ADVANCED POETRY: 20TH CENTURY AFRICAN-AMERICAN POETRY

ENGL3670-110 (Spring 2015) Thursdays 4:00-6:20 p.m. (Brown Hall 3002)

<u>Instructor:</u> Michael Marberry <u>Office:</u> Sprau Tower 813

Email: [INSERT] Office Hours: TR 3:00-4:00 p.m. (by appt.)

Required Texts & Materials:

- Four poetry collections (from list provided in syllabus).
- Notebook for note-taking and in-class writing assignments.
- Various handouts and readings provided on eLearning.
- Folder for final portfolio revision and reflection assignment.
- Money for printing readings/poems for class discussion.

Course Goals:

(1) To familiarize oneself with poets and poetry related to the course theme; (2) To further develop critical-thinking skills in respect to established tools, techniques, and themes; (3) To practice writing original poetry; (4) To respond thoughtfully, respectfully, and critically to peer work; (5) To cultivate a productive process for assessing and revising one's own poetry.

Course Description:

Advanced Poetry Writing (ENGL3670) is an intermediate-level creative-writing class designed to aid students in broadening their knowledge and exposure to poetry, while providing a unique space for constructive peer feedback and critique. Students will produce original creative work in response to class writing exercises and readings, designed to challenge the writer's own conventions and habits. Students will be assigned other projects that will further encourage an exploration into poetry today. In particular, much of our course this semester will focus on the theme of African-American Poetry. Students will be expected to read and write a significant amount of material for this class.

Course Requirements:

During this semester, you will complete several major writing assignments designed to build on each other intellectually, conceptually, and creatively. Regular in-class assignments will help you practice the skills that you learn. Readings and writing prompts will correspond with class discussions, while other projects will push you to read, research, and think critically about writing outside of class.

Assignment:	Due Date:	Percent:
Participation & Daily Work	Throughout Semester	10%
Weekly Poetry Reading Quizzes	Throughout Semester	20%
Weekly Workshop Responsibilities	Throughout Semester	20%
Poet/Poem Presentation	Throughout Semester	10%
Public Reading Response	Throughout Semester	10%
Book Review & Annotation (4)	Throughout Semester	20%
Final Revised Portfolio & Reflection	Exam Week	10%

Grade Scale:

Standard Perce	ntage Value:	Standard G	PA Value:
A = 93-100	B/A = 88-92	A = 4.0	B/A = 3.5
B = 83-87	C/B = 78-82	B = 3.0	C/B = 2.5
C = 73-77	D/C = 68-72	C = 2.0	D/C = 1.5
D = 60-67	E = 0-59	D = 1.0	E = 0

Late Assignment Policy:

Work must be completed and submitted on time. Because of the importance of class discussions and workshop consistency, the daily work, reading quizzes, and workshop submissions/comments **cannot** be made-up or submitted late under any circumstances.

Late submission of a project (e.g. the reading response and the collection reviews) will result in the deduction of 10% for each day late. Students who know that they will miss class when a project is due must contact the instructor (in advance) to arrange for the late submission of the assignment.

Attendance & Tardiness Policy:

Attendance is important to the success of this class and to your development as a thinker and writer. As such, you are expected to attend class regularly (and on time) and participate fully. For our class, you are allowed to accumulate **two (2) absences** for any reason. Your third absence will result in your final grade being deducted by 10%. Accumulating four (4) absences will result in an automatic failure of the course. Note: This course does **not** differentiate between "excused" and "unexcused" absences; furthermore, arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early will result in an absence for the class. As such, I **strongly** advise you to use your absences very wisely.

Tardiness is disruptive to the focused class environment, prevents full participation, disrupts poetry workshop, and impairs the assimilation of class information. Any in-class work, quizzes, etc. missed due to tardiness cannot be made-up. As indicated above, tardiness of more than 15 minutes will be recorded as an absence. If you are habitually late to class, your grade will definitely suffer.

