ENGLISH 304: “Rag and Boneshop of the Heart”
INTRO TO POETRY WRITING

MEAD COMPOSITION BOOK: for copying poems
FRANCE 2 & FRANCE3 Pdfs =F2 F3

WEEK 1  **DICTION/SYNTAX:** The precise choice of their words &
their music. Sweeney: “Little Wet Monster”  
Graham: “San Sepolcro” “I Watched a Snake” Collins: 
“What Intro to Poetry”  
Collins: “Till it Finishes What it Does”  
**What to write About? Getting Started.**  
**Inspiration** Free writing/notebooks  
**Photo/Ekphrastic/Memory** Intro to line & image in poetry.  
Creeley: Copy poem  
**Versification Exercise** Frost: Figure a poem makes  
Graham: V: “Over & Over Stitch,” “Opulence”

WEEK 2  **IMAGE/LINE** WW: C1, 12 Readings: Creeley: “I Know a Man”  
Graham: Selected & “The Salmon”  
Merwin Poems F2 Birdlong: “un(dead)”  
Yeats: “Sailing to Byzantium” Kasischke: 2 Poems  
**WORKSHOP** Estes: “Note”  
5 word exercise Due.  
**What to Put in Your Poem?**

WEEK 3  **FREE & FORMAL VERSE/ PROSE POETRY**  
Rhythm & Meter  
**WORKSHOP**  
Stafford: “Traveling Through the Dark”  
Poetry Foundation Website & Lowell: “For Union Dead”  
Wallace: Measuring the Line F2  
Pull & Drag W.C. Williams  
Sze: “Ox Head Dot” F3

WEEK 4  **SOUND & SENSE:** WW 7  
Graham: “Opulence”  
Selected Readings: Ammons, Levine: “They Feed, They Lion”  
Dylan Thomas  
**WORKSHOP** Gary Snyder Kay Ryan  
Angie Estes & continue Seuss: *franksonnets*
WEEK 5  SYNESTHESIA/ TEXTURE/ ILLUMINATION:
Lighting the poem from the inside. Dickinson: Selected
Graham Kleinzahler, Mary Oliver WW p.33 Graham
One Sentence Exercise Due  WORKSHOP Dickman
Poems F2 / CD Wright Syllabus
franksonnets p. 24

WEEK 6  METAPHOR/ CONTENT: That Essential Something
WW: C 2 Readings: Merwin: “Tree” Larkin, Rueflle
Dickinson, Ashbery: F2 Stafford, Notley: FRANCE3
Hass: “Meditation at Lagunitas” Milosz: “Encounter”
Carson poems Tate: “Distance from Loved Ones”
WORKSHOP  Graham: FRANCE3
Lowell: “For the Union Dead”
Pantoum/Sonnet exercise due
“Post-Colonial Lovesong” Syllabus

WEEK 7  METAPHOR/ CONTENT / SYMBOL & MYTH
WW: C3 Yeats, Eliot, Merwin, Levine, St. John:
“Elegy” F2 “Iris,” Tate: “Distance Loved Ones” F2
Rueflle: “Bunny” F2 5 IDEA EXERCISE Due WORKSHOP
Valentine: “Door in the Mountain” Kasischke poems
RANGE IN POETRY  Milosz poems “Esse” F3
Yeats: “Sailing to Byzantium”

WEEK 8  TONE & GESTURE IN POETRY/ Perception
Dramatic Monologue  Berryman & Plath Poems
Readings: St. John, Gluck, Frank O’Hara,
Schuyler: “Korean Mums” Tate: “Land of Little Sticks”
“Good Time Jesus” Dickman: “King” F2 Rueflle poems
WORKSHOP “Romp Through Rueflleland Essay”

WEEK 9  PERSPECTIVE/ POINT OF VIEW
Readings: Graham: “History” Wilner: “Girl with Bees in
her Hair” F3 Tate: Selected Laura Kasischke poems
Counterpoint Exercise: relating 3 stories Estes: “Note”
Syllabus  Rick Barot Poems (Handout)

WEEK 10  NARRATIVE/ WHAT TO LEAVE OUT
DISCURSIVENESS IN POETRY: Hass: “Meditation
At Lagunitas” Poetry Foundation Website
Larry Levis: “Winter Stars” Syllabus Milosz: “Esse” F3
franksonnets
WEEK 11  EMOTIONAL AMPLITUDE / LOVING WORDS  
WORKSHOP Graham Ekphrastic Exercise franksonnets

WEEK 12  MYSTERY IN POETRY  

WEEK 13  WORKSHOP  Revision Exercise  
Revisions of other poets Final Revisions Due Merwin: “Epitaph” Revision Xerox

WEEK 14  REVISION: LEAPS & CARPENTRY  
Drafts: Yeats, Merwin, Graham: Leaping in Poetry Kasischke: “O Elegant Giant”

WEEK 15  WORKSHOP  REVIEW  
PORTFOLIO DUE

RULES:  

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 6 assigned exercises. Two of these may count toward your final 5 finished poems. 
3. Anyone missing more than 2 classes, unexcused, will no longer be enrolled. 2 lates = 1 absence. 
4. Everyone will be expected to make written comments on the poems work-shopped & to be well prepared for the discussions.
Grading Breakdown

You will be graded on the technical and overall artistic quality of your poems, and also on your success at revising them. **50%**

You will also be graded on the quality of your writing exercises, which may compose part of your final 5 finished poems, all of which will be present in **your final portfolio**, which will be graded for its completeness. **35%**

