

Introduction to Poetry Writing, 2647
Spring 2021
Philip Brady
psbrady@ysu.edu

About the Workshop

This is a student-centered class; the most important text is your own work. We will consider poetry as “an aesthetic experience of language” avoiding limiting definitions and rigid practices; at the same time we will focus on poetry as a formal art, and we will work in a varied of traditional and experimental modes. The class will frame conversations about student poems in terms of each poem’s arc from inception through completion. Where does the poem come from? Where is it going? How does it relate to other poems, both by the author and by other poets? These questions will be addressed in recorded lectures, in student and instructor responses to your work, and in process essays you will append to the poems you submit. In addition to form, we will engage issues of idiom, identity, and tradition, and share ways that poems come together to compose a body of work. We’ll also explore the mysterious and potent connection between sound and meaning, delving into poetry’s pre-literary source as utterance. We’ll invite and encourage one another to consider poetry as a life-sustaining and life-examining art.

About Workshops

Even when it takes place virtually, the workshop is a facsimile of gatherings that have sprung up through history in cafes, homes, parks, churches, and bars. In our virtual environment, we share their purpose and claim their authority. The differences—and they are crucial—are two.

One: our group is defined by no school of thought, movement, clique, or shared aesthetic; we have not chosen our constituency. This alters the group dynamic in ways which, if not addressed, can have a corrosive effect. While we partake of the traditions that brought like-minded poets together, we must resist the impulses that guide non-academic workshops, that is, we must avoid forming and committing to a group aesthetic. Ultimately, we must curb the urge to please. Instead, we must allow our differences to define our own theory and practice of writing. I hope we will find like-minded writers, and form our own allegiances, but only after recognizing the necessity of defining ourselves, by our own lights, rather than that of the group. As my first workshop teacher, Jack Wheatcroft, told us, “Resist everything I say.”

The second difference has to do with our virtual platform. Here, we are words. And while we may miss the personal interaction, we may also benefit from the fact that

our interaction takes place in the same two-dimensional world of the poem itself. Here, we can be candid; we can take our time and be thoughtful; we do not need to be timid, short-tempered, or long-winded.

Guidelines

Regarding your own work

- Practice reading your poems aloud. Find the rhythm of the poem in your voice; use the rhythms to find the poem's thread. Learn it by heart.
- Keep your commitments: no credit for late work.
- Proof carefully.
- Pay careful and respectful attention to comments, even when they seem off the mark.
- Don't turn in 'varnished' poems. All work submitted should be written during the term.

Regarding the work of others, when responding

- As much as possible, be descriptive rather than proscriptive.
- Acknowledge your allegiances and biases.
- Attend to detail, but don't nit-pick.
- Attempt to identify the source of the poem.
 - What is it trying to achieve?
 - What kind of poem is it?
 - What prosodic or theoretical assumptions does it reveal?
- Find connections to other poems you know: can you reference other poems—or other works of art—with similar intentions, methods, slants?
- Consider the possibility that the submission is a part of something yet to be fully conceived.
- Imaginatively identify with the impulse behind the poem. Then, judge your own posture toward that impulse.
- Get to know the body of work of your classmates. View each new poem in terms of its relation to the rest of that work, rather than as a discrete, anonymous submission.

Goals

- To inspire and encourage.
- To share and enlarge our grasp of technique.
- To deepen our knowledge of traditions
- To sharpen our critical faculties.
- To move toward building a body of work.
- To strengthen our network of colleagues in the art.

Methods

We will follow the traditional method of reading and responding to new work on the discussion board. We'll also read poems from the Course Packet, and we'll view recordings of poetry readings and lectures. We will read poems and essays from [*Poems & Their Making: A Conversation*](#), which you will find as a PDF in course content. We will integrate those poems and videos into our discussion, through weekly questions.

Requirements

In addition to our ambition to begin our journey into poetry, we take on additional responsibilities when we enroll in a workshop. These include careful preparation, full participation on the discussion board, and timely submissions.

- 3 poems, based on assignments
- 3 process-essays of 300 words accompanying the poems
- 1 major poem revision with process-essay
- 15 weekly journal entries based on journal assignments. You are responsible for 200 words each week. You may choose one prompt with a 200 word value or 2 prompts with 100, or 4 prompts of 50 word value—any combination that gets you to 200 words. Each prompt is worth only the number of words assigned to it, even if you write more than the assigned number of words. For more information, see “Journal FAQ”
- 15 weekly “Issue posts” of 200 words based on week’s theme.
- 15 weekly “Issue post” responses to classmates. You may respond to any post; you must respond to one post each week. Responses must be at least 100 words. You may offer questions, suggestions, encouragement, and criticism.
- 15 responses to poems by your classmates. You may choose which poems to respond to. You must respond to 5 poems in each of the 3 poetry assignments. Poem responses should be at least 100 words; be specific in your comments; refer to particular lines, phrases, and themes. See “Guidelines.”
- Students must record a recitation by heart of 60 lines of poetry from the class texts, or another student’s poems. You may not substitute a poem of your own. Rationale for this requirement can be found [here](#). Inspiration can be found [here](#).

Grading

While I do not grade the poems qualitatively, to receive credit you must make a good faith effort to address the formal issue involved, and you must explain it cogently in a process-essay of at least 300 words.

