**USC** Dornsife

College

Department of English

**English 172g: The Art of Poetry (32606; LECTURE VIA ZOOM; SECTION FACE-TO-FACE)**

**Units: 4/Fall 2021**

**Lecture: M/W 2-3:20 pm/ZOOM**

**Professor Chris Freeman (Taper 410; office hours 11-12:30 MW & by appt. or Zoom); TAs: Mondays 4 (CPA 107) & 5pm (THH 115), Sara Fetherolf (fetherol@usc.edu); Tuesdays 11 (WPH 203) & noon (THH 217): Austen Leah Rose (alrosenf@usc.edu); Wednesdays noon (THH 207) and 1pm (THH 213): Piotr Florczyk (florczyk@usc.edu)**

“Memory is each human being’s poet-in-residence.”—Stanley Kunitz

“I want the poem to ask something and, at its best moments, I want the question to remain unanswered. I want it to be clear that answering the question is the reader’s part in an implicit author-reader pact.”—Mary Oliver

“You cannot play for safety and make art.”—Lucille Clifton

 “There’s an intimacy in poetry that can make one feel as though there is just one listener out there, and the voice of the poem is speaking directly to that listener. That kind of intimacy that makes you feel as if you are inhabiting the experience of someone else. Because it’s very quiet…, it’s a space that allows for the connection between a reader or a listener, and a writer that touches not just the intellect, but the heart.”—Natasha Trethewey on writing poetry

**ABOUT THE COURSE**

“The Art of Poetry” will explore the craft of poetry, the work of poetry, the beauty of poetry, and the complexity of poetry. We will read about the mechanics and the uses of poetry, and we will write our own poems—when we get inside the forms, we understand them differently. This course will use one recent anthology of poetry as the fundamental textbook; it will provide us the foundational material we need to explore further and deeper the work of individual poets, focusing especially on the American poets Mary Oliver (1935-2019) and Lucille Clifton (1936-2010).

***Students will be expected to attend lecture and section every week and to participate actively in both****.* We will be, in effect, a large poetry community. In section, you’ll work on poetry closely with your TA; that work will draw from and contribute to our discussions in lecture, and lecture will be as much of a full discussion as possible. We care about your reactions and responses to the poetry we will be reading and discussing: this is the material of our course.

***NOTE: You are expected to attend and to engage with the lectures and the discussion sections fully. However, if you are ill, COVID or otherwise, DO NOT ATTEND section face-to-face; notify your TA and me via email and we will make a breakout room for you and your TA at lecture (at the end of class) so that you can work out a plan for keeping up with class (perhaps dialing in and being on speaker, or some other method.)***

Your work will include reading, thinking about, and discussing poetry and its challenges and rewards; you will also write a few essays and a few poems, some of which you’ll share with lecture and/or section. Active engagement and participation are the keys to your success in this class.

**NOTE ON ZOOM: PLEASE PLAN TO HAVE YOUR CAMERA AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE DURING LECTURE. IT CAN BE DISTRACTING TO SEE BLACK SCREENS; FEEL FREE TO USE A BACKGROUND OF YOUR CHOICE FOR PRIVACY REASONS. PLEASE SPEAK TO THE PROFESSOR AND YOUR TA IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO DO THIS AND IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND SYNCHRONOUSLY. ALL LECTURE RECORDINGS WILL BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD, OF COURSE. If you miss lecture, watch the recording and email your TA with a couple of paragraphs in response.**

This general education course will help you understand and appreciate poetry and will remind you of the pleasures inherent in the art of poetry. We will do all we can to make this class a conversation about poetry, reading, and writing. Our job is to get you more interested in what poetry is and what it does; your job, in the words of the contemporary American writer Mary Oliver, is “to pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.” I will ask for your engagement; you need to read our material, to think about it, and to come to lecture prepared to discuss it, to read it out loud, and to try to interpret it. We don’t “read into” poetry; we read out from it.

In your discussion sections, your instructors will elaborate on lecture material, and they will also pursue some of their own passions about poetry. Essentially, the sections are “advanced” poetry and will function as a sort of workshop, while the lecture is “introduction and intermediate” poetry; the simultaneity of these experiences should keep you challenged and inspired from day one. Poetry is beautiful; it can be disturbing and challenging; it is almost always instructive. This course will help you understand it more fully and with more depth and, maybe, passion

***To reiterate: You are expected to attend and to engage with the lectures and the discussion sections fully.***

**Hot Seat**: This structure will facilitate the atmosphere of a seminar, instead of a large lecture course. At every lecture beginning week three, one section will be designated at that day’s HOT SEAT. Everyone in the hot seat is on the spot: you are expected to volunteer to read out loud, to make comments, and to ask questions; everyone else may also participate, but they get recognized AFTER the hot seat students have their turn/say. Your TA will take roll of the hot seat section; if you miss TWICE, you forfeit all credit for your lecture class participation.