Class Cancellation & Late Instructor Instructions:

In the unlikely event of class cancellation, I will contact the class via email beforehand. If, for some unknown reason, I am late to class <u>and</u> haven't notified anyone via email about my tardiness or class cancellation, please wait 15 minutes. If I still have not shown up or emailed the class by that point, something serious and unforeseen has happened to me (and class will be cancelled for that day).

WMU eLearning:

For this class, we'll be using eLearning as a hub for class readings, handouts, assignments, prompts, workshop submissions, etc. Please let me know if you have problems finding or accessing eLearning and I'll gladly help you.

WMU Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free consultation service for all WMU students, where experienced writing consultants help writers of all levels and abilities with any writing assignment. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The Writing Center is located in 1343 Ellsworth Hall. For more information, visit the Writing Center website: www.wmich.edu/writingcenter

Academic Misconduct, Plagiarism, & Classroom Conduct:

Western Michigan University's Office of Student Conduct lists the following values as those which every student, instructor, and staff-member should strive for: academic honesty, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, personal responsibility, respect for others, and ethical conduct. These values foster, promote, and protect the core mission of the university. In the classroom, academic misconduct is any activity that tends to compromise the university's academic integrity or subvert the educational process. Forms of academic misconduct include cheating, fabrication, falsification, forgery, multiple submission, complicity, computer misuse, and plagiarism.

Western Michigan University defines plagiarism as the act of intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e. without proper acknowledgement of the source). Multiple submitting is the submission of substantial portions of the same work (including reports) for credit more than once without authorization from instructors of all classes in which the student submits the work. These are serious academic offenses and are counterproductive to a workshop in which the inherent goal is for students to produce new, original creative work. More information about academic misconduct can be found here: http://www.wmich.edu/conduct/index.html.

Aside from academic honesty, individuals are expected to behave respectfully toward others and avoid disruptive and obstructive behaviors. Such negative behavior includes (but is not limited to): physical abuse, verbal abuse, verbal and written threats, stalking, intimidation, harassment, hazing, possession of controlled substances, possession of alcoholic beverages, irresponsible computer use, cell phone use (including texting), etc. If there is an emergency situation that requires you to text during class, please let me know beforehand.

One of the best things about college life is that it brings together people with an array of different personal/cultural beliefs and experiences. Because of this, for our class to be successful, a certain level of trust, decorum, and respect must exist among all participants. Such empathy is especially important in a workshop, where we will sometimes be reading, writing, and discussing potentially sensitive materials. Any act that compromises, endangers, or disrespects either the instructor or your peers will absolutely not be tolerated.

Student Disabilities:

Western Michigan University provides academic assistance for Students with Disabilities, including the technical, academic, and emotional support necessary to achiever academic and personal success. Course-related assistance and academic accommodations are provided to eligible students who have documented disabilities. Services may include advocacy, reader services, interpreters, alternate exam administration, and note takers. Adaptive equipment is also available. The link for web information regarding services can be found at: http://www.dsrs.wmich.edu/. Students are also encouraged to contact one of the following offices:

- **Disabled Student Resources and Services (DSRS)**, 269-387-2116, serves students who have documented physical and psychiatric disabilities, as well as students with documented learning disabilities and related emotional issues.
- Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (OSSLD), 269-387-4411, serves students who have documented learning disabilities and related emotional issues.

• Office of Institutional Equity (OIE), 269-387-8880, acts affirmatively on the behalf of qualified persons who have disability related compliance issues in accordance with Federal and State guidelines and regulations.

Counseling Services:

Students face many challenges in a myriad of personal and professional contexts. Western Michigan University is fully committed to providing its students with avenues for identifying and addressing any emotional, physical, and/or psychological difficulties that arise – including relationship conflict, stress and anxiety, grief or loss, social and peer pressure, sexual identity questions, trauma and post-traumatic stress, adjusting to college life, feelings of depression, body image or eating disorders, etc. If any of these difficulties occur during the semester, I encourage you to contact Counseling Services by visiting the Sindecuse Health Center or by making an appointment (269-387-1850). Discussions with Counseling Services are confidential.

Poet/Poem Presentations:

There are too many interesting, important African-American poets to cover in a semester. As such, students will give <u>one</u> (1) brief poet/poem presentation on a poet <u>not</u> covered in our class. A list of potential poets and sign-up sheet will be provided. The assignment sheet is on eLearning.

