

Three-day workshops and critical seminars

The Contemporary Sonnet with Rebecca Foust

Fourteen lines do not a sonnet make. What are the necessary and sufficient qualities that “earn” the title? In the words of Molly Peacock, Is there a 21st century sonnet? Is there an American Sonnet? The form has persisted, ebullient and powerful for seven centuries. How has it renewed itself? More importantly, how can it renew poetry and those writing it? This class will examine the contemporary sonnet in its myriad and exciting interactions with traditional forms. Each day will offer a short lecture with handouts, workshop of student poems, and a prompt.

The Ekphrastic Muse with Molly Peacock

This workshop, designed as both a seminar and a studio, invites participants at every level. We will consider how the visual inspires poetic craft and vice versa. We will delve into the uses, functions, rhythms, forms and dreams of word painting, both as visual art inspires poetry and as imagery is created in poems. What does a repeating form or a limited form do for an ekphrastic poem? How does a striking image function in a formal poem? Although ekphrasis can extend to borrowings among many arts, we will focus on poetry and visual art. Each class will provide an opportunity for the participants to start or sketch a poem.

Light Verse and Parody with Melissa Balmain and Frank Osen

What makes some poems and parodies funnier than others? Are the standards of craftsmanship different for light verse? Can contests help you get better at writing it? What the heck *is* “light verse,” anyway? We’ll seek answers to these questions and more, with help from poets living, dead, and (in the case of parodies) sometimes both. Topics to be explored include humor-friendly forms, rhyme and meter, subject matter, line and syntax, and types of poems that light-verse editors don’t care if they ever see again.

Master Class with A. E. Stallings

This workshop is reserved for poets who have published a full length collection.

The Poetic Narrative with Peter Makuck

I will distribute examples of narrative poems, long and short, both metrical and in open form. We will talk about the role of narrative or story in lyric poetry as well as physical detail, place, and persona. There will be open discussion about these and other subjects in the workshop. I will make recommendations for writing, reading, and provide some reminders about the fine art of revision.

Finding Your Form with Debora Greger and William Logan

“Disciples and devotees . . . what are most of them doing? Worshipping
the teapot instead of drinking the tea!”
—Wei Wu Wei

Form is the box we put the words in—but the box may make all the difference. Sonnet or villanelle, orderly free verse or words scattered on the page—forms are chosen or imposed, arrived at whimsically at dawn or by painstaking rejection at midnight. Poets may spend weeks trying to perfect a form, when the real problem is

the words. Every good poem might have been cast in a different form, and every form offers advantages otherwise lost and disadvantages no longer avoided. Whether the form is stringently adhered to or radically messed with, the important thing, always, is to make a better poem.

Each member of the workshop will submit three poems in advance, formal or free verse—preferably poems where you have a question about the form. From each poet's work we will select one or more to discuss. We will bring a packet of poems in various forms as illustrations of choices made brilliantly, or badly. Please send the poems by .pdf to wlogan@ufl.edu.

What is form but the box we put the words in?

Rhyming and Competing with John Whitworth

Up till quite recently most poems in English rhymed. Philip Larkin rhymed. Richard Wilbur still rhymes but if you look in many places where poetry is published it seems like a dying art. A lot of this is to do with words like 'Sincerity' which came creeping, creeping throughout the Twentieth Century. And there is Progress and Progressive. I want poems to be regressive and insincere. I want them to rhyme and scan. Places where they do are in Competitions where you can win small sums AT NO OUTLAY. So my workshop is a business proposition that would delight the soul of Donald Trump (if he has one). Oh yes, irony is another thing we might encourage. And we will enter the Spectator Competitions. Americans win these things. A Canadian (Chris O'Carroll) wins them A LOT. Remember, the Spectator has a 60,000 weekly circulation and a much greater readership. Where is the Literary Magazine that can match these figures? The New Yorker perhaps. O'Carroll has been in the New Yorker though I haven't... yet.

Globalizing Poetic Forms: Writing Pantoums, Villanelles, and Ghazals with Shirley Geok-lin Lim

This workshop focuses on how poets have seized on these traditional forms, "repurposing" the line breaks, rhythms, cadences, patterning, and expressive possibilities, for their individual voices, visions, aspirations, themes, and communities. We will consider how these global forms from Asia, Europe and the Middle East have been and can be 'indigenized' by poets writing in English. The three-day workshops will be devoted to discussing the forms' strictures; in writing your own pantoums, villanelles and ghazals, you will be encouraged to observe, play with and break these strictures to generate original work.

Blank Verse and the Iambic Line with Mark Jarman

In American poetry the two modern masters of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) were and remain Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens. We will begin our class by comparing some of the ways these two, employing the same metrical measure and following the same metrical rules, wrote verse that sounded remarkably different and distinctly their own. We will also read and discuss at least two of your own efforts at writing blank verse and/or other poems in which you have written an iambic line. Blank verse will be our focus, but I will be happy to talk about any other iambic poems you have written.

The Dramatic Voice with Leon Stokesbury

Verses and Voices: Poetic Translation Seminar with Dick Davis

This seminar will consist of four 90 minute sessions, spread over four days; this will be restricted to invited participants, but to conclude there will also be a general session with an audience made up of anyone attending the conference who wishes to come. For the seminar itself, each of the participants will give a talk on some aspect of verse translation, or make a comparison of verse translations by different poets of a single work or of a single poet's oeuvre, or offer a road-map as to how he or she has gone about his or her own verse translations – generally or with regard to a specific work. Each of the talks will be followed by a discussion of the topics raised. For the open session each of us will read a translation or two of our own, with however much commentary seems appropriate, and again we hope that this leads comments, questions or a wider discussion.

The Achievement of Stevie Smith Seminar with Gregory Dowling and Moira Egan

Stevie Smith (1902-1971) was one of the most popular poets of the 20th century. Her work was known for its “variety and inventiveness, much humour and understanding, and a constant poignancy” (Seamus Heaney). A new Collected volume, edited by Will May, gathers Smith's poems and drawings to celebrate her decades-long career, which was honoured with the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. In this critical seminar, each participant will give a 10-minute presentation on a chosen poem by Stevie Smith, with discussion to follow.