**A NOTE ON CONDUCT/PROFESSIONALISM**: You are expected to attend lecture—in the sense of being on camera in our zoom room and in the sense of engaging, listening, and participating—and section. Respect and attend to people’s responses to the poems and contribute your own. ***Lean in; engage; respond; be a good participant.***

**ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES/GRADING**

Short response paper/introduce yourself (750 words; week three): 10%

Essay One (1000-1200 words; due week six or seven): 25%

Essay Two (1200-1500 words; due week twelve or thirteen): 25%

**Final exam** (due Friday December 10th by 4pm PT to your section leader): 30%

**Participation and Attendance**: 10% (5% lecture; 5% section: if you miss TWO ‘hot seat’ days, you forfeit lecture percentage; if you miss more than two section meetings, you forfeit that percentage).

**Poetry Event:** We will recommend events during the semester, most of which will be online; you will attend and write a response of 500-750 words and submit it to your TA within ONE WEEK of the event; completion of this activity will exempt you from part of your final exam assignment.

**Pass-No Pass**: you must maintain C-level work or above to achieve “Pass”

Grading: A: 93-100; A-: 92-89; B+: 88-86; B: 85-83; B-: 82-79; C+: 78-73, etc.

**TEXTS**

\*The anthology: *Poetry: A Writers’ Guide and Anthology* (Bloomsbury, 2018), Edited by Amorak Huey & W. Todd Kaneko (order paperback or ebook version)

\*Mary Oliver, *Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*. (Penguin, 2017; order ebook or hard copy)

\*Lucille Clifton, *How to Carry Water* (BOA editions, 2020): ebook or hard copy

\*Poetry packet for section (TA will provide this via Blackboard)

A note on how we will use these books: we will generally be using the anthology text on MONDAYS and the Mary Oliver and Lucille Clifton books on Wednesdays; in section, you’ll be using the anthology to help you work with Oliver, Clifton, and other poets. The anthology readings are outlined in the schedule below; the final section of the book is a collection of poems, all of which are referenced within the text of the book. **When you are doing your homework, you should read the entire section and note which poems are referenced; then, you should read (at least twice) each referenced poem for our discussion.** In terms of Oliver’s *Devotions*, it is a collected poems volume, arranged from most recent to oldest. We will therefore work with it in reverse. Using Post-It notes or something similar, use the table of contents to mark where each individual book begins and read for section and Wednesday lecture based on the schedule below. This is easier than it sounds, but please familiarize yourselves with both of those texts early on.

**SCHEDULE (subject to revision as pacing of the course necessitates)**

Week One: (8/23 & 25): introduction to course and structure; understanding how to use the books and the format of lecture/section; Seamus Heaney; for Wednesday, in Huey, read the preface and chapter 1, sections 1 &2; read *New Yorker* essay on Mary Oliver (Blackboard); from “No Voyage” in *Devotions*, read “No Voyage” and “Swimming Lesson”

Week Two: (8/30 & 9/1): M: Huey, chapter 1, sections 3-5; Angelou from Blackboard; W: Oliver, From “River Styx”: “Going to Walden” and “Night Flight” and From “Twelve Moons”: “Entering the Kingdom”; “Beaver Moon—The Suicide of a Friend; Gorman from Blackboard; discuss “introduce yourself” essay in section

Week Three (no class on Labor Day & 9/8): Hot Seat W: Sara 4pm; Huey, chapter 2, section 6 and 7 ABC (Ambiguity; Beginnings; Clarity; Concision; Contradiction); Oliver, From “Three Rivers”: “At Blackwater Pond”; from “American Primitive”: “Humpbacks” and “In Blackwater Woods”; **getting to know you essay due to your TA this week**

Week Four (9/13 & 9/15): M: Hot Seat: Sara 5pm; Huey: 2.7 DE (Defamiliarization; Diction; Doorways; Endings; Explorations); W: Hot Seat: Austen 11am; Oliver, “New & Selected Poems”: “The Sun”; “When Death Comes”; “Picking Blueberries”

