

SYLLABUS

HUM 611—OLD FORMS/NEW FORMS

March 9-13, 2011 Wednesday–Sunday: 9am-5pm

Instructor: Professor Martine Bellen Room:

New Forms/Old Forms: An Immersive Fiction and Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop

Forms abound in our lives—from census forms to tax returns to report cards; today, we sometimes even fill out forms to make restaurant reservations! We are constantly telling the stories of our lives through forms--creating content from form. This writing workshop will investigate how form and forms can be used to draw from us innovative content and how renowned authors have used time-honored forms to tell the most contemporary of tales.

In New Forms/Old Forms, we will focus on short contemporary works--both fiction and poetry--that utilize old forms in new ways (and new forms too). Angela Carter and Robert Coover breathe fresh life and meaning into the fairytale. Aaron Shurin and Harryette Mullen reexamine Shakespeare's sonnets. From Greek mythology to credit card forms, forms that might have once seemed stuffy, antiquated, or inhibiting will be revisited in this workshop to reveal a cornucopia of reading and writing riches.

Course Requirements:

An oral presentation (described below)

Critiquing of student writing

6 writing assignments

25 pages of creative writing

Texts:

Students will be sent a PDF of texts to be read for the course (the complete PDF should be Xeroxed and brought to each class). Each student will read the book by the writer who they are doing their oral presentation on (oral presentations will be assigned).

PowerPoint can be used for oral presentations but is not required.

Authors included in PDF: Harryette Mullen, Robert Cover, James Tate, Anne Sexton, Elizabeth Robinson, Elaine Equi, Gregory Orr, Angela Carter, Italo Calvino, Georges Perec, Ted Berrigan, Aaron Shurin, Keith Waldrop, Kelly Link, Linh Dinh, Russell Edson, Miranda July, Anne Carson, Tao Lin, Amy Hempel.

Other books students might want to look at but will not be read in class:

NOX by Anne Carson

ONE WITH OTHERS by C.D. Wright

CHANGING by Lily Hoang

SEVEN CONTROLLED VOCABULARIES AND OBITUARY; THE JOY OF

COOKING by Tan Lin

DICTEE by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

THE FACTS OF WINTER by Paul Poissel (author), Paul LaFarge (translator)

Oral presentations: prepare a 15-minute oral presentation on the author (and his or her book) that you're assigned. Oral presentations should include author's bio, information about the tradition (author's influences/intentions) of the work. Find an interview, or two, to better understand the author's practice. Analyze author's writing techniques and analyze, unpack, the story / poem(s) that the class has read (that's in the PDF) and discuss how that work fits into the entire collection that you've read and the author's work as a whole. Discuss how author addresses form, in particular the form that is being focused on in the class. Prepare one or two discussion questions for the class. Students should bring a printout of the PDF to class.

Attendance policy: Since class lasts for only five days, no absences are permitted.

In-Class Portfolio of Work will be comprised of 6 pieces written (some critiqued during class) during the immersion week (class writing assignments). **Final Project**, which consists of twenty-five pages and is due two weeks after class ends, is the expansion of class writing assignments into one to three longer pieces (the parameters or scope of your project can be defined before class begins—more on this in a separate email). Final project might contain two short stories and one poem; one long story that includes both prose and poetry; one story and a poem; or another combination.

Grades will be based on attendance and participation, final project and oral presentation.

Day 1

Mythology, Fairytales

Read from the PDF packet of myth-based contemporary poems and prose (M pages 1-56): Mullen, Coover, Tate, Sexton, Robinson, Equi, Orr, Carter.

Discuss poems and prose that incorporate mythological motifs

Oral presentations

Watch scenes from Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus*

Writing exercise

Critiquing of students' work

Day 2

Writing Procedures

Read the PDF packet (P pages 57-139), which includes work by Italo Calvino, Georges Perec, Padgett on the sonnet, Ted Berrigan, Aaron Shurin, Harryette Mullen, Keith Waldrop, Linh Dinh, Elaine Equi.

Discuss Oulipo, sonnet form, collage, lists, and chance operation.

Discuss poems and prose

Oral presentation

Critique students' work

Day 3

Epistle

Types of letters to be explored are varied and can include love letters, apology letters, rejection letters, letters of application and recommendation.

Read the PDF packet (E pages 140-168), which includes work by Kelly Link, Russell Edson, Amy Hempel, Elaine Equi, Miranda July.

Discuss epistle poems and prose

Oral presentation

Critique students' work

Day 4

Other Forms

Types of other forms that will be discussed are the interview, dictionary types and definitions, documentary, and forms such as recipe, census, examination, application.

Read PDF packet of poems and prose (O pages 169-192), which includes work by Anne Carson, Elaine Equi, James Tate, Linh Dinh, Brenda Coultas, and Kim Echlin.

Discuss poems and prose

Oral presentation

Critique students' work

Day 5

Surrealist Narratives

Read PDF packet of poems and prose (S pages 187-215), which includes work by Miranda July, Linh Dinh, James Tate, Tao Lin, Russell Edson.

Watch excerpts from *Paprika* (anime film)

Discuss surrealist narrative poems and prose

Critique students' work

Oral presentations