Class participation will also be considered and you will be graded on the critical comments made on other poems This is a creative class so the grading criteria are different from regular classes. Each participant will be asked to present one contemporary poem of choice, and then to argue for its passion, originality, and evocative use of language. **15%**
Introduction to Poetry

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,
or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.
But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Billy Collins
Everything Good between Men and Women
BY C. D. WRIGHT

has been written in mud and butter
and barbecue sauce. The walls and
the floors used to be gorgeous.
The socks off-white and a near match.
The quince with fire blight
but we get two pints of jelly
in the end. Long walks strengthen
the back. You with a fever blister
and myself with a sty. Eyes
have we and we are forever prey
to each other’s teeth. The torrents
go over us. Thunder has not harmed
anyone we know. The river coursing
through us is dirty and deep. The left
hand protects the rhythm. Watch
your head. No fires should be
unattended. Especially when wind. Each
receives a free swiss army knife.
The first few tongues are clearly
preparatory. The impression
made by yours I carry to my grave. It is
just so sad so creepy so beautiful.
Bless it. We have so little time
to learn, so much... The river
courses dirty and deep. Cover the lettuce.
Call it a night. O soul. Flow on. Instead.

(un)dead

Does anyone else, while they’re watching
the video of the cop shooting the black
man/boy/person on the internet

pause the video right before it ends?
I do—It doesn’t matter if it’s the one
with Tamir or Oscar.

Sometimes, right before it gets to the end
I’ll stop it, then hit rewind—It’s always bizarre
witnessing the body rise and the cop

retreat, climb back into their car
before fleeing in reverse. Likewise, it is
strangely beautiful to see the snow

(un)red as the bullet exits the (un)dead
body and return into the barrel’s black,
the boy/man/person now standing,

walking. Does anyone else laugh
or manage a mischievous smile
imagining the look on death’s face?

Bryan Byrdlong

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
Extract from Postcolonial Love Poem

I've been taught bloodstones can cure a snakebite,
Can stop the bleeding – most people forgot this
when the war ended. The war ended
depending on which war you mean: those we started,
before those, millennia ago and onward,
those which started me, which I lost and won –
these ever-blooming wounds.
I was built by wage. So I wage love and worse –
always another campaign to march across
a desert night for the cannon flash of your pale skin
settling in a silver lagoon of smoke at your breast.
I dismount my dark horse, bend to you there, deliver you
The hard pull of all my thirsts –
I learned Drink in a country of drought.
We pleasure to hurt, leave marks
The size of stones – each a cabochon polished
by our mouths. I, your lapidary, your lapidary wheel
turning – green mottled red –
the jaspers of our desires.
There are wildflowers in my desert
which take up to twenty years to bloom.
The seeds sleep like geodes beneath hot feldspar sand
until a flash flood bolts the arroyo, lifting them
in its copper current, opens them with memory –
they remember what their god whispered
into their ribs: *Wake up and ache for your life.*
*America faces an end*

Natalie Diaz
The Bunny Gives Us a Lesson in Eternity

We are a sad people, without hats.
The history of our nation is tragically benign.
We like to watch the rabbits screwing in the graveyard.
We are fond of the little bunny with the bent ear
who stands alone in the moonlight
reading what little text there is on the graves.
He looks quite desirable like that.
He looks like the center of the universe.
Look how his mouth moves mouthing the words
while the others are busy making more of him.
Soon the more will ask of him to write their love
letters and he will oblige, using the language
of our ancestors, those poor clouds in the ground,
beloved by us who have been standing here for hours,
a proud people after all.

--(Mary Ruefle 69)
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.
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?
**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.  

(Anne Carson 102)

**Passage**

In autumn in this same life  
I was leaving a capital  
where an old animal  
captured in its youth  
one that in the wild  
would never have reached such an age  
was watching the sun set  
over nameless  
unapproachable trees  
and it is spring

--W.S. Merwin
Note

They wrote to say they’d found my mother wondering in the garage—like entering the ethereal sphere,
I thought: drawing near to its desire, so deeply is our intellect immersed that memory
cannot follow after it, as if desire were a fugitive dye made from the blue stars of the forget-me-not and hell could be defined as that which cannot be forgotten, the damned condemned to go on like Paolo and Francesca in desire but unable to recognize what could move them so

* * *

When I was a child, my mittens were attached to each other, their cord running under my coat from hand to hand like the blue veins in the clear plastic Invisible Man I assembled in the basement, and after he left assisted living, my friend’s father kept asking, What if my mother dies again? What, I thought, if she slips off like a glove

* * *

In paradise,
Dante says, we will have only a memory of having a memory, now lost like the photograph of my mother’s great
grandfather printed from a negative made
from a photograph of a negative, which we
Xeroed for keeps: it’s the same old
story of the Perseids, their gray hair
streaking the sky the way ethereal
is streaked by real

*     *     *

Like denizens
of the cadenza, cicadas scratching
their cicatrices, a star shines until day
begins to lighten the sky, the shining
gone through the star remains, not
shining but not yet gone, still
moving across the heavens right up
to the moment the sky turns
sky blue.  

Angie Estes
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:
The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The

The
new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

**Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EOO-TIX)** - (213) 740-5086
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)** - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

**USC Campus Support and Intervention** - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** - (213) 740-2101
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency** - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

**USC Department of Public Safety** - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Office of the Ombuds** - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323)-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

**Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice** - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.