ENGL3201 - Advanced Creative Writing 1
Course Outline (Poetry)

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Kim Cheng Boey
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Consultation hours: Wednesday 11am-1pm, Friday 11am – 1pm
Semester: Semester 1 - 2006
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Lecture
Seminar
Workshop

Course Overview

Brief Course Description
Allows students to undertake specialization in poetry or prose. Students will be able to concentrate on developing their poetic skills or narrative and descriptive techniques in order to produce a coherent and sustained portfolio in either poetry or prose.

Contact Hours
Workshop for 2 Hours per Week for 13 Weeks
workshop/lecture/seminar

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have
1. furthered the understanding of the art of creative reading - the ability to identify a good text and use it as a creative model;
2. furthered the ability to analyse literary texts in a coherent way;
3. acquired a deeper knowledge of the different genres, literary tradition and forms;
4. learned more about the mechanics of a good poem or a compelling narrative;
5. been exposed to an array of voices from the local to the global and start to develop their own voice.

**Course Content**
This course allows students to specialize in either poetry or prose and thus gives them more opportunity to develop as fiction writers or poets. Students will be able to concentrate on developing their poetic skills or narrative and descriptive techniques in order to produce a coherent and sustained portfolio in either poetry or prose. Particular attention will be paid to:
* contemporary developments in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction;
* comparing local and foreign voices;
* deepening knowledge of forms and traditions of each genre;
* developing a coherent collection of poetry or prose;
* the skills and techniques of major writers;
* discovering literary exemplars to inspire students.

**Assessment Items**

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<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>* Creative Work: 3000 words or equivalent (50%) - due 5 June</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>* Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%) - due 10 April</td>
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<td>* Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%) - due 15 May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group/tutorial participation and contribution</td>
<td>* Class participation (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>* Journal and book review: 500 words (10%) – due 5 June</td>
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**Assumed Knowledge**
ENGL2201 and ENGL2202 or equivalent.

**Callaghan Campus Timetable**
ENGL3201
**ADVANCED CREATIVE WRITING 1**
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 1 - 2006

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<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>18:00 - 20:00</th>
<th>[MC102]</th>
<th>PROSE</th>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>12:00 - 14:00</td>
<td>[MCLG42]</td>
<td>PROSE</td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>90:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>[MC102]</td>
<td>POETRY</td>
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**Plagiarism**
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another’s ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -


The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

**Written Assessment Items**

Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

**Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations**

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment: or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer on the prescribed form.

Please go to the Policy and the on-line form for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you, at:

Changing your Enrolment
The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:
For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2006
Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester and prior to the commencement of the formal exam period. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with the School Office.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html

Contact Details
Faculty Student Service Offices

The Faculty of Education and Arts
Room: GP1-22 (General Purpose Building)
Phone: 0249 215 314

The Dean of Students
Dr Jennifer Archer
Phone: 492 15806
Fax: 492 17151
resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

Alteration of this Course Outline
No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards
STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 49 21 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at:

www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Online Tutorial Registration:
Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system:

Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/
This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

Hard copy submission:

- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
University coversheet: All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet:

Assignments are to be deposited in the relevant discipline assignment box:
  o Callaghan students: School of Humanities and Social Science Office, Level 1, McMullin Building, MC127
  o Ourimbah students: Room H01.43

Do not fax or email assignments: Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse. Assignments mailed to Schools are accepted from the date posted.

Keep a copy of all assignments: All assignments are date-stamped upon receipt. However, it is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in hard copy and on disk.

Online copy submission to Turnitin
In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:
  ß Creative Writing Portfolio due June 5
  ß Critical Essay (1000 words) due May 15
  ß Creative Short Assignment due April 10

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing.

Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Penalties for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time will be penalised by the reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than ten days after the due date will be awarded zero marks.

Special Consideration/Extension of Time Applications
Students wishing to apply for Special Consideration or Extension of Time should obtain the appropriate form from the Student HUBS.

No Assignment Re-submission
Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

Remarks
Students can request to have their work re-marked by the Course Coordinator or Discipline Convenor (or their delegate); three outcomes are possible: the same grade, a lower grade, or a higher grade being awarded. Students may also appeal against their final result for a course. Please consult the University policy at:
Return of Assignments
Where possible, assignments will be marked within 3 weeks and returned to students in class. At the end of semester, students can collect assignments from the Student HUBS during office hours.

Preferred Referencing Style
In this course, it is recommended that you use the MLA referencing system for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure.

An in-text citation names the author of the source and gives the page number in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors' last names (or by titles for works without authors). Further information on referencing and general study skills can be obtained from:

Infoskills:

Student Representatives
We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Student Representatives are the channel of communication between students and the School Board. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on the School website.

