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CRWR 311.01: Intermediate Poetry Workshop

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CRWR 311, Intermediate Poetry Workshop, 3 credits, Autumn 2021

Course Information

- Day/time: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:50pm
- Location: Payne Family Native American Center, Room 201

Contact Information

- Instructor: Keetje Kuipers
- Office: LA 127
- Office hours: Wednesday, 10am-2pm
- Email: keetje.kuipers@umontana.edu

Course Description

This course will explore some of the newest and most daring contemporary American poetry being written today by poets engaged with the wildly changing American landscape: Wal-Mart stores and streets filled with riot police, abandoned factory towns and meat packing plants, city busses and clear-cut hillsides, faded church pews and used car lots. You will also be invited to write your own poems that clearly occupy a contemporary American perspective, asking questions of what has come before us and imagining our impossible futures.

The traditional workshop focused on student work will remain essential to our class, but we'll aim to incorporate more advanced projects, as well, including a handmade chapbook of your own poems. You will also attend a number of poetry readings on Zoom over the course of the term, taking full advantage of the incredible roster of contemporary poetry events offered online from coast to coast.

Course Outcomes

In this course, students will:

- read closely and respond to critical and creative texts that expand their notion of what a poem can accomplish
- deepen their facility with the elements of poetry such as the musical, metaphorical, structural, and rhetorical
- write their own adventurous and daring poems
- provide others with constructive critiques of works-in-progress
- incorporate criticism in order to compose their own portfolios of thoroughly revised poems

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Steve Kowit's *In the Palm of Your Hand*, 2nd Edition (2017).

I will also provide additional readings handed out in class and shared over Moodle. If provided electronically, students must print and retain copies of the reading for annotation and discussion in class.

Course Requirements

Class Format and Procedures

Tuesday classes will be reserved for discussion of texts, small group work, and writing exercises. Our Thursday classes will be devoted to workshop. The class will be split into three groups—Hugo, Welch, and Kwasny—rotating groups for workshop each week. Everyone will get a chance to workshop 3 original poems over the course of the semester, along with one additional workshop of a revised poem at the end of the semester.

All poems for workshop must be submitted on the stipulated Tuesday. To facilitate our workshop schedule, workshop poems will be handed in as hard copies (13 copies: one for each member of the class, including yourself, and one for me) on the Tuesday preceding your scheduled Thursday workshop. Last-minute technical problems are not an acceptable excuse for not having your work in hand. Additionally, the self-evaluation that must accompany each workshop submission is due in class on the Thursday of your workshop. You need only bring one copy (for me), and it should briefly (1-2 pages) detail your thoughts on the work you're submitting: questions about the form, successful changes you made, elements you enjoyed, things you're still struggling with, and so on.

Peer critiques are an important part of this course. On workshop days, you will submit peer critiques for the students being workshopped. In all critiques, you are expected to be thorough and respectful. Try to avoid simply saying "I liked this part" or "I didn't like that part"—instead focus your critiques on specific points of craft and use examples from the text to illustrate what you think is working and what needs improvement. These critiques should not be typed—instead, please write directly on the poems themselves, including not only substantial line-edits but also a lengthy paragraph response on the back of the poem summing up your thoughts on potential revision. When critiquing the work of your peers, strive to be rigorous and specific, but also respectful and professional, both in class and in your written critiques. You will turn these critiques in to me and I will grade them before passing them on to your peers.

Responsibilities

Students are expected to complete critical responses to the assigned texts and come to class prepared to discuss them. Students will also submit freshly written poems from assigned writing exercises. For workshop, students will come to class having read the other students' poems, and will provide thorough oral and written critiques. Students must also regularly check Moodle for assignment materials, updates, and deadlines.

All poems and exercises should be new writing, produced this term for this course. Be sure to maintain a hardcopy folder of your drafts for workshop, especially those with my comments, as well as subsequent revisions of poems and exercises, to refer to during conferences. With the exception of in-class exercises, all work for the course must be typed and submitted with your name, the class name, the date, and a title and/or descriptive label for the work on the first page. All submitted work must be stapled. In addition, don't submit the only copy of your work—keep a digital and hard copy on hand. I recommend resaving each new draft under a different title (i.e. "TreePoem1," "TreePoem2," etc.) so that you can go back to your work and see the changes you made during the extended revision process.

