

Fall 9-1-2018

CRWR 491.03: ST: Poet's Journals

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Recommended Citation

Szymaszek, Stacy A., "CRWR 491.03: ST: Poet's Journals" (2018). *Syllabi*. 8119.
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A VERSE RECORD: JOURNAL POEMS – CRWR 491 (Special Topics)

University of Montana Fall 2018

Instructor: Stacy Szymaszek

Contact: stacy.szymaszek@mso.umt.edu

Course Time/Day/Room: Thursdays 3:30pm – 6:20pm ECK(LA)233

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2pm-5pm & by appointment / ECK(LA)231

“Writing for me is a kind of daily practice. Even if you don’t have anything to say, you keep your hand in...” – Joanne Kyger

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What does time show in our lives? How does poet-logic (sequencing, fluidity) run amok with temporal order and reveal multidimensionality? Wallace Stevens lamented the "malady of the quotidian," but what is a momentous event? This class will assert that poetry as an art form uniquely reveals how the daily and the cosmic occur in the same dimension, and how we as poets construe the self (or various selves) creating synergy between these dimensions. We'll read work that takes time (years or hours or down to minutes of the day) as a basis of composition, starting with some examples from the Japanese poetic diary tradition (Ki no Tsurayuki's *The Tosa Diary* and Masaoka Shiki's *The Verse Record of My Peonies*) as well as work by an array of contemporary poets.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Through studying, discussing, and emulating some of the journal poem approaches taken by poets, you will become self-motivated readers and disciplined writers of poetry that takes risks with form and content. By the end of the class, you will have a strong final manuscript. Using the classroom as an incubator to support your own searching, developing, and coming into your own sense of what matters in your work, as well as the self-possession to use your experience as subject matter, are the most important goals of this seminar.

Required work to achieve these objectives will include:

- Read and annotate weekly readings
- Engage in all in-class writing, discussion, and other individual and collaborative activities

- Write brief weekly responses to the work we read (1/2 -1 page)
- Work on your journal poem project for your final manuscript
- Revise work through peer review, self-assessment, and my feedback

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Philip Whalen - *Overtime*

giovanni singleton - *Ascension*

Bernadette Mayer - *Midwinter Day*

Available at the UM Bookstore.

In addition to the three required books, I will provide supplementary reading packets as PDFs.

STRUCTURE:

Along with the reading and writing of poetry and the written responses, each class will have a ten-minute focus freewrite (I will provide a theme or a stylistic consideration that relates to our reading as a frame of reference). These writings can be used to develop your final manuscript. For your final manuscript, you will come up with a writing project at the beginning of the semester that incorporates elements of record-keeping, journaling, the temporal, autobiography, etc... . If you would like to discuss ideas for your project we can do so during my office hours.

Basic structure for classes (subject to revision if needed):

- Reading texts aloud
- Focused freewrite
- Sharing freewrite (in class) or new poems (out of class assignments)
- Discussion (in groups of 4 or 5)*
- Discussion full class

*I will organize groups of 4 or 5 students to work in groups for half an hour each class, then come together to workshop a poem from each group in a collaborative fashion. This will allow each student to receive feedback from your group and rotational feedback from the class at large.

All course work (unless stated otherwise) must be typed or computer printed on standard white paper. If you know you will be sharing your work with the class, be sure to make the appropriate number of copies to hand out. While there will be writing assignments as well as reading texts aloud in class, you will be expected to do most of your writing and reading for the course on your own time.

GRADING:

35% in-class participation, 20% weekly assignments/responses (on time), 20% mid-semester portfolio, and 25% final manuscript. I expect full participation and will allow for only two absences.

POLICY ON ABSENCES AND LATENESS:

The standard policy is that more than three absences in a fourteen-week term may result in a grade of “no credit.” You must arrive on time for class and stay until dismissal. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. If there is an emergency please speak to me about it as soon as you can.

CULTURAL OR CEREMONIAL LEAVE:

“Cultural or ceremonial leave allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student’s customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student’s attendance or participation.” For full information on this and other academic [policies and procedures](http://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures/) see: <http://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures/>.

OFFICE HOURS/CONTACTING ME:

I encourage you to meet with me if you wish to discuss your work, an idea, or simply need additional support. You may also request an appointment outside of office hours. When you email me, I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. Please put CRWR 491 in the subject line of your emails.

CLASS DECORUM:

My preference is that you shut down and store all electronic devices during class unless our work calls for them, however I will only make a point of asking you to put a device away if you appear distracted or are distracting others. Beverages are okay, but please refrain from eating in class. During discussions, we will work toward a lively, engaged style of conversation that allows for balanced, respectful sharing of questions, opinions, feedback, and debate.

I encourage you to exchange University of Montana email addresses with your peers as you will be getting to know each other through your own work and responses. Since we are creating a conscientious and supportive environment, I trust that you will be mindful and respectful of each other and your shared work and will not discuss the work with persons outside of our workshop unless you have permission from the author. Since the topic of the class is life-writing (journal poems), you will most likely be exploring personal themes in your work. The classroom will serve as a comfortable environment in which to do so.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator, so I can do my best to support you.

NAME/ PRONOUN STATEMENT:

I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate/preferred name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty—in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning—will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. For a definition of plagiarism or if you are unsure about your rights and responsibilities, please take the time to consult the [student conduct code](http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/) (<http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/>) on the University of Montana's website.

COURSE CALENDAR (SUBJECT TO REVISION):

August 30: Introduction to course and overview of syllabus

Japanese poetic diaries (*The Tosa Diary* by Ki no Tsurayuki, "The Verse Record of My Peonies" by Masaoka Shiki, *Narrow Road to the Interior* by Basho) (handout)

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Homework for next class: from Whalen's *Overtime*, read "Sourdough Mountain Lookout," "Self-Portrait Sad," "Since You Ask Me," "Three Mornings," and others I will add in class

September 6: Notebook strategies

Japanese poetic diaries continued

September 13: Following the lineage

Discussion of Phillip Whalen, Joanne Kyger, Diane di Prima, and others

September 20: The structured walk (we'll be going outside for this)

More Whalen

Walking poems (more Basho, Kimiko Hahn, Harryette Mullen, Andy Fitch & Jon Cotner), and more Whalen

September 27: Grieving over time

Ascension by Giovanni Singleton, Kamau Brathwaite (handout)

October 4: More on grieving over time

October 11: Extreme journaling

Midwinter Day by Bernadette Mayer, Hannah Weiner, Ron Silliman (handout)

October 18: **Mid-semester portfolio due**

Midwinter Day and journal poems from the New York School

October 25: Day books / where am I?

Handout (George Oppen, Simon Ortiz, Jonas Mekas, Lorine Niedecker, C.S. Giscombe, Robert Grenier, Barbara Henning, and others)

November 1: Day books, continued

(I will be absent/sub. teacher)

November 8: Year books

Fiends Fell by Tom Pickard, *Seasons* by Etel Adnan, *20 Lines a Day* by Harry Mathews (handout)

November 15: Year books, continued

November 22: (Thanksgiving / no class)

November 29: The ending of time / poets as predictors

David Bohm and J Krishnamurti (handout)

“Poem for the End of Time” by Noelle Kocot

“A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island” by Frank O’Hara

December 6: Entire class reserved for workshopping

December 13: In-class poetry reading

Portfolios due by email by 11:59pm