

ENGLISH 465: ADVANCED POETRY WRITING, Online, Spring 2016, Prof. Maya Zeller:
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"My allegiance to poetry, to art, is greater than my allegiance to knowledge and intelligence, and that stance is harder and harder to maintain in today's world, because knowledge and intelligence form the corporate umbrella (the academy) that shelters and protects poetry in a culture that cares about other things. On the other hand, the evening news tells us a corporation is not interested in protecting anything but itself. This is best contemplated by the younger generation, on whom it will have the greatest impact."

-Mary Ruefle, "Introduction," *Madness, Rack, & Honey*, 2013.

Required Texts:

Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town*

Diane Lockward, *The Crafty Poet: A Portable Workshop*

[Robert Hass, "One Body: Some Notes on Form" \(via link\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Mary Ruefle, "Madness, Rack, & Honey" (see pdf in "files")

At least two books or a comprehensive selected works volume by a "mentor" poet of your choice, (order as soon as you decide, so you have time to read; consult with me first—see calendar below & suggestions during first two weeks); and one other book by a literary descendant, ancestor, or cousin of this poet. (For a total of at least three books of your own choosing.)

Your poems & exercises; your peers' poems & exercises; links to other digital texts
Canvas platform & Wordpress blog: [advancedpoetrywritingspring2016 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Course Description:

Poets! Welcome to Advanced Poetry Writing. If you're reading this, you are, quite frankly, part of a lovely group of humans who believes that the depth of our world is better understood through the delicate nuances of language. I'm genuinely pleased you're in this class.

Like Poetry Writing (365), this course (465) focuses on improving poetic craft for each of you—form, voice, style, etc.—all the elements studied in introductory texts like *Poet's Companion* (if you were in my 365, you may want to reference that text, so hang onto it). Again, we'll look to strong models, read critical and aesthetic statements, listen to poets read their own and others' work, practice new exercises/ prompts, offer one another supportive and critical feedback, and revise. And revise again. And then again. This term, though, you'll get a chance to dive more deeply into individual interests, each choosing a mentor poet to study closely, also reaching back to that poet's historical influences, forward and possibly laterally into their scope of contemporary influence (perhaps outside of the poetry genre), and so allow that to inform your understanding of your "poetry family."

To deepen our poetics cognizance, we'll spend time on the following practices. These assignments will unfold as the quarter progresses, and you'll revise many of them for your final portfolio.

EXPLICATION:

One way to understand a poem--yours', your peers', those of the poets you study--is to complete an explication, looking closely, at the line level, for what choices the poet makes in regards to rhetorical situation, image, music, & form, and discussing what effects these choices have on overall meaning and/or experience. You may have done this in a literature class or an introductory creative writing or poetry class (when I teach introductory literature, my students write an imitation of a poem by a famous poet and then explicate their poem and provide commentary on the conversation the imitation creates). You'll practice this technique this quarter using your poems.

YOUR WRITER'S LINEAGE:

Your writer's lineage is, essentially, like a family tree/ ancestry of writing influences. Who are your parents? Grandparents? Aunts & uncles? Cousins? The relationships aren't always perfect, but the genealogy is there. You'll be thinking about your major aesthetic influences, who taught you what, and making a family tree. Be working on it as the quarter goes on.

MENTORSHIP/STUDY IN ONE WRITER, IMITATION, & REVIEW OF WORK:

Part of understanding your family tree is getting to know someone in the family who has had, or you'd like to have, a major influence on your work (a literary mentor). You'll choose one poet to study; you'll read everything (or at least a good portion of) what that poet has written—at least two or three books; you'll write a review of the most recent work (placing it in context of your mentor's previous works), or, if that person is no longer producing new work, read and review a recent book by one of your poet's literary descendants; you'll also complete an imitation poem based on one of your mentor's poems.

If your mentor poet is a contemporary, and you end up reading mostly new work, then choose one of their direct ancestors to study and/or imitate as well, and perhaps include a discussion of this relationship in your review of the younger poet's newest book.

