

Beginning Poetry

University of Northern Iowa—Spring 2012

English 2715—Section 01

This class is about that “silly, absurd, maddening, futile, enormously rewarding activity: writing poems. I don’t know why we do it. We must be crazy. Welcome, fellow poet.”

(Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town*)

Time, Place: T/Th, 12:30-1:45, Lang 8
Instructor: Kim Groninga
Phone: 273-2821, leave a message
Office: 215 Baker Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00-12:15
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English Office: 117 Baker Hall

Materials Needed -----

- Texts: Fighting Kite, Vince Gotera
A Poetry Handbook, Mary Oliver
Poetry Out Loud: The Anthology, National Endowment for the Arts
The Triggering Town, Richard Hugo

- Internet Access (bookmark www.kimgroninga.com/students)

Course Objectives -----

This course will pay special attention to fundamental elements of poetry through reading, writing, reciting, and other activities. It will prepare students to enter UNI’s Craft of Poetry course. Students will also begin to develop their own voice, style, and poetics.



Additional Information - - - - -

Attendance: You are required to attend each class meeting and be prepared to work. We will work in groups and do many in-class assignments. You will learn from other students, and they will learn from you. Do not underestimate the knowledge, experience, and skills you bring to the group. If you are not in class, we miss the benefit of your input and you miss the contributions of the rest of us. That said, attendance will be taken at every class period. Work done in class cannot be made up. Each student is allowed two absences. Beyond those two, each absence will result in a 5-point deduction from the student's final grade.

Format for Papers: All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in a "normal" typeface with an appropriate size (12 point). Use MLA style for headings, margins, page numbering, and all source documentation. No cover sheets, please. No report covers, please.

Homework Assignments: TBA

Cell Phones: Cell phones are allowed but must be set to "silent." Please answer only emergency calls and step into the hallway to do so. No texting in class.

Students' Special Needs: Students with disabilities or special needs should feel free to contact the instructor privately if there are adaptations which can be made to accommodate specific needs.

Academic Honesty: The assignments in this course ask for your original writing. When you use any ideas or wording borrowed from another writer or speaker, you must clearly identify the source of that material, using standard documentation. If you do not use documentation, it will appear that you are plagiarizing or presenting someone else's work as your own. **Evidence of plagiarism will result in immediate loss of credit for that assignment and will be reported to academic affairs.**

Assistance from the Writing Center: You can get friendly (and free!) one-on-one writing assistance from the Writing Center. The Writing Center, located in 007 ITTC, is open Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or at other arranged times. Call **273-2346** for an appointment.

Save all your work from the course until the end of the semester.

Help to create a climate of trust and respect so everyone will share ideas openly.

Course Schedule (tentative) - - - - -

Week One (January 10 & 12)

Tue: Introductions, Bowl of Fruit Exercise
Thu: Syllabus, Assign Groups, Assign Nametags

Week Two (January 17 & 19)

Tue: Nametags due
Bowl of Fruit poem due
Introduction to Workshopping
Mini-workshop Bowl of Fruit poems
Thu: Read: Hugo "Introduction" and "Writing off the Subject" (xi-10) • discuss
Big Trigger Exercise and Small Trigger Exercise

Week Three (January 24 & 26)

Tue: Vocabulary of Craft (Intro/Review) • Group Meetings
Thu: Trigger poems due
Mini-workshop Trigger poems

Week Four (January 31 & February 2)

Tue: Read: Oliver "Getting Ready" and "Imitation" (7-9 & 13-18) • discuss
Imitation exercise
Thu: Imitation poem due
Mini-workshop Imitation poems

Week Five (February 7 & 9)

Tue: Author Presentations
Thu: Author Presentations

Week Six (February 14 & 16)

Tue: Read: Hugo "Nuts & Bolts" (37-51) • discuss
Free Poem One due (bring enough copies for the class)
Thu: Workshop

Week Seven (February 21 & 23)

Tue: Workshop
Thu: Workshop

Week Eight (February 28 & March 1)

Tue: Read: Oliver "Sound" (19-34) • discuss
Sound poem exercise
Thu: Sound poem due
Mini-workshop Sound poems

HOMEWORK: All readings and other underlined items in this schedule must be completed prior to the class period for which they are assigned.

