

Course Syllabus: Making Poems

Course Information

Course Description

Making Poems will be a creative writing offering that teaches metrics and verse forms, poetry the old-fashioned way. Topics will include rhythm, rhyme, metric feet, lines, and verse forms. For example, you will learn about the iambic foot, write some iambic lines of various lengths, and finally use the iambic line to write a sonnet. Rap poetry with its structured rhythms and elaborate rhyming is another possibility. This "formalist" approach promotes a kind of creativity that is strongly infused with craft and discipline in contrast to the "spoken word" or confessional approaches to making poems.

The course assumes everyone is a beginner and that progress is more important than perfection. A series of exercises in elements of form will result in assignments that will be shared, workshop style, on the class discussion board. This class involves making audio recordings of your poems; you will be required to purchase a headset/microphone and download and install free software. The exercises will lead to complete poems written in formal stanza patterns and these will also be workshopped. In addition, you will write essays directed at your specific competences, and will conclude with a final reflective essay that looks back over the whole experience of the course.

Making Poems is based on the "workshop" model of creative writing instruction pioneered at the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. In this form of instruction, a key element is sharing and discussing the writing that you submit. So our class will become a public forum where your work will be read by your peers who will be encouraged to comment on it and share their reactions. Of course I will read your work too and will give individual comments both in public and in a private email. All grades will be sent privately. In order to implement this process, you will submit your work in this course through the Discussion Board where it can be immediately shared with others. The usual link to the Assignment Tool will be disabled.

Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Accurately divide words into syllables
- Locate primary stress in polysyllabic words
- Identify several kinds of metric feet (iamb, trochee, anapest)
- Create rhymes both perfect and close
- Write various poetic lines including but not limited to
 - Iambic tetrameter
 - Blank verse / iambic pentameter
 - Anapestic trimeter
- Construct stanzas of various kinds
- Write a sonnet

- Reflect on the nature of creativity
- Reflect on the impact that formal requirements have on the creative process
- Understand the relation of the individual artist to a tradition
- Assess your own connection, intellectual and emotional, to this process.

Let me add that my attitude towards the work you do is governed by the idea that progress is more important than perfection. I don't expect everyone to write a great sonnet. I just want you all to try your best. Poetry is a complex art. It's ok to be a beginner.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Type "DePaul" for name of the school.

[Click here for help buying your books](#)

Learning resources:

Optional Text:

Hobsbaum, P. *Metre, Rhythm and Verse Form* (The New Critical Idiom) Routledge (1995)
digital edition available.

References to this text will be made in the assignments, but all of the information you'll need for the course is readily available on the internet, so if you are comfortable with web searching you may want to find it for yourself and may regard use of Hobsbaum's text as optional.

Web Resources

Click on "Web Resources" in the lefthand navigation bar of your online course to access a listing of current web links and resources.

Software & Hardware:

You will need a program to record and play back sound files and a microphone to attach to your computer. Microphone/headsets are available for \$20 to \$25 at computer stores and online. *Audacity*, a free program available for both Windows and Mac, has been selected as the software (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>)

In addition you will need to download LAME software to convert the Audacity files to MP3 format to conserve server space. Pointers to this software are found on the Audacity site. We'll play around with this technology in the first week. If you already own software that creates MP3 files, you may use it for this course.

Course Competences

Competence	Competence Statement
A-1-C	Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style.
A-2-A	Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.
A-5	Can define and analyze a creative process.

A-1-C: The course will teach the formal elements of traditional poetry and so will put you and your creative process directly in touch with the impact of these elements on form, content, and style.

A-2-A: You will write poems using formal devices and structures and so will be made directly aware of the impact of formal elements on the creative process.

A-5: You will write original poems and reflect on this process in a Competence Specific Essay that will include some research into the nature of the creative process.

How the Competences will be Demonstrated in this Course

A-1-C: Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style.

