

# INTERMEDIATE POETRY WRITING

Professor Merrill Cole  
[M-Cole@wiu.edu](mailto:M-Cole@wiu.edu)  
<http://faculty.wiu.edu/M-Cole/>

English 385, Section 001  
Intermediate Poetry Writing

Office: Simpkins 109  
Hours: M, 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
Th, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

T, 5:30-8:00 p.m.  
Simpkins 308

## TEXTS

Addonizio, Kim. *Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within*. ISBN: 0393334163  
*Poems will be posted for class discussion on my website—NOT on WesternOnline.*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course offers poets the opportunity to refine and develop their art by exploring a variety of possibilities. Becoming a better poet means more than mastering technique, though we will spend a good deal of time experimenting with poetic form. Becoming a better poet also means developing critical awareness of ourselves and of the world around us. This seminar will explore poetic composition as the opportunity to live up to the potential of who we are and to explore who we might become.

The best writers are the best readers, for contrary to popular belief, writers must carefully study other writers in order to excel at their art. We will examine the productions of a variety of published poets, always with an eye to learning about technique. The poems will serve to increase the understanding of literary language, to widen the vocabulary, to cultivate the appreciation of diverse styles, and to inspire our own creations.

This course is a writing workshop, where participants are expected regularly to submit writing in progress. Writers need practice—and then more practice. We will also have routine classroom and homework exercises.

There will be focused writing assignments, but students will also have opportunities to write as they please. Discipline alone is the death of creativity. Freedom without discipline leads nowhere interesting. In attempting to balance the two, the course is designed to produce better poets.

## REQUIREMENTS

This is a **portfolio** course, meaning that each student will present a final portfolio of twenty pages, or a little more, at the end of the course. The portfolio may consist of any number of poems, including prose poems. As a general rule, two poems should not appear on the same page. Along with the portfolio, students will turn in a three-page **self-reflective essay** on how they have revised their workshop poems. Students will also keep a **journal** with at least one entry every day.

I expect you always to bring to class the poems that I assign from my website, whether on an electronic device, or in print. I welcome student reading suggestions, but I reserve the right to make the ultimate decision on the readings. *All homework exercises and all workshop poems must be **printed** in enough copies for all class members, not including me. All homework assignments and workshop poems must be **uploaded on WesternOnline** as Microsoft Word attachments before the beginning of class.*

After a poem is workshopped in class, you will **email** the student and me with a **50+ word critique**. This counts in participation. Critiques need to be emailed by Friday at 5:00 p.m. The Poetry Critique Guidelines explain what is expected and how the critiques are graded.

Everyone *must* actively participate. Lack of participation will damage and perhaps destroy your grade. This means doing the homework, completing the readings, performing class activities, and joining in workshop. Please see <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for student rights & responsibilities.

## GRADING

Participation:	15% (includes credit for workshop submissions)
Critiques:	15%
Journal:	10%
Self-Reflective Essay:	10%
Portfolio:	50%

Missing classes, or arriving late, will affect the participation grade. *A student with more than two **unexcused** absences automatically fails the course.* I am lenient, though: if you give me a valid reason to miss, or to have missed, a session, I will probably excuse you (I may ask for documentation.). Poems are only graded in the portfolio, but you get credit for workshopping them. Attendance at the readings of Case Writers-in-Residence is required. Lazy students make lousy poets. You waste your time and mine if you don't work hard.

## VISITING MY OFFICE

Please take the opportunity to meet with me during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings, or your writing. I very much appreciate any kind of feedback about the course.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

## DISCRIMINATION POLICY

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: [http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

## SCHEDULE

I am open to make changes to keep the learning situation active and dynamic.

OG=*Ordinary Genius*. Please note that you are expected to have read the pages before you come to class. *Poetry selections are not listed below.*

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| January 14: | Introduction to the course. Haiku.  |
| January 21: | OG, 13-46. Five-poem homework due. Open workshop. Workshop on exercise poems. |
| January 28: | OG, 47-59. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                         |

- February 4: OG, 61-76. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- February 11: OG, 77-95. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- February 18: Open workshop. In-Class exercises.
- February 25: OG, 99-108. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- March 3: Workshop on exercise poems.

## **SPRING BREAK**

- March 17: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- March 24: Open workshop. In-Class exercises.
- March 31: OG, 109-26. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- April 7: OG, 135-46. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- April 14: OG, 148-63. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- April 21: OG 164-69. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- April 28: Portfolio workshop. **Journal due.**

**Portfolio due on Monday, May 4 at 1:00 p.m.; or Friday, May 1, by midnight for my comments.**