

Advanced Poetry Writing
Engl 406-406G – 002
Tues. Thurs.
BB221 12-1:15

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The Course

From: “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction” by Wallace Stevens

Perhaps

The truth depends on a walk around a lake,
A composing as the body tires, a stop
A definition growing certain and
A wait within that certainty, a rest
In the swags of pine-trees bordering the lake.
Perhaps there are times of inherent excellence.

Welcome to the mosey mile of poetry. This course will put foot sores in your brain spores. Through contemplative studies and active walks we are going to compose the world with our bodies and minds. What we receiveth in the form of inspiration from our texts, we will giveth with our eyes as we walk and we will create poems from a fusion of both. We will discuss works by those who have gone before and works of our own. We will experiment and we will experience the thrill of nature and our bodies in (e)motion.

Why a walking course? Because all the great romantic poets were walkers. Because your imagination doesn't like to be confined and neither do you. Because there are strange messages that we, as poets, have been sent to receive. Because poetry is an act of the body and the mind. Inspiration means to breathe. Walking makes you breathe.

The Readings

Inger Christensen – The Alphabet
Alfred Star Hamilton – Dark Dreambox of Another Kind
Rob Schlegel – The Lesser Fields
Sarah Vap – Arco Iris
Numerous handouts to be printed off Blackboard

The Class

This class meets twice a week. On Tuesdays we will be discussing texts and sharing our weekly poems. On Thursdays we will be walking. Unless the weather is life threatening, we will walk. You are expected to wear appropriate clothing.

Discussion Leaders/Textual Responses

Each week we will have three people responsible for leading discussions concerning our assigned readings. You should come to class with three to four questions for us to consider and a 300-400 word response to the reading. Discussion leaders are expected to have looked up weird references and terms that appear in the text. Responses are worth 20 points.

Weekly Poems

Your weekly poems will be, at least, peripherally inspired by our walks and the texts we are studying. In a world dominated by cars and phones, walking is a kind of subversion. The poems you write, like your walks, should be acts of subversion and perversion of normalcy. Weekly poems are worth 20 points.

Workshop

Unlike other poetry classes, this will not be a workshop intensive class. We will have the occasional workshop, but not every week. You will receive feedback from me on all your weekly poems. I will also be available to conference with you, if you would like.

The Walks

We will walk almost every Thursday throughout the semester, rain or shine. You are expected to bring appropriate clothing. Each walk will take about an hour. I am flexible regarding people's health and perambulating speed. If you don't complete the full walk, that is fine. I am not flexible with regards to cheating – i.e. going to a coffee shop or working on other homework while you are supposed to be walking. If you are caught doing this, you will not get better than a C in the class. If you have that much to do, take the absence. Don't waste your time. Cell phones are not permitted on the walks. Tell everyone you know, that you are not available on Thursdays.

Public Reading Responses (10 points each)

Throughout the semester there will be readings given by poets and other writers in public forums. You are required to attend at least two of these and to write a 1-2 page response (double spaced). You may want to research the poet and read some of their poems online to further your understanding of their poetry.

Final Project

Your final project will consist of an artist's book of ten poems that captures the spirit of our walks. Included with this will be a short essay discussing your own thoughts on walking.

Policies

Attendance and Tardiness: You are allowed 3 absences. Upon your 4th absence, you fail the course. Do not expect me to remind you of this. This course depends upon faithful attendance in order to facilitate class discussions and for the inspiration inherent in such discussions. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be counted absent. If you are absent the day of a walk, you will be expected to make it up on your own time.

Late Work: Work will be due at the beginning of class. You will have 24 hours after an assignment is due to email it for 1/2 credit. After 24 hours you will receive zero credit.

Plagiarism: Familiarize yourself with Boise State's Student Code of Conduct; it is available at http://www.boisestate.edu/osrr/scp/student_code.html. Evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment, and possibly for the class, depending on the severity of the incident.