The course will teach the formal elements of traditional poetry and so will put you and your creative process directly in touch with the impact of these elements on form, content, and style. Competence in the application of these formal elements will be demonstrated in written assignments. These assignments start with elementary matters and build to more complex and challenging material. Several class discussions will further explore the way form and content interact and the ways in which formal requirements affect the creative process. In addition, the course offers two formal opportunities for you to reflect on your learning. One is a Competence Specific Essay of 750 to 1000 words, some details of which are specified in this document. You must write one essay for each competence undertaken. The second is a Final Essay, also of 750 to 1000 words, which asks you to reflect on the course experience from several perspectives including your learning, the emotional impact of the course experience, and the impact of the new learning on plans for further growth.

A-2-A: Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.

You will write poems using formal devices and structures and so will be made directly aware of the impact of formal elements on the creative process. You will eventually compose several complete and original poems, ranging from ballads to sonnets. Several class discussions will further explore the way form and content interact and the ways in which formal requirements affect the creative process. In addition, the course offers two formal opportunities for you to reflect on your learning. One is a Competence Specific Essay of 750 to 1000 words, some details of which are specified in this document. You will write one essay for each competence undertaken. The second is a Final Essay, also of 750 to 1000 words, which asks you to reflect on

the course experience from several perspectives including your learning, the emotional impact of the course experience, and the impact of the new learning on plans for further growth.

A-5: Can define and analyze a creative process.

You will write original poems and reflect on this process in a Competence Specific Essay that will include some research into the nature of the creative process. Minimum requirements for this research, including the number of required sources and their documentation, will be detailed later in this Guide. Several class discussions will further explore the way form and content interact and the ways in which formal requirements affect the creative process. In addition, the course offers two formal opportunities for you to reflect on your learning. One is a Competence Specific Essay of 750 to 1000 words, mentioned above. The second is a Final Essay, also of 750 to 1000 words, which asks you to reflect on the course experience from several perspectives including your learning, the emotional impact of the course experience, and the impact of the new learning on plans for further growth.

Most of the work will be done by everyone. For example, I expect everyone to do the early exercises and to write a sonnet. The primary thing that will distinguish the student who takes the course for A-1-C from the student pursuing A-5 will be the Competence Specific Essay. This is a major piece of work in the form of an essay of 750 to 1000 words. In the case of A-5, for instance, this project includes doing some research into the nature of creativity. If you take the course for two competences, you will be expected to write two of these essays demonstrating your learning in each area. Two is the limit.

Assessment Criteria for your Final Paper or Project by Competence

It is important to start thinking about and planning the competence specific essay early in the course.

In this course, everyone works through the same learning activities, and only the Competence Specific Essays reflect an emphasis on the particular competences you are registered for. Here are the content criteria that will be used to judge each of these Competence essays.

Competence	Competence Statement
A-1-C	Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style.
A-2-A	Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.
A-5	Can define and analyze a creative process.

A-1-C: The course will teach the formal elements of traditional poetry and so will put you and your creative process directly in touch with the impact of these elements on form, content, and style.

The Competence Essay for A-1-C should conduct an analysis of several poems, including poems you have written for the course and/or examples of your analysis of your peers' work in our class discussions. Your analysis should focus on the formal elements of these poems, their lines,

rhyming patterns, and stanza forms. The essay should show how these elements contribute to the overall meaning or impact of the poems. For example, a Shakespearian sonnet contains three quatrains and a final couplet. How are these rhetorical structures used to organize the content of a specific poem (one by Shakespeare or one of your own or both!).

A-2-A: You will write poems using formal devices and structures and so will be made directly aware of the impact of formal elements on the creative process.

The Competence Essay for A-2-A will focus on poems you have written for the course and will try to show how the creative process of writing these poems was influenced by the formal requirements of the assignments. If you attempt this competence, you should probably keep some kind of diary in which you record the struggles and discoveries you will go through as you try to make language fit into a form. Finally, it is important that this essay say something about how it is possible to use a traditional form and still be able to make something that's new and modern.

A-5: You will write original poems and reflect on this process in a Competence Specific Essay that will include some research into the nature of the creative process.

The Competence essay for A-5 uses your experience in the course along with outside reading to try to come to some conclusions about the nature of creativity itself. It is a *definitional* essay that tries to say what creativity is, what elements or processes contribute to the creative act. This is a wonderfully huge subject, so it will be important to find a focus of some sort.

