

Carleton University
Winter 2018
Department of English

English 4915 Advanced Writing Workshop:
Linked Poem Sequences and Long Verse

Prerequisites: Fourth-year Honours standing in English, a 3000-level creative writing workshop, or permission of the instructor. (See instructor's note below regarding the possible extension of eligibility to students with comparable creative writing experience.)

Introduction

This workshop allows writers to workshop and explore extended verse forms: the long poem, linked poetry sequences or series, narrative or dramatic verse, extended hybrid/collage work, prose poetry sequences, the verse novella. All these forms allow length and sequencing to enhance the meaning and complexity of the work. Sometimes, bigger is better!

In the popular imagination, poetry is expected to be brief, personal, and often focused on a single incident. However, longer forms of poetry have ancient roots and remained significant in all artistic periods and movements up to the present.

Homer's *Odyssey*, The *Ramayana*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Elizabeth Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* are all examples of long poems that animate and articulate the obsessions of their particular cultures. Even the Japanese poet Basho, best known for his short-form Haiku, linked his short poems into long narrative tales.



(photo from the film, *Paterson*)

Canadian poets have long demonstrated an attraction to and a talent for longer verse forms. Contemporary long poem work, such as Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, dominate Canadian best-seller lists, university poetry courses, and constitute the core of the Canadian poetic canon. Canadian publishers and Canadian awards committees favour the long poem (Sandra Ridley's *Silvija* and

Jordan Abel's *Injun* which were nominated for the 2017 Griffin Prize were long-linked verse works).

As a workshop, this course offers the singular opportunity to strengthen your skills both as a creative writer and as an editor of poetry sequences and longer poems. Roughly every two weeks, you will be handing in drafts of your own original poems for the rest of the class to read, discuss, and offer constructive, supportive criticism. As well, there will be a number of assigned readings on poetics and poetry.

While we will be spending much time workshoping our fellow writers' work, we will also be investigating the work of established poets. At the end of the term, you will present your revised poem sequence or long poem(s) in a portfolio and submit it for grading.

Time: Mondays 2:35-5:25.

Location: Room 214CO (*confirm on Carleton Central*)

Instructor: David Stymeist

Office: 1819 DT

Email: david.stymeist@carleton.ca

Alternate: dstymeist@yahoo.ca

Office Hours: TBA. Creative writing students can schedule an appointment that meets their schedule—contact instructor via email.

Preliminary Outline- subject to change

Participation

Since this is a workshop, every student needs to attend, read assigned texts, read and comment on fellow student's work, and come prepared to engage in lively discussions.

Part of being a good writer is to become a great reader of other people's work. The more you are willing to put into the class, the more you (and us) will get out of it!

Workshop Structure

As this is an advanced workshop, students will be expected to write independently on topics that interest them without the need for individual prompts.

You will, of course, need to develop ways to focus your poetry sequence(s), or long poem(s) over the term.

Poems and segments of larger works are due in hardcopy at the beginning of class the week before we are to discuss them. We will pass them around and then take them home to read. This lets us have the time necessary to read them and comment on them thoroughly.

Workshop protocols:

- Everyone reads and comments on the poems before class starts.
- The author reads their poem aloud in class. The author can preface their poem before they read.
- The class discusses the poem at length.
- If your poem is being “workshopped,” you should let the debate take its own course and don’t intervene. You can offer clarification after the discussion has ceased.
- Record significant comments in order to assist in the revision process.

Grades

Active Participation <i>(discussion in class, prompt submission of poems, reading preparation, attendance)</i>	10%
Editorial Participation <i>(editorial attention to other students’ work, quality of contribution to the workshop process)</i>	10%
Fieldtrip Reading Report	5%
Munro Beattie Event Attendance (March 21 st , Wednesday, 7:00pm)	5%
Poetry Review	15%
Final Portfolio (18-20 pages of poetry)	55%

Poetry Workshop Schedule (subject to change)

Jan.8 Fall Term Begins. Introductory Class.

Jan.15 Bring in a Favorite poem and read it. (Group A handout)
Discussion (sample of long poem and poem sequencing)

(Jan. 19th Last day to change courses or sections (including auditing) for winter term courses.)

