

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

WRI 419, FALL 2007

The writer's life—there is no simple formula by which to live it. To degrees, each of you is already in it; and to degrees each of you will configure your life after graduation to continue as a writer. And some of you may ultimately go a different way. I see this course as a chance to engage with the components of a writer's life, some very familiar to you (writing, revising) and some perhaps less so (ordering a manuscript, querying or submitting to journals). Even more, I'd like us to try and replicate one way that you might continue your practice as a writer once you don't have workshops or an immediate community of writers around you.

In all of this, there are three threads that will comprise Portfolio and Practice:

I. ~~PORTFOLIO~~ PROJECT

While this is not a workshop (and I suspect you hardly want to be enrolled in another workshop), your primary effort as a writer this semester will be your Senior Writing Project, which this course aims to support. Please see the guidelines for the Senior Writing Project on a separate page. Know, too, that if you are not enrolled in a creative writing course or independent study that will be the place for you to revise, plan, and organize your Project, you should make arrangements now: enroll in a course, plan an independent study, or arrange for regular meetings with an advisor.

We will take time to read and provide feedback on your Project Introduction.

II. PRACTICE, THE PROFESSIONAL PART

Thus far your focus as a writing student (as a writer) has been on writing. Your apprenticeship at Warren Wilson is important, and you may find yourself longing for that rarified world at some point. Now is the time, however, for you to go public, and about half of our meetings will be dedicated to some topic of professionalization. These topics may include:

- Submitting work (to journals, magazines, and publishers)
- Presenting your work (performance, self-publication, new media, etc.)
- Jobs for writers (not always *as* writers)
- Graduate school
- Other issues you are interested in

III. PRACTICE, THE SUSTAINING PART

To be sure, all of the above activities are viable parts of a writer's life, but when I think of the practice of being (for me) a poet, I concentrate on those activities that will sustain me in my work of writing. Some of the greatest sustenance are ideas and other writers to share them with. Over the course of the semester, we'll work to create an exchange of ideas and model a mode that you might find works for you later on. We'll have a common reading that will be the topic of some of our meetings. Moreover, we'll read the selected letters of a writer we'll choose together. In letters you'll have a chance to glimpse ideas as they arise outside of class—and a letter, or course, is a fantastic vehicle for sharing ideas (and for debate). At each of these meetings I'll ask you to write a letter to the group, which we'll read aloud to start our talk. My first suggestion is that we read Chekhov's

letters, but here are some other options, and you may have others (for some reason poets seem to have more published letters than those who write other genres):

- Anton Chekhov
- John Keats
- Elizabeth Bishop
- Hart Crane
- William Maxwell
- Flannery O'Connor
- Vladimir Nabokov/Edmund Wilson
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- Rainer Marie Rilke
- Marianne Moore
- Gabriel Garcia Lorca
- Virginia Woolf
- Sylvia Plath
- Robert Lowell
- Gustave Flaubert

MEETINGS

We'll meet eight times throughout the semester—every other week. I propose we make these meetings on Tuesdays at two different times (if we can manage the confusion). How about evenings from 7-9:30 for our Sustaining Practice sessions and supper time for our Professional Practice sessions (since I may call on friends and faculty for their expertise this time seems more accessible). Location to be determined.

DATES:

Sept. 4 th	7pm
Sept. 18 th	5pm
Oct. 2 nd	7pm
Oct. 16 th	5pm
Oct. 30 th	7pm
Nov. 13 th	5pm
Nov. 27 th	7pm
Dec. 11 th	5pm

With only 8 meetings I expect to see you at every one.

CONTACT INFO:

Gary Hawkins
Jensen 204—CPO 6253
ghawkins@w-w.edu
O: 828/771.3718
H: 828/ 357.8247