ENGLISH 406: Enlarging the Temple / Intermediate Poetry Writing Workshop

Using contemporary models of poetry, including those of John Ashbery, W.S. Merwin, and Jorie Graham, three poets whose work has successfully evolved through numerous forms, students will hopefully engage new poetic strategies and risks in their own work. Critiques will focus on how form and new forms reinforce content. Students will set individual goals and new objectives for their own work. Memorability, imagination, and emotional amplitude will be stressed, and numerous examples from contemporary painting and music will be applied. Several essays on craft and form will also be discussed. Rewriting will play an integral part of this workshop, and revisions of well-known poems also will be discussed. Additionally, we will examine the work of several award-winning, younger poets.

BOOKS:


FRANCE 2 & 3 Pdf

MEAD COMPOSITION BOOK: For Copying Poems.
ENGLISH 406: INTERMEDIATE POETRY WORKSHOP

WEEK 1  DICTION/SYNTAX, SOUND & SENSE: The precise choice of their words & their music.
Clarity, Obscurity  Graham: “San Sepolcro” F2
Readings: Estes:  Keats: “Autumn”
13 Poets: Donnelly / Jennifer / Chad Sweeney
Frost: Figure a poem makes
“Poetry & Memorability” Essay

Greenstreet: “Deer” Merwin: Selected FRANCE 2
WORKSHOP Kasischke : 2 poems Merwin:”Passage”
5 Word EXERCISE Due / Place Exercise
Merwin: “How We Are Spared”

WEEK 3  FREE & FORMAL VERSE/ PROSE POEMS
Rhythm /Meter  Readings: Donnelly: “Clair del Lune”
Wallace: Measuring the Line Pull & Drag Maria Hummel
Selected Readings: Merwin: F2
Sze: “Ox-Head Dot” Phillips: Terra Incognita
Gander, “Time and the Hour” WORKSHOP
Place Exercise Due / Begin Sonnet/Pantoum/Villanelle

WEEK 4  SYNESTHESIA/ TEXTURE/ ILLUMINATION:
Lighting the poem from the inside. Ruefle: “Last Supper”
Graham: “Evening Prayer” “Salmon” F3 Merwin:
“Substance” Sweeney: “Little Wet Monster”
WORKSHOP
“A Romp through Ruefleland” Mark Irwin Essay

WEEK 5  METAPHOR/ IMAGINATION
Rimbaud: “Drunken Boat” Ashbery: “North Farm” F3
“Some Trees” Merwin: “The Animals,” “Passage” Larkin:
“High Windows” Amichai: “The Diameter of the Bomb”
St. John: “Elegy” F3 Matthew Dickman: “King”
Bishop: “First Death Nova Scotia” Dickinson: Selected
Stevens: “Snowman,” “Large Red Man Reading”
WORKSHOP 5 IDEA EXERCISE DUE
WEEK 6  **METAPHOR/ CONTENT / SYMBOL & MYTH**  
Yeats, Eliot, Merwin, Levine: “They Feed, They Lion”  
St. John: “Iris” Merwin: “Place” Carl Philips “Almost”  
Readings: Xerox **WORKSHOP** Tracy K. Smith  
Metaphor: Poem as Concept: Ruefle: Selected  
Albert Goldbarth “Stonehenge” F3 James Tate: Selected  
RANGE IN POETRY  **Metaphor as Continual Action**  
Rimbaud: “The Drunken Boat”

WEEK 7  **POETRY & ORIGINALITY**

Merwin: Selected; Ashbery: Selected; Ruefle Selected  
**Translation Exercise**  **Form Exercise Due**  
Carson: Selected  
**Ten-Minute Presentation:** Original Poem  
Contemporary Poet

WEEK 8  **LANGUAGE & POETRY/ Diction Again**  
Lydia Davis: “A Mown Lawn” Atsuro Riley: “Nullaby”  
Jorie Graham: *The End of Beauty* Revell: “Lucy”  
**Discussion:** *Prose or Lyric / Improvisation*  
Estes: “I Want to Talk about You”

