

Intermediate Poetry Writing

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

English 385, Section 001
Intermediate Poetry Writing

Office: Simpkins 109
Hours: MW, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
TTh, 3:15-4:15 p.m.

Th, 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 WesternOnline.

Course Objectives

This course offers poets the opportunity to refine and develop their skills, exploring a 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 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 emailed to me 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 **100+ word critique**, formatted as a Microsoft Word attachment. This counts as participation. Critiques need to be emailed within 48 hours. 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:	20% (includes credit for workshop submissions)
Critiques:	20%
Journal:	5%
Self-Reflective Essay:	5%
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. I will dock a student a letter grade for missing a Case reading.

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 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.*

- January 19: Introduction to the course. Haiku.
- January 26: OG, 13-46. Five-poem homework due. Open workshop. Workshop on exercise poems.
- February 2: OG, 47-59. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- February 9: OG, 61-76. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.
- February 16: OG, 61-76. Workshop on exercise poems.

February 23: Open workshop. In-Class exercises.

March 2: OG, 77-95. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

March 9: Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

Spring Break

March 23: OG, 99-108. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

March 30: OG, 109-26. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

April 6: Open workshop.

April 14: OG, 135-46. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

April 21: OG, 148-63. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

April 28: OG 164-69. Workshop on exercise poems. Open workshop.

May 5: Portfolio workshop. **Journal due.**

Portfolio due on Monday, May 8 at 1:00 p.m., or Friday, May 6, by midnight for comments.