

# Intermediate Poetry Writing

Professor Merrill Cole  
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English 385, Section 001  
Fall Semester 2013

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

TTh, 3:30-4:45 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.*

## Course Objectives

This course offers poets the opportunity to refine and develop their skills and to explore the variety of poetic 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 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. Students will also keep a journal with at least one entry every day. 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 that I assign from my website. I welcome student reading 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.* 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.

After a poem is workshopped, you will email the student and me with a critique. This counts as participation.

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

## Grading

Participation:		40%
Homework:	20%	
Workshop:	20%	
Reflective Essay:		10%
Portfolio:		50%

Missing classes, or arriving late, will affect the participation grade. *A student with more than three **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. 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.

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.

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|---------------|--|
| August 20:    | Introduction to the course. Haiku.                             |
| August 22:    | OG, 13-31. Open workshop.                                      |
| August 27:    | <i>Class canceled.</i>   |
| August 29:    | <i>Class canceled.</i>   |
| September 3:  | OG, 32-46. Five-poem homework due. Workshop on exercise poems. |
| September 5:  | Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                     |
| September 10: | OG, 47-59. Workshop on exercise poems.                         |
| September 12: | Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                     |
| September 17: | OG, 61-76. Workshop on exercise poems.                         |
| September 19: | Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                     |
| September 24: | Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                     |
| September 26: | Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.                     |

- October 1: **Reflective essay due.** Open workshop.  
 October 3: OG, 77-95. Workshop on exercise poems.
- October 8: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 October 10: Open workshop.
- October 15: OG, 99-108. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 October 17: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- October 22: OG, 109-26. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 October 24: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- October 29: OG, 127-34. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 October 31: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- November 5: OG, 135-46. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 November 7: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- November 12: OG, 148-63. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 November 14: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

#### **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

- November 19: OG 164-69. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.  
 November 21: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- December 3: Portfolio workshop.  
 December 5: **Portfolio & Journal due.**

*There will be a student reading during final exam week, date and time TBA.*