Week Five (9/20 & 22): M: Hot Seat: Austen noon; Huey: 2. 7 FGI (Form; Gaze; Gravity & Lightness; Image; Inventory) and section 3.8 (The Poetry Workshop) and Appendix A (Poetry Experiments); W: Hot Seat: Piotr noon; Mary Oliver, from “White Pine”: “May”; “Yes! No!”; “Morning Glories”; from “Why I Wake Early”: “Am I Not Among the Early Risers?”; **ESSAY ONE prompts in section**

Week Six (9/27 & 9/29): M: visit from Kaneko and Huey by Zoom! Hot Seat: Piotr 1pm; read Huey: 2.7 LM (Language; Lines; Lyric; Metaphor; Mood; Movement; Music) and 3.9 (Revision); from Mary Oliver, from “Long Life”: “Just as the Calendar Began to Say Summer”; title poem from “Why I Wake Early”; Wednesday: **TA Craft Talk by Piotr;** Hot Seat: Austen noon

Week Seven (10/4 & 10/6): M: Hot Seat: Piotr 1pm; Huey: 2.7 NO (Narrative; Observation and Interpretation); Mary Oliver, from “Thirst”: “Doesn’t Every Poet Write a Poem about Unrequited Love” and “Thirst”; and excerpts from “Blue Horses”; Wednesday: **TA Craft Talk by Austen**; Hot Seat: Piotr noon; **Essay One due to your TA this week (1000-1200 words)**

Week Eight (10/11 & 13): Monday: Sara 4pm; Huey: 2.7 PQ (Point of View; Precision; Punctuation; Questioning); W: **TA Craft Talk by Sara;** Hot Seat: Austen 11

Week Nine (10/18 & 20): M: Hot Seat: Sara 4; Huey: 2.7 R (Repetition; Rhythm) and 3.10 (Proceed with Caution); W: Hot Seat: Sara 5pm; begin Clifton (foreword and pp 3-33); intro essay from “Collected Works of Lucille Clifton” (on Blackboard) and Toni Morrison on Clifton (B’board)

Week Ten (10/25 & 27): M: Hot Seat: Austen noon; Huey: 2.7 S (Showing and Telling; Speaker); W: Hot Seat: Piotr noon; Clifton, 34-84

Week Eleven (11/1 & 3): M: Hot Seat: Piotr 1pm; Huey, 2.7 T (Titles); W: Hot Seat: Sara 5pm; Clifton, 85-130; **essay prompts in section this week**

Week Twelve (11/8 & 10): M: Hot Seat: Sara 4pm; Huey, 2.7 V (Value; Voice); W: Hot Seat: Austen noon; Clifton, 131-62; **Essay due (1200-1500 words) this week or next**

Week Thirteen (11/15 & 17): M: Austen 11am; Huey, 2.7 W (Work) and wrap up the anthology; W: Hot Seat: Piotr 1pm; Clifton, 163-97; final exam prompts given this week

Week Fourteen (11/22): M: Piotr both; Clifton, 199-218; poetry event response due this week or before; no class 11/24: Thanksgiving break

Week Fifteen (11/29 & 12/1): M: Hot Seat: Sara both; Clifton, 219-38; W: Hot Seat: Austen both; finish Clifton; wrap up discussion; online evaluations

**FINAL EXAM due December 10th by 4pm PT to your TA**

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems Academic Conduct**

***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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus*and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university.  You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity*/*Title IX Office* [http://equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu/) and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/). This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage [http://sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu/) fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

## 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*[http://ali.usc.edu](http://ali.usc.edu/), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*[http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information*[http://emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu/)will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Support Systems:**

* *Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)
* *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)
* *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*  
  Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/)
* *Sexual Assault Resource Center*For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu/)
* *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu/)
* *Bias Assessment Response and Support*Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/)
* *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/)
* *Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/)
* *Diversity at USC*Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu/)
* *USC Emergency Information*Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)
* *USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000*  
  24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/)

Dornsife provides a full range of mental health resources, which can be found at <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>

***COVID S​afety***

***Students are expected to comply with all aspects of USC’s COVID-19 policy. Failure to do so may result in removal from the class and referral to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.***

**Definition of Excellence in Teaching**

**USC Department of English**

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students’ responses. We expect our students to:

* understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
* organize and interpret evidence;
* feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
* understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
* grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
* see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
* attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
* assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
* adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC’s corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the “USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching.”

Approved September 18, 2018

Undergraduate Studies Committee

Department of English