Neither do I grade the journal entries, issue posts, or responses, but again, to receive credit you must make a good faith effort to address the issue prompt of the week or the journal prompt you have chosen. There are over 60 journal prompts, and you can choose among them in any order. For more information see Journal FAQ.

- Poems, revisions, and process-essays: 40%
- Journal 20%
- Issue Posts 20%
- Issue Post and poem responses 10%
- Recitation 10%

How to Track Your Grades

Each poem, submitted on time with process-essay of at least 200 words, is worth 10% of your final grade. If you turn in 3 poems and 1 revision on time, with process essays of at least 300 words, you receive full credit, 40% of final grade. 3 poems on time, with process essays of at least 300 words, you receive 30% of final grade. 2 poems & process essays, 20%, etc. No credit for late poems or poems without process essays. If I see that you have not made a good faith effort to address that poem assignment, no credit will be allotted, and I will let you know within one week. No make-ups are permitted.

15 journal entries are required, totaling 20% of final grade. You receive 1.5% of your final grade for each week of 200 words submitted on-time to the journal. No credit for late entries or weeks under 200 words. Please include the # of the journal prompt you are addressing. If I see that you have not made a good faith effort to address that journal prompt, even if it is submitted on-time and with sufficient length, no credit will be allotted, and I will let you know within one week. No make-ups are permitted.

15 issue posts are required, totaling 20% of final grade. You receive 1.5% of your final grade for each issue post of 200 words submitted on-time to the discussion board. No credit for late entries or issue posts under 200 words. If I see that you have not made a good faith effort to address the issue post prompt, even if on-time and with sufficient length, no credit will be allotted, and I will let you know within one week. No make-ups are permitted.

15 Issue Post and 15 Poem responses of 100 words are required, totaling 10% of your final grade. You receive .33% of your final grade for each Issue Post and Poem

response submitted on-time to the discussion board. No credit for late entries or issue posts/poem responses under 100 words. If I see that you have not made a good faith effort to respond to the issue post or poem, no credit will be allotted, and I will let you know within one week. No make-ups are permitted.

60 lines of recitation from a class text, including the course links and course packet, or from a classmate's poem, are required. The recitation comprises 10% of your final grade. If you choose, you may recite 30 lines, and receive ½ credit. No credit will be given for recitations under 30 lines. Your recitation should be video-recorded, and must demonstrate that you are reciting by heart. If it appears that you are reading, no credit will be given, and I will let you know within one week. No make-ups are permitted.

Schedule

This Spring, YSU has substituted Spring Break Week with individual days spread over the semester. Since this is an online, asynchronous course, we'll follow a straight 15 week semester, which will end one week before the official ending of the Spring Semester classes on April 30. All dates listed on Blackboard's Course Content are final. Your revision-poem and process essay are due on the Tuesday of the last week, April 27.

Deadlines

In an asynchronous online course, keeping up with journals, issue posts, and poems is essential to building and maintaining a working online community. You are responsible to submit your issue post each Thursday by 5:00. Poems are also due Thursday of the designated week at 5:00 PM. Journal assignments are due Friday at 5:00. Poem responses and issue post responses are due on the following Monday by 5:00. If you submit your work late, you are affecting your classmates' ability to respond. So, no credit will be given for late submissions. Late poems and late issue posts will not be eligible for responses.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty, as defined by *The Student Code of Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities*, includes, but is not limited to, use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, test, assignments or examinations; letting someone else write his/her papers, prepare reports or other work; letting someone else use his/her papers, prepared reports or other work to copy; cheating and plagiarism (please see the [The Student Code of Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities](#) for more information).

Statement of Non-Discrimination from the University

Youngstown State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, disability, age, religion or veteran/military status in its programs or activities. Please visit the following link for contact information and for persons designated to handle questions about this policy: [Accessibility Compliance](#).

Statement for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University procedures, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course; please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You must be registered with the Center for Student Progress Disability Services, located at 36 West Wood Street, and provide a letter of accommodation to coordinate reasonable accommodations. You can reach CSP Disability Services at 330-941-1372.

Additional Recommendations for Success

- Writing is a process. Save your all drafts carefully. Back up your files on a hard drive or in cloud storage. If you write notes or drafts by hand prior to typing your post, carefully store and secure all hard copy materials you work with.
- Adhere to a spirit of compassion and civility in your writing on our course Blackboard, particularly when responding to the thoughts of others. Anyone who disrupts our online learning environment will be referred to YSU Student Conduct.

Campus Resources

- The [YSU Writing Center](#) is an invaluable resource. Student consultants are available to help you with any stage of the writing process in this or any class. For our purposes, consultants can help especially with understanding this syllabus and assignment prompts, drafting ideas, and revising. To register and schedule a free appointment, visit the Writing Center website or call 330.941.3055.
- [Student Counseling Services](#) is available to provide high-quality, short term, confidential mental health counseling, consultation, outreach (educational training), and referral services to all currently enrolled YSU students. Contact them by phone at 330.941.3737.
- The [Center for Student Progress](#) offers academic coaching, tutoring, and many other services and programs to YSU students. Visit them at their location near Dunkin Donuts. Contact them by phone at 330.941.3538.

- For help with Blackboard, the YSU Distance Education Office Help Desk e-mail is IDDC@ysu.edu. Phone is 330-941-3244.
- [Click here](#) to learn about additional free campus resources available to all registered students.