AUDITORY ENGAGEMENT:

Poetry is an oral art. Many people practice poetry as a spoken word genre, choosing to perform their work in addition to, even instead of, publishing it in written form. You'll work to study the effects of read-aloud poems, you'll memorize someone else's poem (perhaps one by your chosen ancestor or one of their descendants), and you'll recite it aloud and record yourself doing so (it is ok if the poem you memorize is also the one you choose to imitate). In addition, you'll record yourself reading one of your own poems (and it is ok if this is your imitation poem).

MEETING OTHER POETS & WRITERS/ ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY:

Many of you have noticed that a writing community, a group of people who all value the writing arts, is beneficial to everyone's growth. If this were an on-ground class, we'd host visiting writers and I would require attendance at three community poetry events. To approximate this in the online cohort, with the understanding that our schedules may be more tricky, I'm requiring

attendance at one in-person poetry event. This can be in your community wherever you live, or close by, or in Portland, the Tri-Cities, Ellensburg, Yakima, Walla Walla, Leavenworth, Spokane, Seattle, Bellingham, Anacortes--anywhere the poetry scene is alive and well. For events across Washington State, see the website of the Poet Laureate, Tod Marshall (and if you would like to get Tod to your city, contact him--his goal is to visit underserved, rural areas first as part of his PL project).

PUBLIC PLATFORMS FOR YOUR WORK: Though you may not be ready to begin in earnest quite yet, we're going to think a bit about public presentation of your work: reading for others, submitting for publication; we'll practice this by completing and sending one submission. You may elect to send more; I'll offer advice if you do. (One such venue for student work is *Manastash* Literary Journal at CWU; a WA State venue is the PL project Washington 129.)

CHAPBOOK OF ORIGINAL POEMS:

Formatted like a manuscript collection, this project will be part of your final portfolio. It should contain "publishable" revisions of your best works from the quarter, collected and arranged to create some sort of cohesive project, with a title.

NUTS & BOLTS: In *The Triggering Town*, Hugo's essay "Nuts and Bolts" serves as his "rules" for writing (his) poetry. Ezra Pound's list was "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste." If you took 365, you wrote an Ars Poetica poem that flirted with this notion, and in your final portfolio, you wrote a cover letter framing your work that also served as a sort of aesthetic statement. This quarter, you're going to write your own "Nuts & Bolts"—your rules for writing. These, in conjunction with your writers lineage family tree and your chapbook of poems, will comprise a sort of folio of your influence, poetics, and your best work.

A FEW STYLES & FORMS THAT WE'LL PRACTICE:

This quarter, we'll take a look specifically at the prose poem, blurred genre/CNF flash, linked or long poems, poems of activism, poems of imitation or response (there are various ways of doing this), concrete poetry, collaborative poetry, direct address, indeterminate voice, Surrealism, humor, scientific or historic influence, interview or dialogue, one-sentence, erasure, and several others.

We may also return to styles, modes, and forms introduced/studied in 365, and may practice further: forms like sonnet, villanelle, sestina, pantoum, ghazal, invented forms (like Addonizio's "Sonnenizio"); ekphrastic; persona; epistolary; ars poetica; contrapuntal; poem as dream (related to Surrealism); elegy . . .

HOW THE CLASS WILL WORK:

Each Sunday, I'll post on Canvas & the class blog a list of instructions for that week. You'll complete the assigned reading, reflections, and writing assignments, participating in discussion and/or workshop, as assigned, via Canvas, and you'll post to the blog your attempts at the generative or revision exercises.* All of your exercises will be public within the class blog, but the blog is set to private, so no one outside our class can see what you've written. This allows us

privacy, cross-pollination/ inspiration, and connectedness within our community, and, because you can see and comment on one another's work, fosters support.**

*When you post your assignments/exercises to the blog, please make your name & the exercise/assignment name your title. Then, in the body of the post, click the "read more" tag—it looks like a dotted line inside two parallel solid lines (in the control menu). Put your assignment body text in the body of the post.

