

## **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:**

W.S. Merwin. *The Essential W.S. Merwin*. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2017. \$18.00     **Paperback** ISBN-13: 978-1556592188    New or used

Arthur Sze: *Compass Rose*. Copper Canyon Press, 2014. Paper, \$16.00.  
ISBN:978-1556-594670    (new or used paper)

Mary Ruefle; *Selected Poems*. Wave Books, 2013.  
ISBN: 978-1-933517-56-8    (Paper/new or used)

*13 Younger Contemporary American Poets*. Mark Irwin, ed. Denver: Proem Press, 2010.  
ISBN: 978-0-978-5566-5-5    **Available from Instructor /Xerox**

### **FRANCE 2 & 3 Pdf**

MEAD COMPOSITION BOOK: For Copying Poems.

Mark Irwin, PhD / Taper 415 Office: W 12:00-2 pm TH:4-4:30pm  
 University of Southern California mirwin@usc.edu Spring 2018

**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**
- WEEK 2      **IMAGE/LINE**      Readings: Graham: "San Sepolcro," "The Salmon," Hillman: "Till It Finishes ..."  
 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"  
 Levis: "Winter Stars" Simmerman: "A Child's Grave"  
 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**  
 James Schuyler: “Korean Mums” **T.Sayers Ellis: “Or,”**  
 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 Zerox Ruefle  
 Greenstreet, Gander, Kasischke, Estes  
**WORKSHOP**                                  Peter Gizzi/Poems  
**Arthur Sze Reading/ Required March 22**
- WEEK 10     **NARATIVE/ 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.”

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### **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](mailto: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](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/>).