WEEK 9  **TONE & GESTURE IN POETRY**  
Tate: “Distance from Loved Ones” Louise Gluck: Selected  
Tate: “Land of Little Sticks” Selected Xerox Ruefle  
Greenstreet, Gander, Kasischke, Estes  
**WORKSHOP** Peter Gizzi/Poems  
**Arthur Sze Reading/ Required March 22**

WEEK 10  **NARRATIVE/ WHAT TO LEAVE OUT**  
**PERSPECTIVE/ Point of View** Wojahn  
**DISCURSIVENESS IN POETRY:** Hass: “Meditation”  
Wylner: “The Girl with Bees in Her Hair”  
Sze: “Compass Rose” Larry Levis:”Winter Stars”  
Hass: “Meditation at Lagunitas”  
**Counterpoint Exercise / 3 Stories Exercise**
WEEK 11 **MYSTERY IN POETRY / CLARITY**
Selected Readings: Graham: *End of Beauty, Materialism*
Ashbery: Selected Wojahn: “Mystery Train” Merwin
Ruefle: *Selected “A Romp through Ruefleland”*

WEEK 12 **MOBILE VS. STATIC IMAGERY**
Exercise: Electronic/Mobile Image Poem/ White Out/Distortion Prose poem Due / Submit with Chapbook
Work that reflects a High Tech Culture
*Electronic Age & Impact on Poetry*
Jorie Graham: “Swarm” F2

WEEK 13 **VISION IN POETRY**
RILKE, Duino Elegies KINNELL: Things I Tell No One
WRIGHT: Southern Cross, Dickinson: “I felt a funeral”
Ashbery, Graham, Merwin: Selected Poems
LARKIN: High Windows F3 RIMBAUD: Drunken Boat
Blake, Stevens WORKSHOP Merwin

WEEK 14 **REVISION: LEAPS & CARPENTRY**
*Common Ways a Poem Might Fail*
Narrative, Context, Language, Diction, Obscurity, Clarity
*Group Discussion*

WEEK 15 **REVIEW** PORTFOLIO DUE

WEEK 16 **WORKSHOP**

**EXPECTATIONS:**

1. Everyone will be expected to produce at least 5 finished poems with attendant revisions.
2. Everyone will be expected to complete at least 4 of the 5 assigned exercises. (2 of these may count toward the 5 finished poems)
3. Anyone missing more than 2 classes (unexcused) will no longer be enrolled.
4. Everyone will be expected to make written comments on the poems work-shopped & to be well prepared for the discussions.(See Guidelines)
5. Everyone will hand in a portfolio of completed poems, exercises & notebook with Xerox handouts.
POETRY CRITIQUE GUIDELINES

In addition to class discussions and assignments, written critiques of student poems should be completed prior to workshops. Criticisms should ask:

1. Did the form of the poem reinforce the poem’s content?

2. Was the poem beautiful, or purposefully not beautiful? Specifically how?

3. Did the poem use language in an original, fresh sense that heightened content?

4. Was the poem memorable? Why? How?

5. Was the point of view (or the perspective) of the subject matter compelling?

6. Were you moved by the poem?

7. Did the poem seem true, sincere? What does that mean?

8. How would you improve the poem?

9. Did the poem achieve a form of “separation” in voice, madness, or music?

10. Did the poem create tension or instill a great sense of peace through the relationship of the words to one another?

11. What is art?
Appendix:

4 remember Monica Vitti saying, I can’t watch the sea for a long time or what’s happening on land doesn’t interest me anymore

“I’m really trying to make people’s minds move, you know, which is not something they’re naturally inclined to do,” she told me. “We have a kind of inertia, sitting and listening. But it’s really important to get somehow into the mind and make it move somewhere it has never moved before. That happens partly because the material is mysterious or unknown but mostly because of the way you push the material around from word to word in a sentence. And it’s that that I’m more interested in doing, generally, than mystifying by having unexpected content or bizarre forms. It’s more like: Given whatever material we’re going to talk about, and we all know what it is, how can we move within it in a way we’ve never moved before, mentally? That seems like the most exciting thing to do with your head. I think it’s a weakness to fall back into merely mystifying the audience, which anybody can do. You know, throw in a bit of Hegel. Who knows what that means? But to actually take a piece of Hegel and move it around in a way that shows you something about Hegel is a satisfying challenge.”