Schedule for Public Readings:

In this course, you are expected to encounter poetry texts and respond to them in a careful, critical fashion. But, of course, writing doesn't just exist on the page but also often manifests itself in the form of public readings. As such, you are required to attend <u>one</u> of the following readings during the semester and compose a short reflection on that reading. The assignment sheet is on eLearning.

Public Reading Schedule (Pick 1):			
Date:	Readers:	Location:	
Sat, 1/17 @ 7:00 p.m.	Brandon Krieg & W. Todd Kaneko	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	
Thurs, 2/26 @ 8:00 p.m.	Jericho Brown	The Little Theatre	
Sat, 3/14 @ 7:00 p.m.	Kara Candito & Sean Bishop	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	
Thurs, 3/26 @ 8:00 p.m.	Lisa Williams	Bernhard Center, Rm. 157-159	
Thurs, 4/16 @ 6:30 p.m.	Celebration of Poetry Reading	Kalamazoo Institute for Arts	
Sat, 4/18 @ 7:00 p.m.	Lo Kwa Mei-en & Brandon Lamson	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	

Poetry Collections:

One goal of this course is for students to engage with contemporary writing. After all, as the adage reminds us: the best writers are the best readers. For this course, you will need to purchase, read, review, and annotate the following collections. The assignment sheet is on eLearning.

Book Title:	Due Date:	ISBN:
Maybe the Saddest Thing by Marcus Wicker	February 12 by 4:00 p.m.	0062191012
If One of Us Should Fall by Nicole Terez Dutton	March 5 by 4:00 p.m.	0822962233
Spit Back a Boy by Iain Haley Pollock	April 2 by 4:00 p.m.	0820339083
But a Storm is Blowing From Paradise by Lillian-Yvonne Bertram	April 23 by 4:00 p.m.	1597091685

A Final Prohibition & Disclaimer:

The prohibition: Do <u>not</u> write about folks in workshop or school violence. Let's all be friends! The disclaimer: We're all adults, reading about adult issues written by other adults who sometimes use adult language and adult imagery to explore very complex adult themes. Let's all be adults!

Course Schedule

Week:	Date/Topic:	Assignments Due:
1	Thursday, January 15	- AMS Form due by end of class (hc)
	- Syllabus Review	, , ,
	- Projects Review	
	- Sample Workshop	
2	Thursday, January 22	- Favorite Poem due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Sterling A. Brown (1901-1989)	- Emblematic Poem due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Langston Hughes (1902-1967)	- Reflection (Krieg/Kaneko) due by 4:00 p.m.
3	Thursday, January 29	- Poem #1 due Tues, January 27 th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Robert Hayden (1913-1980)	
	- Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)	
4	Thursday, February 5	- Poem #2 due Tues, February 3 rd by 4:00 p.m.
	- Derek Walcott (1930-Present)	
	- Audre Lorde (1934-1992)	
5	Thursday, February 12	- Poet/Poem Presentation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Etheridge Knight (1931-1991)	- Review & Annotation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Amiri Baraka (1934-2014)	
	- Book Discussion (Wicker)	
6	Thursday, February 19	- Poem #3 due Tues, February 17 th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Sonia Sanchez (1934-Present)	
	- Nikki Giovanni (1943-Present)	
7	Thursday, February 26	- Poem #4 due Tues, February 24 th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Lucille Clifton (1936-2010)	
	- Michael S. Harper (1938-Present)	
8	Thursday, March 5	- Poet/Poem Presentation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Ai (1947-2010)	- Review & Annotation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Yusef Komunyakaa (1947-Present)	- Reflection (Brown) due by 4:00 p.m.
	- Book Discussion (Dutton)	
9	Thursday, March 12	
10	- No Class! (Spring Break)	D#5 1 T M1 17th 1 4-00
10	Thursday, March 19	- Poem #5 due Tues, March 17 th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Rita Dove (1952-Present)	- Reflection (Candito/Bishop) due by 4:00 p.m.
11	- Patricia Smith (1955-Present) Thursday, March 26	- Poem # 6 due Tues, March 24 th by 4:00 p.m.
11	- Thomas Sayers Ellis (1963-Present)	- Foem # o due Tues, March 24 by 4:00 p.m.
	- Homas Sayers Ellis (1903-Present) - Natasha Tretheway (1966-Present)	
12	Thursday, April 2	- Poet/Poem Presentation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
12	- Carl Phillips (1959-Present)	- Review & Annotation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Claudia Rankine (1963-Present)	- Reflection (Williams) due by 4:00 p.m.
	- Book Discussion (Pollock)	- Reflection (williams) due by 7.00 p.m.
	- DOOR DISCUSSION (LONGER)	

