

L 326 Intermediate Poetry — Spring 2009

Tuesday 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm

Jennifer Wallace (Office B 439; 443-423-1154; jwallace@mica.edu)

Office Hours: Wed. 11:00 am – 12:00 noon
Thurs. 10:00 am – 11:00 am
Or by appointment

Course Description

To quote American poet, Frank Bidart, “Making is the mirror in which we see ourselves.” In this class we will dive deeply into the notion of self and of making. . . of poems as made things that work as instruments of thought. And of the writer’s task to think and to reflect on his/her position in the process of making.

The class is underpinned by two essential biases:

1. that poems are art objects made by artists who use language intentionally, with the intention to communicate something.
2. *and*, that there are numerous techniques, conventions, structures that makers use to maximize the possibility of saying what they wish to say.

Our close reading of student poems will be supplemented by poems from other times and places as well as by analytical investigations by other authors. In-class exercises and other improvisations will keep us nimble.

Required Books (Required means required; if you do not read these books, you will not have any fun in the class).

Hirsch, Edward, ed. *The Poet’s Choice*

Mayes, Frances. *The Discovery of Poetry: A Field Guide to Reading and Writing Poems*

Padgett, Ron. *Handbook of Poetic Forms* (Recommended Book)

Class Handouts & Blackboard Posts

Course Requirements

This is an upper-level course in reading, writing, listening and conversing. I know what *I* think; I care about what *you* think about what you’ve read and about what you’ve written and I want to learn more about my own ideas through listening to yours. Consequently, there are high expectations for students to participate actively and deeply in class discussions.

Each week you will be asked to memorize a short poem, to read assigned prose and poems and to talk about what you think about what you’ve written and read. Two analytical responses/critiques to these readings and/or to specific poems will be required throughout the semester. Each week you will write a poem exploring the element of poetic craft we’ve discussed in class. These poems will be “presented” in class according to a schedule to be discussed. Other requirements include: three conferences with the instructor, a final portfolio including: an annotated anthology of favorite poems, a collection of 10-13 revised poems and a self-evaluation essay (2-3 pages).

Absences and Lateness

More than three absences (unless excused) will result in a failing grade. Lateness in excess of 10 minutes will count as a half-absence. Missed assignments may be turned in up to 1 week after the due date, but points will be deducted for each late day.

Grades

Grades will be based on a student's commitment to the revision process and willingness to wrestle with the topics covered in class. This bears repeating: **There are high expectations for students to participate actively and deeply in class discussions.** Your poems and other written work should go through many revisions.

My Commitment to You

This is a demanding class. A lot will be expected of you. I plan to read and write with you. We will work hard and learn about the ways poetry can help us in the experience of being human. In return for your commitment to the endeavor, I will respect your work and offer you my most rigorous and loving attention.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change based on the instructor's and students' interests)

Date	Topic
Jan. 20	Thought & Language, Words & Meanings, Poems and Prose. Syllabus, etc. George Oppen & his instruments of thought.
Jan. 27	The Speaker: The Eye of the Poem DUE: Mayes Chapters 1 & 4
Feb. 3	The Reader's Life DUE: Stephen Dobyns "Writing the Reader's Life" (Blackboard)
Feb. 10	CONFERENCES DUE: 3 revised poems, using Mayes, p. 484-6
Feb. 17	Interpretation & Critique DUE: Mayes Chapter 10 ANALYTICAL ESSAY #1
Feb. 24	Workshop
March 3	Compression, Adjectives and Other Parts of Speech DUE: Ellen Bryant Voight, "Rethinking Adjectives" (Blackboard) Virginia Tufte, "Prepositions" (Blackboard)
March 10	Metaphor and Image DUE: Dobyns "Metaphor and the Authenticating Act of Memory" (Blackboard) Mayes, Chapter 3
March 24	Syntactic Symbolism DUE: Virginia Tufte, "Syntactic Symbolism" (Blackboard) ANALYTICAL ESSAY #2
March 31	CONFERENCES 3 revised poems, using Mayes p. 484-6
April 7	Subject and Style DUE: Mayes Chapter 9 Geof Huth "Twelve Visual Poems" (Handout)
April 14	Workshop DRAFT ANTHOLOGY DUE
April 21	Four Temperaments and the Forms of Poetry DUE: Gregory Orr, "Four Temperaments..." (Blackboard)
April 28	CONFERENCES 3 revised poems, using Mayes p. 484-6
May 5	Last Class: FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE

GRADES

How does anyone assign a grade to a creative endeavor? What an absurd proposition. In any case, we are stuck with it and I'll try to outline for you here some broad guidelines.

A Student comes to class prepared and remains engaged in discussions. Contributes informed and reflective comments to discussions about readings. Arrives on time and has no more than one absence. All assignments are turned in on time. Essays and anthologies are thoughtful, incisive, coherent and free of grammatical errors. Poems have a clear voice and range of vocabulary, imagination and sophisticated use of poetic techniques.

Poems undergo many revisions. Willing to break out and experiment with formal approaches.

B Student misses one class and/or arrives late occasionally. Some work may not be turned in on time. Some missed assignments, sometimes comments on readings in class, but hangs back most of the time. Essays and anthologies are thoughtful but lack deep, incisive arguments/critiques and/or demonstrate an incomplete understanding of the material we've developed in class. Grammatical issues. Poems have a clear voice but are only minimally revised and exhibit minimal attention to poetic craft techniques.

C Student misses two classes and/or arrives late often. Some work may not be turned in on time. Some missed assignments, rarely comments on readings in class. Essays and anthologies show a minimal understanding of the material we've developed in class and have significant grammatical issues. Doesn't take advantage of writing studio. Poems lack a clear voice and do not exhibit attention to utilizing poetic craft elements.

D Student misses two-three classes and is late often. Does not participate in discussions and is unprepared. Does not turn work in on time. Never comments in class. Essays and anthology show minimal thought or effort and have significant grammatical issues. Doesn't take advantage of writing studio. Poems lack a clear voice and are unrevised. Ends the semester with an incomplete body of work. Shows little attempt to experiment with and master basic craft elements.

F Student misses three or more classes. Is late often. Misses a majority of assignments. Never comments in class. Always turns assignments in late. Essays are undeveloped and full of grammatical errors. Doesn't take advantage of writing studio. Ends the semester with an incomplete body of work. Shows no attempt to experiment with and master basic craft elements.

ADA Compliance Statement

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Jennifer Wallace, faculty Language, Literature & Culture, privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://www.mica.edu/learningresourcecenter/>.

Health and Safety Compliance

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

The Office works to provide EHS support for all members of the MICA community. The primary goal of the Office is to be proactive in establishing a culture of safety in which each member of the community shares ownership responsibility that allows each person to be involved in maintaining a healthy work and studying environment. EHS uses several methods to achieve this objective.

First, the EHS office looks at the totality of the EHS requirements by combining campus needs with state and federal requirements and clearly communicating the shared policies and procedures. Second, EHS identifies training needs and develops guidelines for the use of equipment, material and procedures. Third, we ensure compliance with policies through evaluations, inspections, and committees.

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to understand health and safety policies relevant to their individual activities and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan, as well as to participate in training, drills, etc. It is also each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of the Academic Department's also publish EHS procedures and policies such as a dress code, the use of personal protective equipment, fire safety, training, and how to properly dispose of chemical waste. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the faculty to review, test, and assess each student's awareness of basic safety procedures, such as evacuation routes, use of chemicals, fire prevention, and all other guidelines posted by the Environmental Health and Safety Office, (e.g., smoking policy, independent studio policies, pet policy, disposing of hazardous and chemical waste, etc).