitting here while we discuss poetic minutiae, week after week, talking like it’s the most important thing in the world. If you don’t feel that way about it, it’s not too late to switch.

Textbooks

It is your responsibility to get these books, which are available at the NYU bookstore.

- Patricia Lockwood MOTHERLAND FATHERLAND HOMELAND
- Shane McCrae THE ANIMAL TOO BIG TO KILL
- CAConrad BOOK OF FRANK
- Cathy Park Hong ENGINE EMPIRE
- Garrett Caples POWER BALLADS
- Ocean Vuong NIGHT SKY WITH EXIT WOUNDS
- Morgan Parker OTHER PEOPLE'S COMFORT KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT
- Hoa Nguyen AS LONG AS TREES LAST
- Adrian Matejka MIXOLOGY
- Michael Dickman FLIES
- Eduardo C Corral SLOW LIGHTNING
- Noelle Kocot PHANTOM PAINS OF MADNESS

The Workshop

It'll work like this: We'll write out a page for each poem to hand to the poet (and to me) after we're done discussing the poem. During discussion, you can read from your page if you like, but you don’t need to. This is to make sure you have thought out your ideas on the poem’s strengths and weaknesses, and it’s also something the poet can return to later, to digest, and use what’s useful.

I'll divide the class into groups for the workshop so you’ll always know what day your poem is due.

Electronics

Shelley wrote ODE TO THE WEST WIND without electricity. So I’m with Shelley; please turn off your phones, laptops, electronics, etc during class. Seriously. Do not check your phone during class. I won’t do it either.

Office Hours

My office is on the 3rd floor in the back of the Lillian Vernon Creative Writing Center (58 West 10th Street). Office hours are TBA. There’s a sign up sheet on my door. If you can’t make these and need to see me, we can work something out.