^{*} This course schedule is subject to revision at my discretion.

^{**} Be ready to read, to write, to think, and to talk each day in class.

*** Bring the relevant readings/poems with you to class each day.

13	Thursday, April 9	- Poem #7 due Tues, April 7 th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Major Jackson (1968-Present)	
	- Kevin Young (1970-Present)	
14	Thursday, April 16	- Poem #8 due Tues, April 14th by 4:00 p.m.
	- Terrance Hayes (1971-Present)	
	- Tracy K. Smith (1972-Present)	
15	Thursday, April 23	- Poet/Poem Presentation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- BYOP (Bring Your Own Poetry)	- Review & Annotation due by 4:00 p.m. (hc)
	- Book Discussion (Bertram)	- Reflection (Celebration of Poetry) due by 4:00 p.m.
	- Course Evaluations	- Reflection (Mei-en/Lamson) due by 4:00 p.m.
16	Exam Week	- Final Portfolio due Thurs, 4/30 by 7:15 p.m. (hc)
	- No Class!	

Public Reading Attendance & Response

DUE: Throughout Semester (via eLearning)

There are lots of great things about contemporary writing communities. But one of the best and most intriguing aspects is the public reading. Indeed, a great deal of creative writing is meant to be read aloud, and hearing a poem can often unlock layers of meaning and enjoyment that might have previously gone unnoticed. As a result, readings often provide viewers with a unique look into the inner-life of a work of art (and an artist). For this assignment, you must complete these tasks:

1. Attend <u>ONE</u> of the readings listed in the syllabus. There are several excellent readings to choose from. Regardless of which one you attend, make sure to follow some very basic niceties of readings: Don't be late; Don't be disruptive (i.e. don't text!); & Don't fall asleep. Basically, be cool and try to enjoy what the reading has to offer. After all, no two readings are exactly the same.

Public Reading Schedule (Pick 1)			
Date:	Readers:	Location:	
Sat, 1/17 @ 7:00 p.m.	Brandon Krieg & W. Todd Kaneko	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	
Thurs, 2/26 @ 8:00 p.m.	Jericho Brown	The Little Theater	
Sat, 3/14 @ 7:00 p.m.	Kara Candito & Sean Bishop	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	
Thurs, 3/26 @ 8:00 p.m.	Lisa Williams	Bernhard Center, Rm 157-159	
Thurs, 4/16 @ 6:30 p.m.	Celebration of Poetry Reading	Kalamazoo Institute for Arts	
Sat, 4/18 @ 7:00 p.m.	Lo Kwa Mei-en & Brandon Lamson	Kalamazoo Book Arts Center	

2. Write a 2-3 page reflection of your experience at the reading. You can reflect on a number of things: a particular poem that stood out to you (and why), the reader's style/tone during their reading, things that you though were strange/interesting/maddening/amazing/etc. Think of this as simply a chance to debrief your brain following the reading – i.e. a chance to process and put your thoughts and impressions into perspective on paper.

<u>Remember:</u> Whichever reading you attend, the review is due the following class session by 4:00 p.m. as a .doc or .docx file in the appropriate eLearning dropbox. Your reading response will <u>not</u> be accepted late or in any other form or via any other submission method.

<u>Remember:</u> Don't be a jerk by being disruptive during the reading. Arrive early, be respectful to the reader, and try to appreciate what the reading/reader has to offer. And no texting/talking during the reading!