ac
**Town of Finding Out About the Love of God**

I had made a mistake.
Before this day.
Now my suitcase is ready.
Two hardboiled eggs.
For the journey are stored.
In places where.
My eyes were.
Like a current.
Carrying a twig.
The sobbing made me.
Audible to you.  

(Carson 102)

**Terra Incognita**

I plugged my poem into a manhole cover
That flamed into the first guitar,
Jarred the asphalt and tar to ash,
And made from where there once was
Ground a sound instead to stand on.

Rowan Ricardo Phillips
Chad Sweeney

**Little Wet Monster**

_for our unborn son_

The cornfield winds its halo darkly
Come home my little wet monster

Time in the copper mine, time in the copper
Come darkling soon come woe my monster

Distance shines in the ice like a flower
Come early little bornling

Before the furlight’s gone from going
Come rowing soon, come wet my monster

Before the bloodtrees bramble over
Come low my rainweed monster

Come antler through the gates my thingling
Your grapes contain the houses

Unmask the stones my darkling grief
Come whole my homeward early

You alone devour the night
Gather in your teeth, my zero

You devour the night’s holy sound
Come home my little wet monster
LARRY LEVIS

Winter Stars

My father once broke a man’s hand
Over the exhaust pipe of a John Deere tractor. The man,
Ruben Vasquez, wanted to kill his own father
With a sharpened fruit knife, and he held
The curved tip of it, lightly, between his first
Two fingers, so it could slash
Horizontally, & with surprising grace,
Across a throat. It was like a glinting beak in a hand,
And, for a moment, the light held still
On those vines. When it was over,
My father simply went in & ate lunch, & then, as always,
Lay alone in the dark, listening to music.
He never mentioned it.

I never understood how anyone could risk his life,
Then listen to Vivaldi.

Sometimes, I go out into this yard at night,
And stare through the wet branches of an oak
In winter, & realize I am looking at the stars
Again. A thin haze of them, shining
And persisting.

It used to make me feel lighter, looking up at them.
In California, that light was closer.
In a California no one will ever see again,
My father is beginning to die. Something
Inside him is slowly taking back
Every word it ever gave him.
Now, if we try to talk, I watch my father
Search for a lost syllable as if it might
Solve everything, & though he can’t remember, now,
The word for it, he is ashamed…
If you can think of the mind as a place continually
Visited, a whole city placed behind
The eyes, & shining, I can imagine, now, its end—
As when the lights go off, one by one,
In a hotel at night, until at last
All of the travelers will be asleep, or until
Even the thin glow from the lobby is a kind
Of sleep; & while the woman behind the desk
Is applying more lacquer to her nails,
You can almost believe that elevator,
As it ascends, must open upon starlight.

I stand out on the street, & do not go in.
That was our agreement, at my birth.

And for years I believed
That what went unsaid between us became empty,
And pure, like starlight, & that it persisted.

I got it all wrong.
I wound up believing in words the way a scientist
Believes in carbon, after death.

Tonight, I’m talking to you, father, although
It is quiet here in the Midwest, where a small wind,
The size of a wrist, wakes the cold again—
Which may be all that’s left of you & me.

When I left home at seventeen, I left for good.

That pale haze of stars goes on & on,
Like laughter that has found a final, silent shape
On a black sky. It means everything
It cannot say. Look, it’s empty out there, & cold.
Cold enough to reconcile
Even a father, even a son. ❄
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards (see https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct (at http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct). Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity (see http://equity.usc.edu) or to the Department of Public Safety (see http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety whole USC community.

Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support (see http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm), and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources (see sarc@usc.edu).

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students (see http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali). The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations (see http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology (see http://emergency.usc.edu/).