

CRW 5368
TIME, WEIGHT & LIGHTNESS IN
POETRY AND PROSE

(CRN # 13970), Fall 2019

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Fall 2019 Office Hours
Fridays, 12:00-2:00pm & by appointment

Course Information

- *Meeting Times:* Mondays, 6:00-8:50pm
- *Classroom:* Nursing Building, Room 216

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Through our readings and discussions, we'll explore narrative problems (and techniques) related to space and time in both contemporary poetry and prose, including: how to speak from a piece's "own" exigent present when the dramatic action has already occurred; how to braid together competing verb tenses through syntactical creativity and sonic momentum; how to collapse space and time through imagery and rhythm; how to construct tension through sequential and stanzaic order; how to sing in "trustable" voices of prescience; how to practice poetic plasticity; how to wrestle narrative momentum with lyrical intensity; how to make visible and impel to be heard that which is not immediately visible or audible; how to attempt to trespass spaces which we may feel to be un-breachable; and how to speak against, and into, our own borders of language, genre, culture and form.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Please be prepared to bring 13 printed copies of each of your poems to the class for workshop, and consider the printing expenses to do so.

In addition, please buy the following books by **September 9, 2019**. They can be bought online, more affordably through an online seller like Amazon.com. If you would like for me to order hard copies for you through Barnes & Noble (Sunland Park) Bookstore, please let me know and I'll do so. I've listed our course texts in their original language, including any **available translations** of these texts in English and Spanish (these are listed below, in bullets, in **maroon colored font**):

- *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (Milan Kundera)
 - *La insoportable levedad del ser* (versión en español, traductor: Fernando de Valenzuela)
 - *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (English version, translator: Michael Henry Heim)

- *The Simple Truth* (Philip Levine)
- *Beloved* (Toni Morrison)
 - *Beloved* (versión en español, traductor: Iris Menéndez). El traducción en español es disponible por un versión digital (Amazon Kindle) por \$5.99.
- Selected poems from *Wade in the Water* (Tracy K. Smith)
 - de *Atravesar el agua* (versión en español, traductor: Andrea Cote)
- *The Underground Railroad* (Colson Whitehead)
 - *El ferrocarril subterráneo* (versión en español, traductor: Cruz Rodríguez Juiz)
- *The Black Maria* (Aracelis Girmay)
- *In Cold Blood* (Truman Capote)
 - *A sangre fría* (versión en español, traductor: ?). Unfortunately, I can't find many available copies of this online. But I ordered a copy en español, and as soon as I receive it, I'll notify you and I'll leave it in my mailbox for you to use or copy.
- *Antígona González* (Sarah Uribe)
 - *Antígona González* (English version, translator: John Pluecker)
- *Fabulations* (José de Piérola)
- **흰** (한강, Han Kang)
 - *The White Book* (English version, translator: Deborah Smith)
- *Gabriel: A Poem* (Edward Hirsch)

I will supply supplemental reading (poems, stories, essays, interviews and essays on craft) via handouts.

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be dependent on your successful completion of the following course requirements based on the following grading scale. (The following assignments are color-coded here so that you can cross-reference them by color in the *Course Schedule*.)

- 15%: **A peer teaching presentation** (on a “problem” or a technique in the reading). These should be 10-12 minutes and include a handout or other visual. Be prepared to present these on the day that we are scheduled to discuss the reading. As long as your presentation is on a technical aspect of the reading (e.g. point-of-view, sonic repetition, syntax, tense), there are no other requirements or limitations for this.
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- 30%: **A Point in Craft Workshops**. These are prompted smaller creative writing pieces. Please note that this class is conceptualized as a literature course, not as a workshop course, so the majority of our work this semester will be spent through reading published literature and analyzing that literature together in the interest of furthering our individual and collective understanding of literary craft, rather than workshopping our own pieces. In service of that study, I'll ask you to choose to respond to three of these A Point in Craft writing prompts throughout the semester.

Two of your A Point in Craft responses **will be workshopped with the entire class**, and one additional A Point in Craft responses **will be workshopped in small groups** (please see the *Course Schedule*.) You must bring enough printed copies of your work to class, as well as post it to the appropriate discussion board in Blackboard, on **the week before workshop**, so that your peers have enough time to read it, or we will not be able to workshop it when you are scheduled.

This workshop grade also includes your attentive feedback to your classmates' work during our class workshops.

