

# **International Poetry Guild (IPG) Mentor Seminar**

*Winter Term 2020*

Instructor: Eli Zemper

**2225 SEB**

Tuesdays 4:00- 6:00

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## **The Purpose of This Course**

This seminar is intended to provide an opportunity for U of M students to share their enthusiasm for writing with student writers while concurrently exploring their own creative writing. It also is intended to provide a place where high school and middle school writers can explore their interest in writing in a safe environment. We'll see these goals within the framework of the International Poetry Guild (IPG), an online writing project in which high school and middle school writers share their work with peers and with you.

IPG was founded and continues to exist on the assumption that young writers often don't have enough safe and supportive places to pursue their work. Your job as a writing "mentor" this term is to provide a safe place for students to express their ideas and to guide their process. Much of the work of mentoring is searching for ways to offer support to young writers while also striving to model behavior and approaches to discussing creative work that will help some of our IPG participants begin to see themselves as writers who have something important to say. In short, your job is to help some young writers continue to develop their craft.

Because it is often easier to talk about a process when we are practitioners ourselves, a significant portion of each class will be spent looking at our **own** development as writers. By grappling with the process our young poets are working through, our feedback will have much more context and immediacy than if we were merely "armchair" editors.

Please note- some of the BEST mentors were people who did not have a background in writing, did not initially feel that they themselves were "creative" and didn't think of themselves as having anything meaningful to say. The experience of exploring your own writing as you help someone else through the process is a transformative one that by the end of the course may have you thinking very differently both about yourself and your abilities as well as today's youth and what they have to say.

## Learning Goals for This Semester

Students will:

- \*Understand the conventions and formats of written English.
- \*Analyze style and form of various genres.
- \*Identify author's voice, attitude, and point of view.
- \*Use the writing process to produce a variety of creative and analytical pieces.
- \*Use multiple sources to extend writing.
- \*Use tone and voice to engage specific audiences.
- \*Discuss issues surrounding social justice the current education system.
- \*Examine how various factors (racial and cultural background, geography, primary language, social class) shape who we are and the perspectives we have.
- \*Examine and discuss adolescent development from a psychological as well as a pedagogical perspective.
- \*Critique and revise their own writing as well as the writing of others.

## Course Grading

Virtually every mentor in the history of IPG has been here because he or she is interested in poetry and in helping kids to feel more confident in and excited about his or her writing. As a consequence of this, most mentors are highly invested in the project and do excellent work. That said, you will be taking this course for a grade, so the following are the criteria upon which your grade will be determined:

- 1) Diligence and quality of reflective thought as shown by your participation in the three segments of each seminar meeting (personal creative writing, daily lesson, practicum. . . these will be addressed later in the syllabus)
- 2) The quality of and level of investment in your assignments (your poetry, your daily reflective pieces, final submission of a poetry portfolio and final reflection over the semester.)
- 3) Your attendance. Because this class is a three-credit class and only meets thirteen times, it is important to attend class. Class time is devoted to discussing the week's activities as well as make presentations and problem solving. Please do not arrange any other activities that interfere with this two-hour block. **Because participation is vital to this class each class absence (regardless of the reason) results in a reduction of 5% in your final grade.**
- 4) Most importantly. . .the depth and quality and frequency of your on-line interactions with the students. **Your online mentoring work is the MOST important aspect of this course.** Once the online project starts later this month, **you'll be expected to be online 5 out of 7 days a week**, being consistent with crafting and posting your responses and trying your best to keep

up with the flow of the poems. Depending on the length of your responses, this should equate to **15 responses to poems per week. Because of the importance of timely feedback, only 4 responses per day will be counted toward your weekly goal of 15 responses.**

## **Awards**

I will be asking each of you to give awards at the end of the term. The number of awards will be contingent on the number of poems posted, how prolific particular IPG groups are etc. For the moment, I simply want to call attention to this task, so you're thinking about it from the beginning of the course, noting appropriate poems or candidates for awards. Awards can be for group accomplishments, for particular poems or particular poets. I'd like you to take free-rein in creating award categories that reflect both the poems/poets and your sensibilities (I've included a brief sample list of recent award categories for illustrative purposes only) Awards will be posted by the group at the end of the semester.

*The "I Guess I AM a poet" Award*  
*Best Poem in Commemoration*  
*Chow Time Award (for poem(s) about food)*  
*Tweet! Best Poem Short enough to be Tweeted*  
*Best Ann Landers Poem (Advice to live by)*  
*Best "Love Kills" poem*  
*Best Use of Rhyme in Poem*

## **Course Pacing**

What follows is a brief summary of each week's focus. It is broken down into the creative writing portion, the lesson for the day, and a practicum focus. Because the first few weeks will be spent thinking about the art of mentoring, we will spend them on looking at ourselves. After those first few weeks we will be using that final hour of class to discuss issues as they relate to our on-line mentoring. Each student will be responsible for leading a particular week's discussion. Students will be responsible for crafting an essential question or focus (a theme) for the day as different concerns or observations are made about the writing or students within the guild. Additionally, each person will also introduce us to his/her favorite writer by reading a selection of his/her work and discussing an aspect of that writer's work.

### **\*\*Special Note:**

We are attending two live performances this semester. In lieu of a textbook, you will purchase:

**\*\*One ticket to the UMS performance of *Home* on Friday, April 3rd at 8:00 at the Power Center**

\*\* One ticket to the MOTH Storyslam on Tuesday, February 18th at 6:30pm (\$15 general admission). Please reserve your tickets today!