Critical responses must be 1-2 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font. Any responses under 1 full page will be returned. Reader responses should not be casual appraisals of the texts or mere ramblings, but thoughtful and sophisticated critical arguments that utilize the concepts we've discussed. Also note that responses will be incorporated into our class discussions, so be prepared to discuss the content of your responses in class (and to read aloud for us the poem that your response refers to).

Event Responses

In addition to the reading and writing done in and for our class, you are also required to attend at least two poetry readings over Zoom during the course of the semester, one of which must be the James Welch Poetry Prize reading on Thursday, September 16th. If you are unable to attend this event, you must clear your absence with me beforehand. After attending each of these two readings, you will briefly (1-2 pages, as usual) record your response to what you heard and saw there and the experience as a whole. While you may complete this portion of our work at your leisure, I urge you not to wait until the end of the semester. I will be providing you with a list of Zoom readings you can attend throughout the semester.

Final Portfolio

Based on what you learn from workshops, readings, and peer critiques, you will submit a group of comprehensively revised poems at the end of the semester. Revision is an essential skill and something we will be discussing throughout the term. Please note that revision does not mean correcting grammatical errors, changing a few adjectives, or moving a paragraph; it is a complete re-writing which follows a re-seeing (hence "re-vision") of the work as a whole. Required revisions which do not dramatically transform the creative work will be given a failing grade.

Your final project will not be a traditional portfolio revision, but rather a chapbook of your revised poems. A chapbook is a mini-collection of poetry, often centered around a common theme. Chapbooks generally have the look and feel of a handcrafted art object: high quality paper, elegant saddle-stitching, color and/or illustration on the cover. Your chapbook will include the 3 poems you workshoped with our class, as well as 3-5 additional poems you wrote for our class and revised on your own (with the help of my comments and those from your small peer critique sessions). You will design and create a unique chapbook home for these 6-8 poems by the end of our semester together.

Attendance and Participation

All students are expected to participate enthusiastically, consistently, and sensitively in workshops and the course as a whole. Absences are unhelpful in a class that meets only twice a week, and 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 course. Habitual lateness will also lower your grade.

Other Information

Grading Assessment

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class. Success in this class depends on how well you meet all of the requirements and your willingness and ability to enter into the spirit of dedicated craftsmanship.

Grading is based on active participation in the workshops and discussions (25%), weekly critical and creative responses (25%), workshop poems and critiques (25%), and the final portfolio (25%). Creative work will be graded based on fulfillment of the instructions, rigor of the finished product, and the sense of adventure and exploration applied to the work.

Late work is not accepted and will receive no credit unless an extension has been arranged in advance. The completion deadline is part of the assignment. Also, please note that assignments will not be accepted via email. If an assignment is not turned in through the proper forum (in class, through Moodle, etc.), it will be considered late. You are responsible for finding out about any homework assigned while you were absent and completing the same before returning to class. I should not be the first person you ask about what you missed in class.

Please note that to receive a high grade in this course, you must not only satisfy the standard requirements, but also demonstrate excellence in participation, your written work, your development of revision and close reading skills, and your final revision.

Office Hours

You are welcome and encouraged to come to my office to talk about your work or anything relevant to it. (For example, I'll often recommend additional writers you might personally enjoy reading). I am happy to conference with you about an assignment at any point: before you begin your work, part way through its completion, or after you have a working draft together. While you will have one required conference with me this semester, it is strongly recommended that you see me several times over the course of the term to discuss your work in progress.

Electronic Devices

Please make sure to turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices (including laptops) prior to the start of class. There will be zero tolerance for ringing phones and texting in class, as such disruptions are distracting and disrespectful to the workshop community. If an emergency requires you to leave your phone on, please speak to me at the beginning of class. Texting is forbidden, and if you do it, I will ask you to leave our class, perhaps permanently.

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) if CDC and local health guidelines change.