

ENGL2901A: Poetry Workshop

Winter 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05-11:25, Mackenzie 4494

Prerequisite: permission of the instructor

Professor Amal El-Mohtar

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 – 2:00 or by appointment

DESCRIPTION

The objective of this poetry-writing workshop is to develop students' creative writing skills and, attendant to that, their reading and editorial skills. Students in this workshop are expected to have read and written poetry before, and to be open to being exposed to forms and styles with which they're unfamiliar. They will also have a sincere interest in writing poetry and a willingness to learn from their fellow writers, the instructor, and works of exemplary poetry assigned by the instructor. While the focus is on writing relatively short pieces – under 50 lines, as a general rule, or what can be assessed in its entirety during a class – longer works can also be workshopped with enough advance planning.

The course is in two parts. The first five weeks will consist of discussion of exemplary works, student presentations, and in-class exercises designed to assist students in the development of their own poetry; the rest of the course will be devoted to student-led critique sessions of that poetry.

Note well: The success of this class and your development as a writer depends upon attending each and every session, contributing to discussions, and fully engaging with in-class exercises and workshops. You must, therefore, be ready to circulate your creative work among your peers and have it openly discussed in class. As well as receiving and perhaps integrating the comments of others into your writing, you will offer your peers constructive, thoughtful and forthright critiques as well.

EVALUATION

Attendance/participation	15%
1 short presentation	10%
Workshop Letters	20 %
Workshop Poems	20%
Final Portfolio	35%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (15%)

The first 10 minutes of every class will be devoted to spontaneous writing in response to a prompt, followed by a few minutes' voluntary discussion/sharing of that writing; this makes it especially important to arrive to class on time, in order to fully benefit from these sessions.

Come to class having read the assigned poems and prepared to discuss them. Poetry benefits from deep, slow reading: almost all the pieces you'll be assigned in the first half of the course can be read in under 10 minutes, but will benefit hugely from being re-read, marked up, and engaged with thoughtfully. The more engaged you are, the better the workshop experience will be for everyone.

Once the critique sessions begin, your attendance is crucial. A workshop course is a delicate contract between you and your peers: it's awkward and ungenerous to be absent from your fellow students' sessions while expecting them to take the time and effort to critique your own work. Please make an effort to attend every class, and wherever possible please alert me in advance of an absence. Unplanned absences wreak havoc with a workshop schedule and re-scheduling with a class of our size is very difficult. Repeated unexcused absences will result in loss of marks here, as will repeated tardiness.

SHORT PRESENTATION (10%)

This is a 15-minute presentation on a poem of your choosing, shared with the class. Reading the poem out loud is optional, but encouraged.

Your presentation should contain the following:

- A rationale for why you chose this poem to accompany the week's theme
- Some biographical information about the author and background about the poem
- A brief exploration of the poem, touching on what you find moving, interesting or noteworthy about it
- A discussion question for the class

You'll also need to provide a write-up of the presentation, to be handed in at the end of class. This should be 1-2 double-spaced pages, and is NOT a formal essay; it's more of a memory aid for me containing your main points.

WORKSHOP LETTERS (20%)

These are 1-page (double-spaced) critique letters you'll provide for every student who sits in the hot seat; you'll turn in 3 of them per critique session, one per student being critiqued. Bring 2 copies of each letter: one for the student and one for me.

There are 21 students in the course, and everyone will go up for critique twice: this means you'll be writing up 40 letters in all. Each one is worth half a point, and is marked purely on whether or not it's a good faith critique that demonstrates serious consideration of the poem or poems in question.

WORKSHOP POEMS (20%)

At the beginning of the course, you'll sign up for two critique sessions between February 14 and April 6. **The week before your critique session**, you'll turn in up to 5 single-spaced pages of poetry to the rest of the group (the ideal number of poems being between 1 and 3). These are awkward metrics, designed mostly to allow your peers the time to deeply read and critique 3 sets of poems a class; we will of course make allowance for variety in length and styles, but try to bear in mind the limits of class size and workshop structure when you submit your work.

Each submission you offer for critique will count for 10%. These are not marked on aesthetics, but on good faith completeness and punctuality; I want to see that you made the effort to submit something on which you've focused your craft, rather than dashing off in a panic to fulfill a requirement. If you turn your submission in to the group late, you'll automatically lose 5%.