This is a research paper and must use a minimum of four outside sources. The use of sources must be properly documented using MLA style in-text citations and a Works Cited list at the end. Both direct quotes and paraphrase of sources must be documented. See The OWL at Purdue for details <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> and/or send questions about MLA style to me.

Course Structure

This course consists of six modules. Modules may be from one to eight units long The estimated time to complete each module varies from one to three weeks.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

Assessment

Please refer to the course schedule for specific point values and due dates for each assignment.

Percentage distribution of Assessments

The assignments in this course will be evaluated using points. And the final grade will be determined by what percentage of the 815 total points you have accumulated. 90% for an A (733.5), 80% for a B (652.0) and so on (C = 570.5, D = 489.0). I will not be giving plus or minus grades.

If a single assignment is worth 100 points and your score is 85 then you know a few things. You know you got the equivalent of a solid B grade on that assignment and you know that assignment is worth 11% of the total for your final grade. The Sonnet assignment and the Final Essay are two such assignments.

An assignment worth only a few points could still be an important assignment! For example, if you don't know how to find the major stress in polysyllabic words and you skip assignment 2.1 which is "only" worth 20 points, then you are not going to be able to do much with any of the assignments in modules three or four!

A good way to assess how you are doing at any time is to keep track of the points you have earned and the total points so far. Divide the small number by the big number and multiply by 100 and that's the percent you have so far. If the big number and the small number are the same, then congratulations; you have 100% of the points and are getting an A!

Another really good way to get a snapshot of your progress is to send me an email and ask me. I will be keeping this information either in Blackboard or on a spreadsheet and will be able to give you an immediate snapshot of our progress. No extra charge. You can also get information just by clicking on "My Grades" on the course Blackboard.

The Final Reflective Essay is required for everyone in this course. The essay should provide a detailed commentary on your work in the course, including some reflection on your learning and your plans for future learning. The purpose of this assignment is to provide a point at the end of the course for meta-cognitive reflection and closure.

Assessment Criteria for the Assignments

Many of my assignments require clear and unambiguous responses from you and are pretty easy to grade. For example, Module 2.1 asks for the following:

Make a list of 10 polysyllabic words and use a dictionary to identify the syllables and stresses in words. Record yourself reading the words. Post the list on the Discussion Forum with the sound file attached. Read & respond to the work of at least three classmates.

This calls for a list of ten words, marked in a certain way and posted with a sound file on our discussion board. These are clear and objective criteria and little or no judgment is called for in grading the assignment. If you turn in the list, (with a sound file) and there are ten words, and they are correctly marked (see a dictionary for this) and you respond to three classmates, you get ten points. Lots of the early assignments are like this. There are very clear requirements for an iambic pentameter line. It must have five beats and the beat when you say it must conform to a certain pattern (taDUM, taDUM, taDUM, taDUM, taDUM), The assignment to create 10 of these lines does not say anything about them being "good" poetry. That comes later — you hope!

In all the assignments it's progress, not perfection, that counts. That's what being a student is all about.

In Module 4, weeks five to seven, things get a little more sophisticated and the quality of the work you do will count for more. Frankly, it's hard to say just how much more. There will still be an objective basis for the assignment. For example, when you are asked to write a sonnet, you should know by then that a sonnet is a fourteen line poem that uses the iambic pentameter line and rhymes in a certain way. The early work should prepare you for this. You will also get a look at some wonderful examples of the sonnet. If you can write one like that, you won't need me to validate it! So to get an A in this exercise, you will have to produce a poem that holds together a bit and possibly even has something to say. It need not be perfect. A score of 80 or more (a B) will be awarded to all work that meets the basic formal requirements of the form.

The two essays that come at the end will be evaluated with the criteria described in the next section.

Assessment Criteria for the Competence Specific Essay and the Final Reflective Essay

In general, grading of all essay assignments will take into consideration the following:

Content refers to the treatment of your topic, logically and analytically. This is the substance, the "what" of the paper; what you had to say about the topic, what you presented in defense of your position, and what your analysis revealed about your thought processes and grasp of the material you grappled with. The main thing is to have something to say and to say it clearly. This should start with a clear introduction that tells the reader what the essay will be about. "Content" also includes adequate development of your ideas. I strongly urge you to use specific examples from the poems you discuss to support and illustrate what you are saying. Quote lines and phrases.

