CWL 310: Turning “I” into a Monster, Poetics and Performance
Jordan E. Franklin
S01 Tues/Thurs, 11:30 a.m-12:50 p.m
Office Hours, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:00 p.m
Email: Jordan.franklin@stonybrook.edu

CWL 310 Forms of Poetry
S01 Tues/Thurs, 11:30 a.m-12:50 p.m (Class # 94806), FREY HALL 326
Study of the genre through readings, discussion and regular submission of original work.
Course explores methods for expressing the human condition made available through poetry, with examples from the tradition of such tools as metaphor and image, sound, line, form, and juxtaposition. Areas of study include Powers of Poetry, Bright Containers: Form & Meter, and Methods & Madness, a study of the philosophical vs. visionary strains in poetry. Course may be repeated as the topic changes. Prerequisite: CWL 202

In this class of fine, necessary evils, I am its humble chaotic, tour guide. Join me as we decode the genre-warping leviathan known as "poetry", breaking it down into some of its basic techniques such as anaphora, metaphor, etc. As we do so, we will acquire the tools needed to build living, breathing monsters of our own!

Readings
All readings will be assigned through Blackboard and must be printed out, read and brought to class for us to discuss. Readings are not set in stone and are subject to change but there will be a fair amount of warning prior.

Each reading will be the work of a wide range of authors ranging from Diane Seuss to Pablo Neruda. I even plan on throwing in song lyrics for homework. Just be ready for an experience!

Workshop
Once you’ve completed an assignment or two (ones that you kind of dig and want to expand upon), I will begin the workshop phase. For those of you who want a timeline, this will be around week 3 or so. Workshops will be held every Thursday for a huge portion of the class. Rather than put you on the spot, I will break each of you up into small groups where your work will critiqued by your peers. You will sign up for these groups at the beginning of the semester and will critique the work of different teammates every Thursday. The pieces for workshop will be distributed each Tuesday. You are required to read the work and write a critique prior to Friday’s class. The pieces you choose to workshop can either be the product of an assignment or that of something you’ve been working on outside of class.

For those of you new to the whole experience, fear not! We will spend a portion of class or two going over the do’s and don’t’s of workshop. Luckily for you, I’m a seasoned veteran.
Assignments

Your assignments will be a mixture of readings and creative writings which I expect to be done prior to the next class. The writings will usually be a way for you to apply what you learned during that day’s lesson. Make sure you proofread your pieces prior to the due date.

If you know you are not going to be in class the day an assignment is due, be sure to email it to me. Trust me, it is much better than no assignment for the day.

Final Portfolio/Performance

At the end of the semester, you will present a final portfolio of your revised work including performance of one of the poems you wrote. Prior to the final day, I will teach classes on performance, offering tips.

Presentation

Besides writing poetry, I want you to develop an appreciation for it. While you are doing the readings and assignments, I want you to consider some of your favorite songs or poems that were not assigned. In a later class, you must ready a presentation discussing a poem or song you like. I will provide details prior to presentation.

Attendance Policy

Although a creative writing class can be fun and a gateway to some pretty heavy artistic experimentation (and I mean heavy with a capital H), it doesn’t mean that lateness and unexplained absences will be permitted. If you are late twice, it constitutes an absence. Six absences earns you a failing grade. I may crack jokes and dig cartoons a little too much but that doesn’t mean I’m a softie. Trust me, unless you have a legitimate excuse, I’m not budging. If you think you might be one of these unfortunate tardy souls, this class may not be for you.

Goals

1. Learn, through readings and assignments, about different poetic techniques such as anaphora, metaphor, imagery, etc.
2. Develop an appreciation for poetry through readings, assignments and presentations.
3. Explore a diverse range of writers across the genre of poetry. Some examples of writers that we will read this semester include Jeffrey McDaniel, Sylvia Plath, Yusef Komunyakaa, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ocean Vuong, and Terrance Hayes among others.
4. Experiment with poetry through the reading and dissection of different poetic forms such as the ghazal, persona poem, free verse, etc.
5. Learn about poetry’s range through the utilization of music, art and video clips.
6. Revise and edit your work encouraging class wide workshops of poems.
7. Develop communication and oral skills through in-class discussions and the performance of selected pieces during the open mic.
8. Create a portfolio of polished poems for either publication or potential MFA applications.

**Week 1: Introductions to Your Fellow Bards!**
8/30 Introductions to classmates, the class, the syllabus and to yours truly. What do you expect to get out of this class? What is your major? Why are you taking this class?

Assignment: Write a small 1-2 page bio of yourself. It can either be formal or informal. Due Thursday.

Assigned readings:

**Thursday:** “I think, therefore I am” and all that jazz...
9/1: Introductions continued. Sign-ups for workshop. What is poetry? Do you have any familiarity with poetry? Who are your favorite poets?

Assignment: Taking the 1-2 page bio you wrote for homework, write a short bio poem.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #1

**Week 2: Imagery**

Assignment: Using your five senses, I want you to describe yourself. How do you smell? What do you look like?

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #2

9/8: Imagery Continued. What is figurative language? What is a metaphor? What is a simile? Discussion of the readings. Converting the previous in-class assignment into metaphor and similes.

