

English 392: Explorations of Mood and Language in Contemporary Poetry
Spring 2023, M/W 12:30pm-1:50pm
Dickinson Hall, Room 302

Instructor: Eric Johnson

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30am-11:30am, and by appointment

Office: Dickinson Hall, Room 516

Phone: (847) 555-1234

Email: ewijohnson@poetryu.edu

Course Objectives

This course serves to explore how mood can be created and conveyed through language in poetry. Mood is transmitted through word choice, topic choice, phrasing, as well as through specific poetic elements such as enjambment, endings, form, mystery, etc. This course will delve deep into each of these topics and analyze contemporary poetry to see how poets are conveying different moods and emotions in radically different ways.

This course will provide the opportunity to:

- Engage in readings and discussion of how language directly and indirectly conveys mood through selected readings
- Analyze poems to better understand the poetic craft
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in students' own poems
- Compose weekly poems
- Revise poems and practice revision techniques

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Discuss and critically analyze how language conveys mood, both on a macro and micro scale within poetry
- Employ or adapt tools and techniques of mood and language to their own writing
- Produce a final portfolio of original poems

Course Components

This course will be split between readings/discussion and composing/revising original poems. For the first 9 weeks, we will focus on analyzing and writing poems. Each student will sign up for 2 workshops. The last part of the class will be more self-directed and will revolve around revision strategies and readings selected based on each students' individual project.

Grading

Poems: 8 new poems at 4 points each (32 points total)

Readings/Discussion: 10 weeks at 2 points each (20 points total)

Written Workshop Feedback: 6 workshops at 4 points each (24 points total)

Final Portfolio: 6 revised poems at 4 points each (24 points total)

Grading Scale

Grade	Points
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	Below 60

Office Hours

Available in-person or over Zoom. Appointments are encouraged, but not required. If you drop-in, please note that you may have to wait as students with appointments will have first dibs. If you can't make office hours, email or talk to me and we can set up another time to meet.

Contact Info

Email is the easiest way to reach me. Do not count on me responding after 5pm or on weekends, so plan ahead!

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated. Your first offense will be a non-negotiable 0 on the assignment. Your second offense will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and will result in probable expulsion from the program. Don't do it. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, please come talk to me.

Formatting

For prose: Nothing unusual. 12 pt Times New Roman or 11 pt Calibri. Double-spaced, default margins. For poems: Anything goes, but it must be legible. Standard fonts are encouraged.

Attendance

You are allowed two absences for any reason. I do not need to know the reason, but you do need to let me know. Send me an email saying you are using one of your excused absences. That said, please plan on being present for your workshop days, because you will not have a chance to redo

them unless you can convince another student to switch with you. I will not help you switch days. You must switch at least a week in advance of your workshop, and I must be informed at least a week in advance. Having any unexcused absences (read: an absence that you do not notify me of beforehand) or more than two excused absences will result in automatic withdrawal from the course, or if after the withdrawal deadline, a failing grade.

Punctuality

Please show up on time and be prepared to participate. Showing up more than 10 minutes late more than twice will result in an absence.

Late Work

For all assignments *except for workshop pieces*, you have an 8-hour grace period. After that, late work will incur a 10% penalty for every 24 hours, up to 72 hours, after which you will receive a 0 on the assignment. No late assignments will be accepted for workshop pieces, as the rest of the class is relying on you.

Extensions

For all assignments *except for workshop pieces*, you can have up to two extensions of 72 hours for any reason. Just email me and let me know you'd like to use one of your extensions. If you have extenuating circumstances, please talk to me and we can work something out!

Classroom Conduct

Please be respectful of everyone in the class. I would like to cultivate a positive environment, but I cannot do it by myself. I need everyone's participation.

Learning Accommodations

If you require any accommodations, please contact the Office of Accommodations. They will get in touch with me to provide anything you need.

Content Warnings

Literature can be described as the study and artistic expression of human lives and emotions. Not all of these lives, actions, or emotions are pleasant, and in fact, many are extremely unpleasant and difficult to engage with. To that end, this serves as a blanket content notification for the entire course. Please note that we may encounter texts that deal with violence, drug abuse, racism, sexual violence, and more. If you have a particular type of content that you know you find difficult, please talk with me and I will work with you on providing an individual notification or alternative reading. Similarly, if you come across something that you are not able to engage with, feel free to stop reading. If we are discussing in class and you need to leave for a few minutes, please do so.

Finally, I would also encourage everyone to include content notifications for the work you submit, both for myself as well as the class as a whole. Please act with compassion and empathy, and always use your best judgement.

Restricted Content

The only content that will be restricted is gratuitous violence and hate speech. Gratuitous is defined here as not being necessary to the piece. This can be very subjective, so please talk to me if you are unsure. Remember to be respectful towards everyone in our class.

What to Bring to Class

Notebook, writing instruments, water, snacks if you need (although please refrain from anything too aromatic and any common allergens (no peanuts, etc.)). I will ask you to keep your phones put away. It shows disrespect to not be fully engaged. Laptops are fine, although if I notice that you are looking at content not related to class, or if you are not participating, I may ask you to put them away.

Additional Help

There is a wonderful Writing Center and a Tutoring Center on campus, so please feel free to contact them if you need any additional assistance.

Schedule

Week 1—Introductions

Monday:

Read/Discuss: Syllabus

Wednesday:

Read/Discuss: Selected poems in Canvas

Week 2—Crafting a Collection/Mood through Theme

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *Oceanic*, Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Wednesday:

Due: Poem 1 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 1)

Week 3—Creating Meaning through Mystery

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *The Nightfields*, Joanna Klink

Wednesday:

Workshop 1

Due: Poem 2 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 2)

Written feedback for Workshop 1

Week 4—Imagery through Form and Memory

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *frank: sonnets*, Diane Seuss

Wednesday:

Workshop 2

Due: Poem 3 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 3)

Written feedback for Workshop 2

Week 5—Trauma into Art

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *Guillotine*, Eduardo C. Corral

Wednesday:

Workshop 3

Due: Poem 4 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 4)

Written feedback for Workshop 3

Week 6—Mood through Woven Images

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *Sight Lines*, Arthur Sze

Wednesday:

Workshop 4

Due: Poem 5 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 5)

Written feedback for Workshop 4

Week 7—Conveying Current Events

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry*, John Murillo

Wednesday:

Workshop 5

Due: Poem 6 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 6)

Written feedback for Workshop 5

Week 8—Language Poetry and Non-Traditional Sense-making

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *My Life*, Lyn Hejinian

Wednesday:

Workshop 6

Due: Poem 7 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 7)
Written feedback for Workshop 6

Week 9—Playing with Language to Craft Mood

Monday:

Read/Discuss: *Toxicon and Arachne*, Joyelle McSweeney

Wednesday:

Workshop 7

Due: Poem 8 (bring copies for everyone if in Workshop 8)
Written feedback for Workshop 7

Week 10—Revision Strategies

Monday:

Read/Discuss: Individual choice, I can provide a list of suggestions

Wednesday:

Workshop 8

Due: Revisions of 3 poems
Written feedback for Workshop 8

Week 11—Continuing Revisions

Monday:

Read/Discuss: Individual choice, I can provide a list of suggestions based on your interests and needs

Wednesday:

Continue working on revisions, discuss in class

Week 12—Wrapping Up

Monday:

Continue working on revisions, discuss in class

Wednesday:

Celebration of accomplishments & sharing of writing
Due: Final Portfolio