**You may comment on one another's exercises/posts; please keep your comments supportive & encouraging. Anything completed as an assignment is a draft, an exercise, and the blog is not a workshop—it's meant to help the generative phase of the class. IF you are open to/request peer critique of your posted draft, you (the author of the posted piece) may note that you would be open to feedback on this pre-workshop draft, and your peers may follow suit, but it is not required that you seek and receive feedback in the generative phase. We will get to workshop in a different setting, via small groups on Canvas. You will then offer more intense critique & critical feedback. However, do leave supportive comments on your peers' blog posts; in fact, try to participate by reading all of your peers' posts each week, and commenting on at least three.

Your grades will be comprehensive, based on the following components:

ASSIGNMENTS: Reading reflections/ drafts of assignments/ writing exercises/ workshop participation, including timely posting of your work and thoughtful engagement with/critique of your peers' work (this will be a mix of exercises posted to the blog and assignments/ discussions/ workshop via Canvas), see list of assignments/projects [most of this work will be for "completion" credit, ungraded] : 50%

PORTFOLIO of revised/polished work (this will be turned in via Canvas at semester's end): 50%

Your portfolio, due via Canvas on June 6, should contain the revisions of the assignments completed throughout the course. Everything you've worked on—from your blog posts of exercise drafts, craft paragraphs, comments via discussion, peers' comments in Canvas workshop and on blog, assigned readings & multimodal readings (books, links to essays, craft discussions, your review, How a Poem Happens, From the Fishhouse, linebreak.org, video clips, uploads of yourself reading, interviews, etc.) and anything else you read, wrote, or discussed—is fair game for the portfolio. You can upcycle, reinvent, revise, excerpt from any of these sources, so long as anything that comes from the cohort or readings is attributed to its source. The portfolio will contain:

-Your "Nuts & Bolts" Aesthetic Statement

-Your Chapbook of Original Poems (revisions of work from this quarter (10-15 poems/pages) and last (0-5 poems/pages); total: 12-15 pages of poetry

-Your Writer's Lineage Map, w/ notes—comprehensive, but highlighting at least five major influential poems and at least two poets; may also include craft essays/ books/ other influential works read/ studied in critical or other literary genres

-Discussion of your Mentor poet and Review of that poet's most recent book or of a book by a closely related poet

Calendar:

March 29-April 1 INTRODUCTIONS

Robert Hass: "One Body: Some Notes on Form"

Poems by Roethke, Hass, Snyder, Gluck, etc.

"Four Ways in Four Days" (Wonder & repetition, music & meaning, etc.)

Lineage, Mentor poets, Poet Community

Sign up (via Canvas discussion) for your "contribute a prompt" week

(read Hugo's "Stray Thoughts on Roethke & Teaching" over the weekend)

April 4-8 Hugo, "Stray Thoughts on Roethke & Teaching"--lineage, mentor poets

Mary Ruefle, "Madness, Rack, & Honey"

Hugo, Ruefle, Wright, Stevens, Bishop, Kinnell, Stein

Collaborative poems

Choose your "mentor" poet by the end of this week; order books

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

April 11-15 Hugo, "In Defense of Creative Writing Classes"

Workshop #1: whole class

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

April 18-22 Sharing Poetry: Get a Poem Into the World

Imitation/ Explication Due

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

April 25-29 Public Platforms for Your Work

Audio Recordings Due

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

May 2-6 Hugo, "Statements of Faith"

WORKSHOP #2: small groups

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

May 9-13 MENTOR POET Review Due w/ rough LINEAGE maps

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

May 16-20 Re-read Hugo, "Nuts & Bolts;" reconsider yours; begin to write

Levine, "On Making the Poetry Manuscript"

Draft & put a ms. together

Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

May 23-27 WORKSHOP 3: small groups--chapbook mss. & other portfolio work
Crafty Poet exercises: TBA

May 31 (30 is a day off)-June 3 Hugo, "How Poets Make a Living"; revision
Work on/ revise your portfolio materials

June 6- 10 (finals) FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE June 6