

# Intermediate Poetry Writing

Professor Merrill Cole  
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<http://faculty.wiu.edu/M-Cole/>

English 385, Section 001  
Fall Semester 2012

Office: Simpkins 109  
Hours: TTH, 12:30-2:00; W, 12:30-1:30

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

## Texts

Addonizio, Kim and Dorianne Laux. *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*. ISBN: 0393316548  
*Poems will be posted for class discussion on my website.*

## Course Objectives

This course offers poets the opportunity to refine and develop their skills and to explore a variety of poetic possibilities. Becoming a better poet means more than mastering technique, though we will spend a good deal of time practicing poetic form, both traditional and experimental. 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 carefully study 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 also 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 be able 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 of the portfolio.

As the midterm assignment, each student will write a three-page analysis of the importance of a particular published poet to her or his own works. These reflective, personal essays will be read aloud, as well as turned in for a grade.

I expect you always to print and to bring to class the poems assigned from my website. I welcome student poetry suggestions, but reserve the right to make the ultimate decision on what we read as a class.

*All homework exercises and all poems must be printed in enough copies for all class members, including me. Grades will be penalized otherwise.*

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 class discussion, particularly when we review someone else's writing.

Please see <<http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student/>> for student rights and responsibilities.

## Grading

Participation:		40%
Homework:	20%	
Class Participation:	20%	
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). Please let me know, if you have another class or responsibility right before our session begins that prevents you from arriving on time. Whenever you arrive late, it is your responsibility to make sure I've recorded your attendance.

Lazy students make lousy poets. While this course might be considered "easy" in the conventional academic sense of the term—it's easy to pass—you are wasting 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 policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I will make academic accommodations for any student who notifies me of the need. For me to provide the proper accommodation(s), you must provide me documentation from Disability Support Services. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to my attention, as I am not legally permitted to ask. Students who require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e., fire, tornado, etc.) should tell me the most appropriate procedures to follow. Please contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512.

## Schedule

I am open to make changes to keep the learning situation active and dynamic. At this time, however, I have a plan: we will spend the first half of every session discussing the reading and workshopping homework exercises; the second half will be devoted to open workshop (we will also do other things if there's not enough new writing). We will have a 15 minute break at some time in the middle, so long as students remain diligent about getting back on time.

PC=*The Poet's Companion*. Poems are not listed below.

Week 1: August 21

Introduction to the course  
In-Class readings & exercises

Week 2: August 28

PC, Introduction & "Writing and Knowing"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 3: September 4

PC, "The Family: Inspiration & Obstacle"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 4: September 11

PC, "Death and Grief"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 5: September 18  
PC, "Writing the Erotic"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 6: September 25  
PC, "The Shadow"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 7: October 2  
PC, "Witnessing"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 8: October 9     **Midterm Reflective Essay**  
PC, "Poetry of Place"; exercises  
Reading of the Reflective Essays

Week 9: October 16  
PC, "Images"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 10: October 23  
PC, "Simile and Metaphor"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 11: October 30  
PC, "The Music of the Line"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 12: November 6  
PC, "Voice and Style"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 13: November 13  
PC, "Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments"; exercises  
Open Workshop

***Thanksgiving Break***

Week 14: November 27  
PC, "Meter, Rhyme, and Form"; exercises  
Open Workshop

Week 15: December 4     **Final Portfolio**  
PC, "Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues"; exercises

Final Exam Week     **Creative Writing Students Reading: Date and Time TBA**