

ENG 461-03
Writing Poems/Reading Culture: Beyond the Workshop
Dr. Reginald Flood
Fall 2016 Mondays 4:00-6:45 p.m.

This seminar will seek to create a community of writers willing to take on the challenge of spending a year writing original poetry and insightful, analytical prose. This course will neither be a traditional literary seminar nor a standard creative writing workshop, but will be based on the belief that creative activity and theoretical inquiry complement each other and can open up new ways to think about writing and reading. We will read poetry from a diverse group of writers complemented by theory in cultural studies.

The most important thing students must bring to this seminar is not expertise in cultural studies or experience in creative writing classes, but a strong desire to commit to a year of serious writing and reading. The crucial element for you to be successful in this class is a commitment to develop your critical and creative voice, and a willingness to be open-minded that many of the ideals and standards we hold dear about beautiful language, the necessity of universal meaning, and the elements that constitute an important piece of literature do not exist outside their cultural construction.

The course will begin with exploring traditional forms in English, move to a focus on the Persona poem, and conclude with an examination of Spoken Word. Our poems shall negotiate some of the same territory as the diverse writers we read, and our analytical prose will build on the work of new historicist and critical race theorists. We shall vigorously interrogate the methods of consideration of poetry in the university, and examine the divorce between the lively world of poetry outside the academy and what constitutes the study of poetry in most colleges.

Some of the questions we might ask. How does form reflect the cultural realities of power and influence? Why are some types of verse privileged as important and valuable while others are ignored? How do we as writers engage our own cultural moments with an intellectual level of risk that can make us better poets? We will explore a variety of poets (most of them woman, many of them individuals of color) texts about craft and cultural studies, and numerous videos and documentaries about poetry, aesthetics, and culture.

All English Majors Welcome