- 30%: **A final paper** analyzing, in-depth, a narrative technique (or multiple techniques) manifested in both poetry and prose. This paper should be 15-20 pages, double-spaced, in MLA style, with a Works Cited page (and a Bibliography page when necessary). Please see the *Course Schedule* for this deadline.
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- 15%: **A final conference**. Please set up a 40-minute final conference with me, in my office, from Monday, December 2 through Friday, December 13. At least 7 days before your final conference with me, please email me the work on which you'd like to spend your final conference time.

Please choose how you best wish to use your time with me. We can talk together about:

- 1) revisions of your two workshopped pieces, and your unrevised piece for small-group workshop, or
 - 2) three new, unrevised short pieces in response to the course's A Point of Craft writing prompts, or
 - 3) one new, unrevised longer work using the techniques, in practice, that you'll analyze in your final paper
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- 10%: Attendance of 2 literary presentations in the community. Simply tell me, by the end of the course, which two events you attended this semester.

Please see the *Course Schedule* for deadlines.

GRADING SCALE

A: 90-100%
 B: 89-80%
 C: 79-70%
 D: 69-60%
 F: 59% and below

WORKSHOP, PARTICIPATION, AND FORMATTING

This is a literature course for professional, practicing writers and as such, we'll be conducting some workshops of your creative work. The pieces that you turn in to workshop should not be your "first" draft of that poem or prose piece. You should turn in the best possible piece you can write (having worked on that poem considerably) when a creative work is due from you because you'll get more advanced feedback. As in any form of artistry, the harder you work at each stage of the writing process, the faster and better you will learn your craft.

You are responsible for bringing in enough copies (13) of your work for the entire class. Please see the *Course Schedule* for deadlines specific to your workshop group. Also please see the *Attendance & Late Work* policy for rules in turning in your work to workshop.

Your poems should be typed, printed, single-spaced, in a single-column (unless you're purposefully writing a multiple-column poem) and justified to the left-hand margin (unless you're specifically experimenting with whitespace in a modern way), and in a single standard font like Times New Roman, in 11-12 pt. size.

Your prose should be typed, printed, double-spaced (unless you're purposefully using vertical and horizontal space in modern ways, as Han Kang does, for example) and justified to the left-hand margin, and in a single standard font like Times New Roman, in 11-12 pt. size.

Please turn in only one piece per scheduled workshop, in response to one of the available A Point in Craft prompts before your workshop, no more.

I ask you to use these guidelines because we cannot control the stylistic aspects of work we turn work in for publication to editors, and also so we can study as writers how to create emotional effects using language itself, not the ways by which language can be stylized. In the case of poetry, please use a full 8.5" x 11" page for each of your poems, as the whitespace of a poem is just as important as the written text.

Please use the following formatting for each poem:

Name Workshop Group Name, Poem # Date Title

Poem or Prose Text

During workshop, I ask you to take your role as a writer and critic with seriousness and sensitivity. You have a responsibility to your classmates to not only read their work carefully, but to make constructive and useful comments to help them express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions into a compelling aesthetic. In the beginning I may lead discussion more, but as the course progresses, I'll expect you to take more of a lead in shaping the conversation. In respect of your peers, I expect that you will have read your colleagues' work beforehand, that you will have made careful notes on the work, and that you will be vocal during workshop.

This is a graduate course in the arts, wherein much of the learning occurs through your articulation of the subject. Participating in these workshops will help you to read and revise your own work with more fluency and expertise. There is always something to critique. It's your job as a writer to find it. It is unacceptable to tell a fellow writer that you love or like everything about his/her poem, as this is quite unhelpful to your peers and is non-intuitive to the writing process, which demands revision.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Come to class! Because of the intensive nature of this graduate class, I will adhere to a strict attendance policy:

- ***You are allowed 1 absence***, for any reason, whether by necessity or whimsy.
- Leaving early or coming late, or leaving class when in session by more than 15 minutes will be counted as a ½ absence.
- Any absences above the allotted will lower your final grade by a letter for *each* absence.
- If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out the work that you've missed, including any activities, homework assignments or copies of your classmates' poems for workshop. (I strongly suggest that you get contact information from your fellow classmates in case you might be absent).

I cannot make any exceptions. If you feel that circumstances arise so that you cannot be successful in this course at this time, please withdraw from this course officially by the university's course drop deadline so that you can receive a "W" for a grade.

LATE WORK POLICY

I will not accept late work. Please take careful note of due dates of assignments on the *Course Schedule*.

COOKIE POLICY

If your phone rings while class is in session, or if I catch you texting during workshop or lecture, I'll ask you to bring cookies for the entire class for the following week.