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CRWR 511.01: Graduate Poetry Workshop

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CRWR 511, Work-Lust: Graduate Poetry Workshop, 3 credits, Fall 2021

Course Information

- Day/time: Monday, 6:00-8:50pm
- Location: LA 102

Contact Information

- Instructor: Keetje Kuipers
- Office: LA 127
- Email: keetje.kuipers@umontana.edu

Course Description

“What you must do must be done on your own // so get back in harness. The main thing is to write / for the joy of it. Cultivate a work-lust / that imagines its haven like your hands at night // dreaming the sun in the sunspot of a breast.” –Seamus Heaney

We are here to work. To work our poems, our minds, our souls, our hearts. We will read with a sense of hunger. We will write as though our lives depend on it. And we will come to know ourselves as poets dedicated to a craft that demands not only our devotion but our desire. We will do all of this as comrades in the intimate writing community we are building here and as members of the larger literary community and lineage to which we also belong.

Course Outcomes

Students will:

- develop skills of self-critique and learn to apply them to works-in-progress
- add depth and breadth to their knowledge of contemporary American poetry
- compose a linked portfolio of new and revised poems
- come to understand the role of literary community and lineage in their work

Required Texts/Readings

Texts

There will be no universally assigned texts for this class. Instead, you will each be creating your own reading lists over the course of the semester. Additionally, I will be bringing individual essays and poems into class for us to discuss.

Course Requirements

Class Format and Procedures

The class will be split into two groups—River and Meadow—alternating workshop most weeks, except when we have revision workshops which will include poems from everyone in the class. Students 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 goals for the work. 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

For workshop, you will come to class having read the other students' poems, and will provide thorough oral and written critiques. In addition to writing and responding to these workshop poems, you will also be:

- completing critical responses (~2 pages) to reading assignments of essays by poets in our shared poetic lineage (# TBD)
- preparing questions about writing, revising, and shaping a first collection of poems for Zoom visits with four debut authors
- turning in an additional poem for my eyes only on the workshop days when you do not have a poem being considered by the class (4 total)
- building a personal reading list of 4 books accompanied by written reflections
- preparing a final portfolio
- memorizing one of their own poems for presentation

Revision, Final Portfolio, and Memorization

You will do a Big Revise of the four poems turned in for workshop over the course of the semester, using specific revision prompts from Carmen Jimenez Smith and examples of revision techniques found on *underbelly*. Your final portfolio will consist of these four dramatically revised poems, along with four additional poems (shared with me over the course of the semester but not shared with the workshop) that come together to create a suite of work connected by mode, theme, subject, concept, or style. These additional poems should also undergo revision, of course, but they will not be part of your Big Revise assignment.

For the portfolio, you will also compose a critical introduction that explores these poems as part of your holistic body of work, and discusses how the books you chose to read this semester informed your creative practice for our class. It is integral that your final reading list reflect a

sense of diversity and adventure in your reading process in terms of gender, race, and sexuality, as well as style, theme, and the range of large and small houses publishing poetry today. I encourage you to share your discoveries with your peers throughout the semester, so that you may each gain from the others' reading habits.

On our last day of class, you will present your portfolio and lead a discussion of the books on your reading list. Included in this presentation will also be a performance of a poem of your own memorized and recited for the class.

A Note as You Craft Your Poems

I encourage you to allow yourself to see where the poems take you this semester rather than beginning with a thematic or stylistic goal. I am often surprised to discover that my work is already interlinked in various ways without me even intending to create such connections. Approach your writing with a sense of possibility, discovery, and surprise instead of carefully plotted intention. Save that more focused mode for revision, when you'll have the chance to shape the poems into something you perhaps hadn't yet realized they could come to be.

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, and your style or voice—where it's come from, where it is now, where it's going, and how to refine and articulate it. You are expected to come to conferences on time and prepared with whatever we need to have our discussion (masks required, of course)

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%), 4 Big Revise poems (25%), a final portfolio (15%), and memorization of your poem (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 (including during my office hours). 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.