<u>Remember:</u> If you can't attend one of the readings in the syllabus for <u>legitimate</u> reasons, notify me as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements for this assignment. Don't wait to the last minute!

- Length: 2-3 pages
- Typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA style
- Submitted as .doc or .docx file in correct eLearning dropboxes by due date/time

Poet/Poem Presentation

DUE: Throughout Semester (via hard-copy)

During this semester, we're reading and discussing a number of prominent African-American poets, with an eye/ear toward how those poets and their poems can inform and challenge our own writing. Unfortunately, as is often the case, there just isn't enough time/space to discuss every important and influential 20th Century African-American poet during the confines of our semester-long exploration. Still, despite our constraints, it's valuable that we each continue to explore this proud poetic tradition beyond just the poets/poems on our class reading list. For this assignment, you must complete the following tasks:

1. Choose ONE of the poets below – all of whom are <u>not</u> on the course reading list – to fully immerse yourself in his/her work. I've gone ahead and comprised a list of ten African-American poets here, whose work is evocative, influential, problematic, etc. in some way. Each student should select one of these poets via the sign-up sheet and read as much as possible by this poet in order to try and get a full understanding of his/her poetic interests, techniques, strategies, etc. While it may be counterproductive to become too obsessed with the poet's biographical info at the expense of the work itself, some knowledge of the poet's life can inform certain aspects and interpretations of the poet's work (and is therefore encouraged).

Potential Poets for Presentation (Pick 1)		
1. Melvin B. Tolson (1898-1966)	6. Cornelius Eady (1954-Present)	
2. Bob Kaufman (1925-1986)	7. Thylias Moss (1954-Present)	
3. Toi Derricotte (1941-Present)	8. Nikky Finney (1957-Present)	
4. Wanda Coleman (1946-2013)	9. Saul Williams (1972-Present)	
5. Harryette Mullen (1953-Present)	10. Jericho Brown (1976-Present)	

- 2. Give a brief presentation (15-20 minutes) for the class about this poet and his/her work, focusing primarily on 2-3 poems. For this presentation, feel free to give us an overview of the poet's oeuvre, as well as some personal background on the poet and his/her poetic philosophies. However, remember that your primary focus should be on the 2-3 poems that you've selected by this poet to share with the class. Feel free to select the most interesting, emblematic, challenging, problematic, memorable, influential, etc. poems i.e. whatever you select is totally up to you. Be sure to provide enough copies of the poems for everyone in class so we can follow along with you.
- **3. Submit an annotation of the 2-3 poems.** For this, you should workshop the poet's poems as you might workshop your peers' work. Feel free to write questions you have, observations you've noticed, etc. As you annotate, consider not only *what* the poem is saying but also *how* it says it by focusing on poetic techniques, tools, etc. Be thorough and thoughtful.

<u>Remember:</u> The goal here is to immerse yourself in a writer's work. Read as much as you can by/about them and then share your insights with the class. Don't forget that Waldo Library can be a great resource!

- Length (Presentation) = 15-20 minutes
- Length (Annotation) = 2-3 poems w/ workshop comments

Poetry Collection Review & Annotation

DUE: Throughout Semester (via hard-copy)

A crucial aspect of any writer's life is *reading*. In fact, the best writers are often voracious readers. For our ENGL3670 course, you will be writing your own poetry; but you will also need to spend time reading and engaging with other contemporary writers. Doing so will help you learn from the current literary landscape, as well as expose you to the possibilities and potential in creative writing. For this assignment, you must complete these tasks:

1. Purchase and read the <u>FOUR</u> poetry collections provided in the syllabus. As our course readings this semester is organized around 20th Century African-American Poetry, each of the four collections is written by an African-American poet. Moreover, these are all collections from the last few years written by young African-American poets (i.e. these are all first books). As you'll discover, these collections contain a wide range of perspectives regarding subject-matter, form, style, tone, etc.