FINAL PORTFOLIO (35%) – due April 25

The final portfolio will consist of the following:

- A cover page
- A table of contents
- A 2-3 page (double-spaced) reflection on the work you developed throughout the course, encompassing in-class writing exercises, discussion, and the directions your poetry took (or resisted taking) in response to the critiques you received.
- A selection of the poems you workshopped during the course (roughly 8-10 single-spaced pages, with liberal allowance made for form or its lack)

- An editorial introduction to those poems, making the case for why you selected those pieces and presented them in the order you did.

Those are the portions that will be marked – but if you feel it’s helpful to include more process or background (such as in-class exercises) to provide context for your work or its development, please feel free!

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change as called for by scheduling considerations)

Jan. 5	Introductions, syllabus review, assignment sign-ups
Jan. 10	LANGUAGE: Sparse – H.D., “Oread,” “Sea Rose”
Jan. 12	LANGUAGE: Lush – Rose Lemberg, “I will show you a single treasure from the treasures of Shah Niyaz” – Student: – Student:
Jan. 17	MEANING: Sense – Mary Oliver, “The Wild Geese” – Student: – Student:
Jan. 19	MEANING: Nonsense – Lewis Carroll, “Jabberwocky” – Student: – Student:
Jan. 24	FORM: More – Sofia Samatar, “Girl Hours” – Student: – Student:
Jan. 26	FORM: Less – Kaitlyn Bouding, “Questions to Ask Yourself Before Giving Up” – Student: – Student:
Jan. 31	VOICE: Character – C. S. E. Cooney, “Little Sally and the Bull Fiddle God” – Student: – Student:
Feb. 2	VOICE: Memoir – Carlos Hernandez, “In Lieu of the Stories my Santera Abuela Should Have Told Me Herself, This Poem” – Student: – Student: – Student:
Feb. 7	WITNESS: Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel” – Student:

	– Student: – Student:
Feb. 9	Visit with Gita Hashemi at CUAG
Feb. 14	CRITIQUE SESSIONS BEGIN – Student: – Student: – Student:
Feb. 16	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Feb. 20-24	READING WEEK
Feb. 28	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 2	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 7	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 9	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 14	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 16	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 21	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 23	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 28	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Mar. 30	– Student:

	– Student: – Student:
Apr. 4	– Student: – Student: – Student:
Apr. 6	– Student: – Student: – Student:

Additional notes:

GRADES: Grades for written work will be based on insightfulness, presentation of focused ideas supported by textual evidence, effective organization of ideas, clarity of expression, correct use of MLA style, correct spelling and grammar. The following percentage equivalents will be used when calculating your final grade for this class: A+=90; A/A- = 88; A=85; A-=80; B+/A- = 79; B+ = 77; B/B+ = 75; B = 73; B-/B = 72; B- = 70; C+/B- = 69; C+ = 67; C/C+ = 65; C= 63; C-/C = 62; C- = 60; D+/C- = 59; D+ = 57; D/D+ = 55; D = 53; D-/D = 52; D- = 50; F = 0-49 (a numerical grade will be assigned for an F paper)

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism means passing off someone else’s words or ideas as your own or submitting the same work in two different academic contexts. The most common forms of plagiarism include unacknowledged copying from secondary sources, purchasing papers online or from essay-writing services, or having another person write a paper for you. Do not take these risks. The consequences of plagiarism are severe and are issued by the Dean and the University Senate. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must clearly and correctly attribute the specific sources of quotations, phrasings, and ideas you pick up from books, the internet, and other people. Acknowledging the sources for your writing is considered a crucial part of scholarship and does not suggest that you are unoriginal; rather, it shows that you are responsible and honest about how your own writing builds on the work of others. For additional information, consult the section on Instructional Offenses in the Undergraduate Calendar.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY: If you need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term due to pregnancy, religious obligation, or disability, the processes to be followed for an accommodation request are:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for an academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for

accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website www2.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website www2.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodation in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC 613-520-6608 every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your requires for accommodations to PMC by the deadlines published on the PMC website www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dats-and-deadlines/

OTHER LEARNING SERVICES AT CARLETON: The Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS) offers students academic skills workshops and information sessions, study rooms, a tutor referral service, and peer helpers. Visit CSAS on the 4th floor of the MacOdrum Library or <http://carleton.ca/csas/>. Career Development and Cooperative Education (CDCE) offer career development, employment preparation, experiential learning opportunities for Carleton students. The Career and Resource Centre is located at 401 Tory (613-520-6611). The Co-op and Employer Centre is at 1400 Carleton Technology and Training Centre (613-520-4331).