Organization is the way your paper is laid out and presented, including both the overall organization and the arrangement of individual sections. These include: a relevant title and introduction; the full development of ideas in the body of the paper; connections and transitions; and what used to be called "rhetoric": the skillful arrangement of the pieces for maximum persuasive impact on the reader. And don't forget to write a conclusion!

Mechanics refers to spelling and grammar, the use of standard English, proper sentence structure and punctuation, and effective and sensitive word choice. Spelling checkers can help here but the grammar checkers I've seen so far are misleading and inaccurate and I would not rely on them.

Mastery of basic communication and writing skills is very important for undergraduate students. If you use any outside sources (as is required for the A-5 Competence Essay), then follow the proper MLA citation form for in-text references as well as for a list of Works Cited.

Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

A significant part of your online learning experience involves learning with and from your classmates and the instructor in the online discussions.

Active participation means sharing information and resources and posting your ideas and critiquing and expanding on the ideas of others in a collegial fashion. This discussion is informal and is meant to encourage the exchange of ideas. In discussion we need to treat each other as friends and colleagues, and be respectful of the ideas, values, and feelings of others.

The discussions will be organized into forums around particular assignments. Your contributions will not be graded like English papers so standard sentences, spelling, and so on are NOT required. On the other hand, this isn't a chat room (lol) so while it's ok to be informal I'd like you avoid extreme informality and chat-room slang.

Here's a checklist for your contributions:

1. Offering up ideas or resources and inviting a critique of them
2. Asking challenging questions
3. Articulating, explaining and supporting positions on ideas
4. Exploring and supporting issues by adding explanations and examples
5. Reflecting on and re-evaluating personal opinions
6. Offering a critique, challenging, discussing and expanding ideas of others
7. Negotiating interpretations, definitions and meanings
8. Summarizing previous contributions and asking the next question
9. Proposing actions based on ideas that have been developed
10. Sharing feelings and values as well as ideas and opinions.

The above was adapted from Gilly Salmon's book *E-Moderating: The key to teaching and learning online*. London: Kogan Page: p.143 (2000).

I would like to add that it's also important for these discussions to be friendly and supportive. Be a colleague, not a critic. You and your classmates are going to be sharing some creative work. This always involves a fairly high-level of emotional risk. I know that and I understand your anxiety in this regard because I've been there. I use this approach, sometimes called "the workshop method," because the rewards are great and students report that the initial risk was very worthwhile. So trust me on this and learn to trust each other. It is important for writers to hear from their readers. One of my chief responsibilities as the instructor of this course, is to

make these discussions good learning experiences for all. Let me know if you are having a problem with the process.

Course Grading Scale

Grades: Grades will be based on simple percentages. 815 total points are available.

If you undertake two competences (the maximum) then a grade for each will be calculated using the score of the competence-specific essay you wrote to address that competence.

For the SNL Life-Long Learning courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter. Once made, this decision cannot be changed.

How To Do Well In This Class

There is a sign outside a casino in Las Vegas that says, "You must be present to win." The same is true if you want to do well in this class.

1. Participate in class discussions. The class discussions and homework exercises are important in determining your grade.
2. Don't fall behind — In general once a discussion is graded its over. Don't think you can post discussion items a week after they are graded and expect credit. The class has moved on.
3. Read the assignments carefully. If the assignment says write ten lines of poetry, then write ten. If it says use MLA research paper style then find out what that style is and use it.
4. Email questions. When you have *any* questions, email me. If I send a question to you, then answer it. Take the initiative in our communications, especially if you have a problem. I get paid to help you solve problems!
5. Post all assignments by the specified due dates.
6. Start thinking about and planning the competence specific essay early in the course.
7. When you have any questions, email me. Oh, I said that didn't I?

Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication;

falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions"—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is **EXCLUSIVELY** for the purpose of classroom discussion and will **NOT** be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will **EVER** use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment **EACH** week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Tom Sullivan and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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