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CRWR 511.01: Poetry Workshop

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CRWR 511, Graduate Poetry Workshop, 3 credits, Autumn, 2020

Course Information

- Day/time: Monday, 6:00-8:50pm
- Location: Gallagher Business 108 or the Music Department tent

Contact Information

- Instructor: Keetje Kuipers
- Office: LA 127
- Phone: 406-243-5231
- Email: keetje.kuipers@umontana.edu

Course Description

William Carlos Williams called the poem "a small or large machine made of words." While this may seem cold, it can also be a useful way to step back from our work, and to think about how exactly our machines are built, as well as the great mystery of what they are ultimately designed to accomplish. At the same time, it is integral to remember, as poet and translator Kristin Prevallet has noted, "The creative writing department is not just a factory for producing poems...that are then published and consumed, but...a site where minds converge and think through writing about language, self, boundaries and the larger concerns of the world." Or, to take our cue from C.D. Wright: "Into what forms do you see poetry pouring, morphing, shuddering. / Is there anything you see that poetry has the capacity to alter or altogether upend. / Can you fix anything. Anything at all. / Is the goal of community attainable through the gates of poetry." Therefore, our work together this semester is three-fold: to create poems in your own voice that matter to you deeply as an individual moving through this world, to then learn to apply a mechanic's dispassionate eye to the revision of your poems in order to make sure that they can matter to others, and, finally, to locate the pathways towards sharing your poems with a wider community of readers who are also hungry to think and feel.

Course Outcomes

Students will:

- develop skills of self-critique and learn to apply them to works-in-progress
- add depth and breadth to knowledge of the most recently published poetry collections in North America
- compose a portfolio of new and revised poems

- gain professionalization through submitting work to literary journals

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

- *Holy Moly Carry Me*, by Erika Meitner
- *Some Say the Lark*, by Jennifer Chang
- *Vantage*, by Taneum Bambrick
- *Hard Damage*, by Aria Aber
- *Fantasia for the Man in Blue*, by Tommye Blount

Course Requirements

Class Format and Procedures

The class will be split into two groups—Hugo and Welch—alternating workshop most weeks, except when we have large group or revision workshops. Everyone will have a chance to workshop 4 original poems, along with 2 additional workshops of revised poems. The Friday before workshop, the students in the scheduled group will post their poems on Moodle by 6pm. Please submit a poem for which you are genuinely ready to receive feedback. Prepare yourself to respond to hard questions about your poem and to talk articulately about your own aesthetic. As workshop leader, my most important task is to understand and respect your intentions. As a peer, your task is not to help others write like you, but to help them write more like themselves.

Responsibilities

In addition to these workshoped poems, you will be composing 9 additional fresh poems for me over the course of the semester. We will also be reading 5 recently published collections of poetry, doing Zoom Q&A's with authors, and taking in lectures and readings online. You will complete critical responses to these texts and come to class prepared to discuss them. For workshop, you will come to class having read the other students' poems, and will provide thorough oral and written critiques. You must also regularly check Moodle and UM email for assignment updates.

Final Portfolio and Proof of Submissions

You will significantly revise 10 poems written during the semester, and compose a critical introduction that explores your poems as part of a holistic body of work, connected by subject, theme, concept, and style. Additionally, you will provide a verifiable record of submission of your poems to 5 literary magazines.

Conferences

You will each conference with me twice. We can talk about the current state of your poetry, your goals for its progress, what you're reading, publishing, and your style, or voice—where it's come from, where it is, where it's going and how to refine and articulate it. You are expected to come to conference on time and prepared with whatever we need to have our discussion.

Attendance

Absences must be discussed with the instructor prior to class. Unexpected absences will result in one-half letter-grade reduction per class. More than 2 unexpected absences may result in you being asked to drop the class.

Grading Assessment

Grading is based on active participation in the workshops, discussions, and conferences (25%), weekly critical and creative responses (25%), workshop poems (25%), a final portfolio (15%), and a record of submission of your poems to literary magazines (10%). Late work will receive no credit.

Other Information

Special Accommodation

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

COVID

Mask use is required within the classroom and whenever 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained outside. You may be required to complete the course online through Moodle and Zoom (students must have access to appropriate electronic devices for remote learning).