

Poetry 205 - 1070
Saturday 8am – 11am
LA104
Spring 2010

Adrian Kien

Office: 201-D, English Annex

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 5pm to 6pm and by appointment.

Email: adriankien@boisestate.edu

Texts

- *An Exaltation of Forms* by Finch & Varnes, available at the BSU Bookstore
- *All-American Poem* by Matthew Dickman
- *Scary, No Scary* by Zachary Schomberg
- Related Handouts

Course Description

This course will be an introduction to the reading, writing and performance of poetry. We will first read and study classical and experimental forms of poetry. Then you will try your hand at writing in some of these forms and then we will move into a workshop of poetry in whatever form you choose. I am especially interested in you coming up with fresh and creative poetry. No hallmark greeting cards. No Middle English. No poems written in Vulcan. Just your voice and experiences dripping out of your mouth like you just ate a human doughnut called your heart. My hope is that you will come away from this class with a better appreciation for poetry as a literary genre and as a tool for expressing and articulating your life. More than anything else I want you to write poetry. We will study forms and poets but the poet we will be focusing most of our attention on is you. Approach everything in this class with the question “How can I use this to make me a better poet?” Whatever “better” might mean to you.

Policies

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you are not in class or you are mentally absent you can't participate in workshops, readings or discussions. If you can't participate, you can't receive the benefits this class has to offer. Upon your 3rd absence, you will not get a grade better than a C. You can expect to receive a warning email from me upon your third absence. If you miss 4 classes, you fail.

Tardiness

This class will start promptly at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings. By signing up for this class you understand the responsibilities an early class like this entails. If you are not a morning person, please drop the class. If you are frequently late your grade will drop until it hits F.

Participation

Participation will be a large part of your grade. In class you will be required to comment on each other's work during workshop. In addition, I will request that you participate in discussions regarding outside texts, make presentations, and do in-class activities.

Lateness

Assignments are due when scheduled; arrange to submit completed assignments even if you are absent from class. You will have until the Wednesday after an assignment is due to email it to me and receive half credit. After this you will receive zero credit.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the undocumented use of someone else's work. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in your immediate removal from the class and a failing grade.

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. Be honest. Be fair.

Homework:

Readings

There will be a substantial amount of reading assignments of both poetry and prose about writing poetry. Class time will be devoted to discussing these reading assignments - so be prepared to participate and to respond to the occasional freewrite/quiz.

Poems

You can expect to write at least one poem a week according to an assigned form. We will spend considerable class time each week discussing these different forms. Some of these forms will require particular rhyme schemes and meters, others will be more philosophically based.

*Please abstain from writing rhyming poems unless the form dictates it. Rhyming poems tend to sacrifice a great deal for the sake of rhyme. Don't rhyme, it's a crime.

Workshop

As presenter

Throughout the semester you will be turning in poems for workshop. These should be poems that you have spent a significant amount of time crafting. It is your responsibility to post these poems to on blackboard a week before they are due and to bring a copy of the poem to class on your workshop day. Failure to attend class the day of your workshop will lower your letter grade. Attendance is required.

As responder

A 100 word, typed response is due for each poem that is workshopped. These responses need to be posted to Blackboard. In class you must bring a copy of your response and the workshop poem. You may also make any necessary notes on the poems themselves.

Presentations

At some point during the semester you will give a presentation on a poet of your choosing. This presentation should be about 8 minutes long. You should give us a brief biography of the poet, some sample poems, and an explanation of why this poet is relevant to us (10 points).

Please do not read from your notes or from a wikipedia entry, doing so will result in zero credit.

Public Readings

During the semester you will be required to attend at least two poetry readings and hand in a 1-2 page response to each reading. In class we will talk about the components of good poetry readings and you will be required from time to time to read poetry of your own and of others. Poetry is both a written and oral art form so be prepared to share your work. If you are uncomfortable or too shy to share your work, you shouldn't be in this class - or well, maybe hopefully by the end you will feel comfortable.

Papers

In addition to writing poems, you will be required to write an informal response to *All-American Poem* and *Scary, No Scary* (4 pages 2bl spaced, 10 points each) You will also have to provide a written response to each of the poetry readings (5 points each). Finally, you will have to write a statement discussing your poetics (or what you think about your poetry) that will accompany your final project (3 pages 2bl spaced).

Final Project:

Your final project will consist of at least 10 of your poems presented in a creative and original way. Included will be a statement of poetics.

I will be grading your final project on presentation, evidence that you revised, and that it contains thoughtful and imaginative poetry.

Grading

First, you must show competence in the written language (the application of standard grammar and punctuation is, generally, a benefit to poetry; in other words, poetry is not an excuse for sloppy writing). If you do not show competence in the written language, you cannot pass this course. Though not required by BSU, I highly recommend that you have completed English 102 before taking this class. See me if you have any difficulty.

Judging poetry is a partially subjective act, and what you learn in this course will not be immediately apparent in your writing. (It takes time to incorporate the knowledge you gain into your poems.) Therefore, the great majority of your grade will depend upon your participation. If you complete all reading and writing assignments (and show competence in the written language), you will earn, at the very least, a C. The quantity and quality of your participation in discussions will earn you an appropriately higher grade. If, at the end of the semester, you feel that I have not fully appreciated your participation, I encourage you to convince me that I have made an error in judgment. You talk, I'll listen.

Participation 35%

Homework and Papers 35%

Final Project 30%