## **Week One: 1/14**

Writing: Exquisite Corpse

Lesson: Read “Learning to Read” Write: how do you understand the student’s comments at the end. Is she right?

Practicum: What experiences have you had with writing and critique?

Homework: Finish Learning Inventory, Read “Teaching Poetic texts” and “Errors as an Invitation to Improve” Write two-page reflection on the teaching of poetry and what you found out about your learning style. What do you think will be easy for you and what will challenge you as you begin to think about becoming a mentor? What are your concerns as they relate to your readings? Bring paper to class next week.

## **Week Two: 1/21**

### **\*Turn in Two-Page reflection**

Writing: Diary entry: you at 13. (Day in the life)

Lesson: Look at and discuss student creative work. What do we comment on? How do we comment?

Practicum: Discuss learning inventory. Read “Thirteen ways of Seeing a Blackbird”

Homework: Read “The Art of Teaching Writing” Write a poem in the style of the “13 Ways of Seeing. . .” and bring in a copy of it next week.

## **Week Three: 1/28**

### **\*Bring a copy of “13 Ways”**

Writing: Development. “Advance. . . Expand” exercise

Lesson: Writer’s workshop- model as a group then workshop each other’s “13 ways” from last week

Practicum: Go over literary terms, look at “Journal Jumpstarts” as a way in to talking to the poets, Trade writes from the beginning of class and provide feedback using a few of these prompts (ten minutes). When finished, give to student critiquing this week’s work

Homework: Write a “Best and Worst poem modeled after Charles Bukowski. Bring to class next week. **Students are expected to begin their online work this week. Remember that your expectation is to be online 5 out of seven days per week- please comment on 15 poems this week.**

## **Week Four: 2/4**

### **\*Bring “Best and Worst” poem**

Writing: Ingredient Label/ nutritional analysis for you

Lesson: Workshop pieces, discuss in larger group

Practicum: Ten-minute quick write “Issues and Observations” from online comments this week. Sign up for practicum. Look at examples of successful practica.

Homework: Life Graph- We will be sharing these

## **Week Five: 2/11\*\* Bring Life Graph**

Writing: In pairs look at life graphs. Which seems the most compelling? Have partner tell the story. What parts should writer advance and what parts should the writer expand? Is there an object that is prominent in your story? Make at least 7 connections between you and the object. Read *Eleven*.

Lesson: First student-led discussion- use Close Looks as a basis. Author share.

Practicum: Share “Close Looks” and discuss recurring themes.

Homework: Write Life graph story

## **Week Six: 2/18 \*\* Class meets 6:30 at Zingerman’s Greyline For Moth Story Slam**

## **Week Seven 3/10 \*\* Bring Copy of Life Graph Story**

Lesson: Workshop Life Graph Story

Practicum: Student- led discussion “How do I respond when this writer’s experience is so far outside of my experience/ comfort level”. Author share.

Homework: For the next two weeks, keep a log of every time a student’s work causes you to pause to reflect on something. What unique perspectives are they bringing to

the guild? Record times when you encounter particularly insightful work and times when you encounter ideas or images that challenge you. Bring these to class.

## **Week Eight: 3/10**

Writing:

Color Chip Poem use the following quote as a framework:

“Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of the moon and the colors of the dawn and dusk.”- N. Scott Momaday

Lesson: Dialogue Poems- Short Stories- “The Hills are like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway

Practicum: Student- led discussion Who are we and who are the populations we are serving? What assumptions/expectations are we carrying about who they are as writers are and what they need? How does background play into the relationship of writer and mentor?

Review observation logs

Homework: Write your own 2-3 page dialogue piece.

## **Week Nine: 3/17 \*\*Bring Dialogue Writes**

Writing: Superheroes that didn't make the cut. . . (Dr Horrible's Sing Along Blog)

Lesson: Workshop Dialogue pieces

Practicum: : Student- led discussion “Mentor concerns- challenges and celebrations as related to our writers”. Author share.

Homework: Write a piece about a superhero/supervillain that didn't quite make it

## **Week Ten: 3/24**

Writing: Read Odes- Pablo Neruda's Elemental Odes

Lesson: “Reflection on the difference (?) between commenting on your colleagues work versus commenting on our student poet's work.” Author Share.

Practicum: Student- led discussion

Homework: Write an Ode in the style of Pablo Neruda

## **Week Eleven : 3/31 \*\* bring a Copy of Ode**

Writing: Language Use- Onomatopoeia- “Jabberwocky”- Lewis Carroll- In pairs make up a dictionary of 10 new words, words that sound like what they are.

Practicum: Student-led discussion of student work. Author share

Homework: Use the dictionary of 10 words to write a poem. Bring poem next week.

## **Week Eleven: 4/3 \*\*Friday 5:00 PM Class meets Thurston High School Students at School of Social Work 8:00 Performance of *Home* at Power Center**

Writing: two-voice poem with students on the topic of censorship

Lesson: Town-hall with students about community standards/censorship/expression

UMS performance of *Home*

## **Week Twelve: 4/7**

### **\*Bring a copy of Jabberwocky-esque poem**

Writing: Dog Slam! Write the worst poem you possibly can in 10 minutes.

Practicum: Student-led discussion of student work. Author share

Homework: With an eye toward giving out awards both to our poets, begin thinking of the ten awards you will give to the poets. Final reflection is due next week. Final Portfolio is due next week. See course pack for details.

## **Week Thirteen: 4/14**

### **\*Bring list of awards for students, Final reflection, Final portfolio with 5 polished creative pieces.**

Practicum: Student-led discussion. Final evaluation of the semester.

Wrap- up- adjourn to post final awards as a group and to finish evaluations.