Office of Disability Services: The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is responsible for ensuring that Boise State University maintains an educationally and physically open, accessible environment for students with disabilities. If you have needs that are not being met in the

classroom or need assistive technology, please contact the DRC. Their website is <http://drc.boisestate.edu/>.

Attitude: All discussions will be held in positive, constructive, adult, open and honest manners, which is to say that hostility of any kind towards anyone's work will be considered highly unprofessional and will not be tolerated. You will be kicked out of class. We will be reading poetry in this class that you might find offensive, so be prepared to approach it with an open mind and to form articulate and intelligent responses to it. If you find what you read to be draining positive energy out of the Universe, take it upon yourself to correct it with your own positive art. Be honest. Be fair.

Grades

This is a 400 level class. As such you will be expected to do advanced work. I will be looking for highly intellectual and seriously engaged work and discussions. Evidence of laziness, lack of participation, etc. will result in a lower grade. Do not expect an easy A.

Here's the breakdown:

A. Misses no more than two classes. Always arrives on time. Participates consistently and enthusiastically in class discussions and exercises. Listens to other students and responds thoughtfully. Completes all writing assignments, and turns in no more than one of them late. Completes all reading assignments and remembers what s/he has read. Asks questions often. Always brings texts and equipment to class. Receives an 18/20 or better on all textual responses. Attends two or more readings, writes two brilliant responses.

B. Misses no more than two classes. Always arrives on time. Participates in class discussions and exercises. Listens to other students and responds thoughtfully, if not regularly. Completes all writing assignments, and turns in no more than two or three of them late. Completes all reading assignments and remembers what s/he has read. Asks questions occasionally. Always brings texts and equipment to class. Receives a 17/20 or better on all textual responses. Attends two readings, writes good responses.

C. Misses no more than three classes. Almost always arrives on time. Sometimes participates in class discussions and exercises. Listens to other students and responds respectfully, but rarely. Completes almost all writing assignments, and turns in no more than three or four of them late. Completes almost all reading assignments and usually remembers what s/he has read. Asks questions rarely. Usually brings texts and equipment to class. Receives an 15/20 or better on all textual responses. Attends only one reading, writes a poor response or misses writing the responses.

D. Misses no more than four classes. Occasionally arrives on time. Rarely participates in class discussions and exercises. Listens to other students but almost never responds. Completes more than half of the writing assignments, and often turns them in late. Rarely completes reading assignments and rarely remembers what s/he has read. Never asks questions. Sometimes brings texts and equipment to class. Receives an 12/20 or better on all textual responses.

F. Misses more than five classes. Does not participate. Does not complete writing or reading assignments. Does not bring texts and equipment to class.

Tentative Schedule

WEEK	TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Week 1, Aug 27, 29	Intros	Rueffle, 3 Things Walk
Week 2, Sept 3, 5	Thoreau – Walking	Poem to share / Workshop
Week 3, Sept 10, 12	Ammons – Poem is a Walk Ammons – Corsons Inlet	Sense mapping / MEC Massachusetts
Week 4, Sept 17, 19	Solnit – ‘Blue	Color poem/walk
Week 5, Sept 24, 26	Schlegel - Lesser Fields Chinese Poems	Depot walk
Week 6, Oct 1, 3	Schlegel - Lesser Fields Hinton – Fossil Sky	Map poem
Week 7, Oct 8, 10	Vap – Arco Iris	River walk – east
Week 8, Oct 15, 17	Vap – Arco Iris	River walk – west
Week 9, Oct 22, 24	Christensen – Alphabet	Walk your name
Week 10, Oct 29, 31	Christensen – Alphabet	Protest Ditch Walk
Week 11, Nov 5, 7	Grad Student Lead Reading	Grad Student lead walk and writing
Week 12, Nov 12, 14	Grad Student Lead Reading	Grad Student lead walk and writing
Week 13, Nov 19, 21	Dream Box	Partner walk, partner poem
Week 14, Nov 26, 28	Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving
Week 15, Dec 3, 5	Dreambox	Workshop
Week 16, Dec 10, 12	Finals Due	