Writers in New York: Poetry Workshop

Instructor: John Murillo
Course Number: V39.0819.001
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2:30pm
Classroom: Writers House, Front Parlor
Phone Number: 212-998-8816
Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-5pm

Course Description and Objectives:

In this course, we will attempt to draw on the strengths of the traditional workshop model while avoiding its many shortcomings. Students will hone their critical skills through close reading of each others' work and in prose responses to outside reading assignments, but special emphasis will be placed on generating new poems, not up for workshop. By allowing students to create new work without fear of censure or critique, and by approaching the revision process as one of constant and exciting discovery, we will cultivate the necessary risk, play, and mystery that is the lifeblood of good writing.

Required Texts:
None. All assignments will be handed out or are available online.

Requirements, Grading:

Informed Participation, 50%: Means more than just showing up. Students must provide written and oral critique of classmates' work, and participate in craft discussions. In addition, students will turn in a one to two page response to each day's assigned reading.

Final Portfolio, 50%: The final portfolio is a summary of the term's activities. Your portfolio must include the following:

- Foreword, 10%: This will take the form of a 2-4 page “manifesto”—a statement of craft and/or vocation written in the spirit of, and in response to, the essays assigned during the term.
- New Poems, 20%: At least five first drafts written in response to the daily assignments and in-class writing exercises.
- Revisions, 20%: Five revised versions of the aforementioned drafts.

(Note: All workshop poems must be handed in one session prior to workshop. NO EMAIL SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. All work must be typed. You must bring enough copies for the entire class, including the instructor. Your name must be on everything you turn in. Remember to save copies of these drafts as you will need them in your final portfolio.)

Other Policies:

Attendance: Attendance is MANDATORY. Students must arrive to class on time and prepared each session. Two unexcused tardies are equivalent to one absence. Two
unexcused absences will cost a letter grade; more than two unexcused absences may result in automatic failure of the course.

**Plagiarism:** In accordance with university policy, plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and could result in severe disciplinary action.

**Workshop Etiquette:** Workshop is an integral part of your education both as writer and reader. The objective is to offer close readings of students' work, as well as comments that may be of use in revision. Guidelines for critique will be distributed on the first day of class. For now, know that this is intended to be a safe place for students to express themselves without fear of ridicule. Therefore, A CLIMATE OF MUTUAL RESPECT WILL BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS**

**June 4:** Course introduction, discuss syllabus, workshop groups assigned, mock workshop.

**June 6:** “The Talent of the Room” by Michael Ventura (online); **Workshop Group A**

**June 11:** “Improvisation/Revision” by Yusef Komunyakaa (online), “Flying Revision’s Flag” by Donald Hall (online); **Workshop Group B**

**June 13:** “Poetry and Ambition” by Donald Hall (online); **Workshop Group A; “Midterm”**

**June 18:** “Tradition and the Individual Talent” by T.S. Eliot (handout); **Group B**

**June 20:** “Uses of the Erotic” by Audre Lorde (online); **Group A**

**June 25:** “Play and Theory of the Duende” by Federico Garcia Lorca; **Groups B**

**June 27:** “Riding a Horse That’s a Little Too Wild For You: an Interview with Li-Young Lee” (handout); **Final Portfolios Due, Presentations**