Assignment: Taking your previous assignment where you described yourself using sensory details, I want you to write a poem where you describe yourself using figurative language. Use “Motion” by Octavio Paz as a frame of reference. Be creative. Type this up and bring it into the next class.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #3
**Week 3: Repetition, Anaphora and Epistrophe**

9/13: What is repetition? What is its use? How does influence a poem? Discuss readings. What is a praise poem?

Assignment: Write a poem that utilizes repetition. It can a praise poem or anything you wish. Make sure the repetition is used effectively.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #4

9/15: What is anaphora? What is epistrophe? Introduce the poetic form known as the “ghazal”.

Assignment: Write a ghazal on a subject theme of your choice. For those of you being workshopped next Thursday, bring in enough copies of your poem to distribute to your group.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #5

**Week 4: Voice and Tone**

9/20: What is tone? How does one discern the tone of a poem or song through textual analysis? Workshop protocols and distribution of work for Thursday.

Assignment: Choosing an emotion selected during class, write a poem where you describe your chosen sentiment using imagery, figurative language and repetition. You must not use any synonyms of your chosen feeling.

Get ready for workshop on Thursday.

9/22: Workshop 1

Assignment: Group B, prepare copies for next workshop.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #6

**Week 5: Addressing the Reader, Dialogue in Poetry**

9/27: How is dialogue utilized in poetry? What effect is triggered when a poem addresses the reader directly? Second person perspective in poetry. Group B will distribute their work.

Assignment: Write a poem where you either address the reader or engage in a dialogue with an unseen figure.

Get ready for workshop.
9/29: Workshop 2

Assigned Readings:
  • Reading Packet #7

**Week 6: Persona**

10/4: What is a persona poem? What are the characteristics of persona poem? Group B will distribute their poems.

Write a persona poem from the perspective of a character or figure of your choice.

10/6: Workshop 3.

Assignment: Group A, bring copies of your work to distribute.

Assigned Readings:
  • Reading Packet #8

**Week 7: Love Poems**

10/11: What is a love poem? What makes a good love poem? Group A will distribute their work. Discuss presentations and sign-up sheet for presentations.

Assignment: Write a love poem. The subject can be a person, pet, cherished object or hobby. Feel free to be as funny or as serious as you wish.

Get ready for workshop.


Assignment: Group B, prepare copies to distribute.

Assigned Reading:
  • Reading Packet #9

**Week 8: Mean Poem**

10/18: What is a mean poem? What makes a successful mean poem? What are “the dozens”? Group C bring in your work to distribute.

Assignment: Using your own life experiences as a focus point, write a mean poem dedicated to someone who has wronged you in the past. Profanity is allowed.

Prepare for workshop.
10/20: Workshop 5.

Assignment: Group C, ready copies for distribution.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #10

**Week 9**: Ekphrasis
10/25: What is ekphrasis? Group C will distribute their work.

Assignment: Using the picture distributed in class, write an ekphrastic poem. Prepare for workshop.

10/27: Workshop 6

Assignment: Group A, ready copies for distribution.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #11

**Week 10**: Hybrid and Experimental Poetry
11/1: What is a hybrid poem? What is a bop poem? Group A will distribute copies.

Assignment: Research a poetic form and use it to create a new poetic form or write a poem in the bop format. Group A will distribute copies.

11/3: Workshop 7

Group B, ready copies of work for distribution.

Assigned Readings:
- Reading Packet #12

**Week 11**: Performance, Counterpoint
11/8: What is counterpoint? Watch or listen to clips of the readings. Are they read in a way that clashes with the subject matter? What is deadpan delivery? What is said vs. how it is said. Group B will distribute copies.

Assignment: TBD

Prepare for Workshop.
11/10: Workshop 8

Assignment: Group C, ready copies to distribute. Prepare presentations.

Assigned Readings:

• Reading Packet #13

Week 12: Performance, Sound

Assignment: Take a piece you’ve been working on, whether it be prose or a poem, and decide which parts will translate into a performance. Is there a character in your story that is so extravagant that you can take on a voice as you read for them? Is there an image or line in your poem imbued with so much emotion that it needs to be shouted instead of whispered? Be creative.

11/17: Workshop 9

Assignment: Group A will ready copies to distribute.

Assigned Readings: TBD

Week 13: Performance Continued
11/22: What are the ins and outs of reading for an audience? Pointers on performance and public speaking. Video clips will be included. Details on the Open Mic as well as presentations. Presentations, Part 2

11/24: Thanksgiving Break

11/29: Presentations, Part 3

Assignment: Get ready for the open mic.

Week 14: Swan Song
12/1: Open Mic Day

Share your work with the class. All performance styles welcome! Get your feel for public speaking and showmanship!

Week 15: Finals, Baby!
12/6: Discuss portfolios. What must be included: rough drafts, final products, reflection letter detailing your process, likes and dislikes about the piece, favorite lesson, etc.
12/8: Portfolios Due. Special Guest Speaker.
**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS) STATEMENT (must be the following language)**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website:  [http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities](http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities)

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT:**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/](http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/)

**CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT:**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.