Jan. 22 Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

Jan. 29 Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

(Jan. 31st Last day for withdrawal from winter term with full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.)

Feb. 5 Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

Feb. 12 Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

Feb. 19th – 23rd Reading Break.

Feb. 26 Group A Workshop (Group B handout)

March 5 Group B Workshop (Group A handout)

March 12 Group A Workshop

March 19 Guest Reader. Discussion. (Group B handout)

(March 21st, Wednesday, 7:00pm. Munro Beattie Lecture: Alice Notley)

March. 26 Group B Workshop

April 2 Final Portfolio Due. Film Screening.

April 9 Final class. Class Readings.

Application Process

Enrollment in this workshop is limited (max. 15 students).

A portfolio must be sent to english@carleton.ca by **Oct. 30th**. Include ENGL 4915 PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION as the subject line.

Acceptance is at the discretion of the instructor and is not guaranteed.

Note: 4th Year Standing in English and prior Creative Writing Workshop experience are typically required, but students with comparable experience will also be allowed to submit a portfolio.

Portfolio Submission Guidelines:

1. A cover page with your full name, Carleton email, and student ID number
2. A brief statement (maximum 250-300 words) indicating a few writers who may have influenced your writing, why you want to take this workshop, and your previous writing/workshopping experience. Note your current Carleton program and year as well
3. A sample of your poetry of no more than 10 pages in total. (Use 12-point font, standard margins, and each page should include both your name and page number. Word or PDF file format preferred) Select your best, most polished poems. All forms/subjects are acceptable. Note that these samples do not need to be long poems or poem sequences.

Decisions will be sent to students by email. As there is no guarantee a student will be accepted into this workshop, students are advised to register in another course until the final selection has been made.

About the Instructor

David Stymeist's debut poetry collection, *The Bone Weir*, was published by Frontenac House in 2016 and was shortlisted for the Canadian Author's Association award for Poetry. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines, including *The Antigone Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *The Fiddlehead*.

He teaches Creative Writing, Renaissance Literature, Crime Fiction, Digital Humanities and Aboriginal Literature at Carleton University. David Stymeist's critical essays and reviews have appeared in academic journals, such as *Studies in English Literature*, *Essays in Renaissance Culture*, *Mosaic*, and *College Teaching*.

He grew up as a non-indigenous member of a mixed family on O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, is the editor and founder of the micro-press, Textualis, and is the current president of VERSe Ottawa, which runs VerseFest, Ottawa's annual poetry festival.

Course Regulations

The mark distribution for the year will be Term Grade: 100%. Class participation marks will include participation in class discussion, Prompt submission of poems, reading preparation, consistent attendance, and full reading preparation for each assigned text. Consistent attendance is required in this class; students failing to attend an absolute **minimum of 30%** of the classes will not receive a grade for their final portfolio.

All assignments must be handed in on the date specified unless cleared previously with the professor. Assignments must be handed to me in person or to the drop box in the English department office (1812 Dunton Tower) on the due date. If you choose to use the drop box, you must be prepared to incur any late penalties that may accumulate due to the unlikely occurrence of the paper's loss or misfiling.

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day. Assignments without medical extension will not be accepted after two weeks of the due date. No faxes or emails of assignments will be accepted. Please keep a copy of your assignment in case of loss by any cause. Students can expect to receive graded feedback in a timely manner; the instructor reserves the right to limit commentary on late assignments and portfolios. Students are required to submit all major assignments in order to pass the course as a whole.

Class etiquette: All digital activity in the class with personal devices should be directly connected to class activity; in other words, you shouldn't be checking your Facebook page.

Grading System:

Assignments in this course will be graded using the letter grading system: A-, A, A+ (Excellent); B-, B, B+ (Good); C-, C, C+ (Satisfactory); D, D+ (Minimal pass); F (Failure). Percentage conversion: A+ (90-100%), A (85-89), A- (80-84), B+ (77-79), B (73-76), B- (70-72), C+ (67-69), C (63-66), C- (60-62), D+ (57-59), D (53-56), D (50-52), F (0-49).

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*"

This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment

written, in whole or in part, by someone else;

--using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

--using another's data or research findings;

--failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

--handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy 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 see the Student Guide

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 see the Student Guide

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).