Poetry Collections (All 4 Required)			
Title & Author:	Due Date:	ISBN:	
Maybe the Saddest Thing by Marcus Wicker	Feb. 12 by 4:00 p.m.	0062191012	
If One of Us Should Fall by Nicole Terez Dutton	Mar. 5 by 4:00 p.m.	0822962233	
Spit Back a Boy by Iain Haley Pollock	Apr. 2 by 4:00 p.m.	0820339083	
But a Storm is Blowing From Paradise by Lillian-Yvonne Bertram	Apr. 23 by 4:00 p.m.	1597091685	

- **2.** Write a 2-3 page book review for <u>each</u> of the collections. For this review, you can focus on specific poems that interested you, any overarching themes that you noticed, any techniques that you found surprising, etc. Assume you are writing this review for someone who has not read this book. How would you describe the tenor/style of this writer? Where do you see this writer and/or book fitting in the larger creative history/tradition? As this is an academic course, your own tone should be professional and critical-minded in your review.
- **3.** Annotate <u>ONE</u> poem from <u>each</u> collection. For this part of the assignment, you will select a single piece from each collection and workshop it, as you might workshop a peer's poem. You may choose a poem that is representative of the whole collection or you might choose a poem that you were surprised/confused by in some way, etc. As you annotate, consider not only *what* the poem is saying but also *how* it says it focusing on poetic techniques, tools, etc. Be thorough and thoughtful.

<u>Remember:</u> Reviews are a "genre" of writing and often operate under certain conventions. As such, it may be helpful to read a few reviews before you attempt to write your own reviews — though I'd advise you against reading reviews about these particular collections beforehand so as to avoid pre-judging the books.

<u>Remember:</u> For each submission, you'll submit <u>two</u> documents (the review <u>and</u> the annotation).

- Length (Review) = 2-3 pages
 - o Typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA-style)
- Length (Annotation) = 1 poem w/ workshop comments

Final Portfolio (Revisions & Reflection)

DUE: Thursday, April 30th by 7:15 p.m. (via hard-copy)

Throughout the semester, you have written eight poems for this course, based on either prompts or other poems/poets. That's quite an accomplishment! However, writing doesn't just end with the first draft. Rather, as you've heard before, writing is a type of *process* in which things are constantly being re-examined, re-formulated, and refined. This is especially true of creative writing – an art that requires a linguistic, cognitive, and emotional precision that is difficult to achieve on the first attempt (even for very experienced writers). For this assignment, you must complete the following tasks:

- 1. Write a 2-3 page reflection of your experiences in ENGL3670. Think of this as a type of self-evaluation (as a thinker/writer/reader). You might think about those writing techniques, tools, modes, considerations, etc. that have been most helpful to your evolution as a writer. You might focus on those issues with which you still struggle. You might discuss any particular poets/poems that you found to be particularly challenging and/or beneficial. Etc. Basically, there are many things you could write about, but this reflection should be an opportunity for you to explore some aspect of your experience in this course.
- 2. Revise and resubmit 5 poems from ENGL3670. Some of your revisions will likely consist of modifying only a few specific lines, images, or aspects of the poem. Some will likely require a drastic re-imagining of the entire piece. Whichever pieces you choose to revise is up to you; however, your revisions should be *significant* and *substantial* in some way. The comments that you've received from workshop will likely be helpful in this regard, as will your own reflection about your writing and the lessons learned from those poets we're reading.

<u>Remember:</u> Include your reflection and your five revised poems in the same folder. Your reflection should appear first, followed by your revisions. There's no need to re-submit the original version of the poems, as they'll already be posted on our eLearning page.

<u>Remember:</u> In these revisions, you do <u>not</u> have to adhere to the original prompt/inspiration — that is, you don't have to adhere to any key-words, length requirements, parts of speech, topics, etc. Do what's best for the poem, which <u>may</u> mean departing from the original catalyst for the poem.

<u>Remember:</u> The deadline listed above is the last possible submission date/time. If you would like to turn your portfolio early, you can do so by turning it into my Sprau English Dept. mailbox.

- Length (Reflection) = 2-3 pages
 - o Typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA-style
- Length (Revisions) = at least 5 pages
 - o Typed, standard font, new page for each new poem