Week Nine (March 6 & 8)

Tue: Be prepared with "Discussion Leader" assignment
Large Group Discussion (individual poems)

Thu: (continued)

----- *Spring Break March 12-16* -----

Week Ten (March 20 & 22)

Tue: Watch POL best performances • Discuss recitations

Thu: Read Hugo: "The Triggering Town" (11-18) • discuss

Week Eleven (March 27 & 29)

Tue: Poetry Recitations due

Thu: (continued)

Free Poem Two due (bring enough copies for the class)

Week Twelve (April 3 & 5)

Tue: Workshop

Thu: Workshop

Week Thirteen (April 10 & 12)

Tue: Finish Workshop • Read Gotera (9-21) • discuss

Thu: Read Gotera (22-33) • discuss

Week Fourteen (April 17 & 19)

Tue: Gotera class visit

Free Poem Three due (bring enough copies for the class)

Thu: Workshop

Week Fifteen (April 24 & 26)

Tue: Workshop

Thu: Read: Oliver "Revision" (109-111) and Hugo: "Ci Vediamo" (74-98) • discuss

Finals Week (April 30—May 3)

Portfolios due at scheduled exam time

How You will Earn your Grade

Poem Recitation*	100 points
Poet Group Presentation*	200 points
Portfolio*	300 points
Two Literary Event Responses*	Pass/Fail
Discussion Leader*	Pass/Fail
Homework Assignments	TBA
Participation	50 points

Be an active participant in your own education.

Contribute your voice as practice for life and for the benefit of this class.

***** A student will not receive a passing grade—regardless of percentage of points—unless he or she completes all major assignments.

Late Papers:

For full credit, all papers and assignments must be turned in before or during class on the day they are due. Late papers and assignments will lose 5 points each class day they are late.

FINAL GRADES will be based on percentage of points earned and will be assigned letter grades as follows:

A	94% and above
A-	90-93%
B+	88-89%
B	84-87%
B-	80-83%
C+	78-79%
C	74-77%
C-	70-73%
D+	68-69%
D	64-67%
D-	60-63%
F	59% and below

Assignment Details

Poem Recitation (100 points)

Students must choose a poem from the anthology, memorize it, and recite it for the class. This assignment will be graded on physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness, level of difficulty, evidence of understanding, overall performance and, of course, accuracy. Half of your grade will be determined by Kim and possibly a guest judge. Half of your grade will be determined by your classmates. Students should not “act out” the poem. Props and costumes are not allowed. You must bring a copy of the poem on separate paper with the lines numbered for the accuracy judge. All recitations will happen in class during week eleven.

Discussion Leader (Pass/Fail)

Students must choose a poem from the anthology and come to class prepared to read the poem aloud and lead a group discussion of the poem. The discussion leader might point out lines or ideas they found striking or discuss elements of craft / technique being used by the poet and how they affect the poem. The discussion leader may wish to prepare a few questions ahead of time to facilitate the conversation. Discussion on each poem will likely last 10-12 minutes. All discussions of individual poems will happen in class during week nine.

Poet Group Presentation (200 points)

Groups (of three) will respond to the challenge to bring a poet to life in our classroom. Groups may choose any poet represented in the anthology or another poet of their choice with the approval of the instructor. Groups should prepare a 15 to 20-minute presentation on that poet’s life and work. Visual aids are encouraged. Students may use the classroom computer and chalk board and are encouraged to help the class get a sense of the author by showing photographs or (if possible) playing recordings of readings in the author’s voice. Incredibly brave students may even choose to dress as their poet or bring in objects that help define that poet. Presentations might address the author’s recurring themes, stylistics, cultural and historical influences, and biography. Only one group will be assigned to any given author. **Groups must request and confirm their author choice by the end of class, January 19.** All presentations will happen in class during week five.

Portfolio (300 points)

Each student’s portfolio should contain “final” drafts of the following seven poems:

Bowl of Fruit poem

Trigger poem

Imitation poem

Free poem one

Sound poem

Free poem two

Free poem three

Each poem should be accompanied by an additional sheet of paper answering the following questions: What changes were made from the first draft to this one and why? What did you learn from this poem? (about style, poetic devices, yourself as a poet, language, truth, anything) Portfolios are due during finals week.

Two Literary Event Responses (Pass/Fail)

Students must attend and report on two literary events throughout the semester. These reports should be simple summary/response reports and must be typed, double-spaced, and in MLA style. Watch your UNI newsfeed in your inbox as well as class announcements for qualifying events. These reports may be turned in any time during the semester.