Student Communication
Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.

Essential Online Information for Students
Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support, Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student Support Services can be found at:

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<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
<th>Pass (P)</th>
<th>Credit (C)</th>
<th>Distinction (D)</th>
<th>High Distinction (HD)</th>
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<td>49% or less</td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.</td>
<td>Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.</td>
<td>All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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## Course Schedule

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Lecture Topic &amp; Assessment at a Glance</th>
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</table>
| 1    | February 20   | What is Poetry for?  
**Texts:** Charles Simic's “Miracle Glass Co.”, Langston Hughes’ “I, Too,” Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool”  
Philip Sidney’s “Old Arcadia,” Algernon Swinburne’s “Sestina,”  
Miller Williams’ “The Shrinking Lonesome Sestina” and Alberto Ríos' “Nani.” |
| 2    | February 27   | The Music of the Line  
| 3    | March 6       | Rewriting Tradition / The Sonnet  
Gwen Harwood’s “A Game of Chess,” “Mary Jo Slater’s “Half a Double Sonnet,” Michael Palmer’s “Sonnet” |
| 4    | March 13      | The Father Poem  
| 5    | March 20      | The Lyric  
**Texts:** James Wright’s “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota,” Edward Thomas’ “Rain” |
| 6    | March 27      | Pantoum  
**Texts:** Carolyn Kizer’s “Parents Pantoum,” Nellie Wong’s “Grandmother’s Song,” Donald Justice’s “Pantoum of the Great Depression” |
| 7    | April 3       | Dramatic Monologue 3  
**Texts:** Ai’s “The German Army, Russia, 1943”  
Wilfred Owen’s “Strange Meeting” |
| 8    | April 10      | The Letter Poem  
**Texts:** Ann Finch’s “Letter to Daphnis, April 2, 1685,”  
Elizabeth Bishop’s “Letter to N.Y.,” Richard Hugo’s “Letter to Kizer from Seattle” and “Letter to Levertov from Butte”  
**Short Creative Writing Assignment due 10 April** |
|      | Mid-Semester Recess: Friday 14 April - Friday 28 April |
| 9    | May 1         | The Elegy  
**Texts:** Ben Jonson’s “On My First Son,” Katherine Philips’ “Epitaph. On her Son H.P. at St. Syth’s Church where her body also lies Interred,” Edward Hirsch’s “In Memoriam Paul Celan,”  
Garrett Hongo’s “The Legend” |
| 10   | May 8         | Voice  
**Texts:** Allen Ginsberg’s “America,” Carolyn Forché’s “The Colonel,” Sharon Olds’ “The Language of the Brag” |
| 11   | May 15        | Memory  
**Texts:** Janet Lewis’ “Remembered Morning,” Philip Levine’s “Smoke,” Derek Walcott’s “Midsummer, Tobago”  
**Critical Essay due May 15** |
| 12   | May 22        | The Journey Poem  
**Texts:** Adrienne Rich’s “Diving Into the Wreck,” Hayden
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Carruth’s “Saturday Morning at the Border”</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Creative Writing Portfolio and Journal(with review) due June 5.</td>
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**Note:**
* The first 45 minutes of the class will be devoted to a lecture and discussion on the topic/readings of the week. This is followed by a 10-minute creative writing exercise and a five-minute break. The second hour is for workshopping.
* Any work to be critiqued should be circulated a week before being workshopped. It should be read at home and a brief critique prepared for the workshop. This allows more discussion time.
* The golden rule to be observed in the sessions is respect, for the tutor and for fellow writing students. Respect and humility are essential in the writing life. Criticism should be constructive and directed at the text, not the author. The poem or story should be evaluated objectively, paying close attention to the craft.
* Participation is assessed by the degree of positive contribution to class discussions. Students can get feedback on their participation during the semester.
* The assessment items are a Creative Writing portfolio (50%), a critical essay (20%), a short creative writing assignment (15%) and a journal. For the Creative Writing portfolio and short assignment, you may use the creative writing suggestions in the weekly topics below or develop your work independently. The number of poems may range from 8 to 20, depending on the quality and length. For the 1000 word critical essay, you must select one of the critical questions relating to the topics from the course. The 500 word journal should include observations about writing and writers, drafts for projects, and a review of a contemporary work. You should be working on your journal through the semester, making it a place where you deposit images, ideas, and thoughts about writers and writing.
* All work must be typed, double-spaced for prose, one-and-half for poetry. All pieces should bear a title, name and date.
* The weekly discussion topics are divided into critical and creative sections. The critical section focuses on literary analysis and appreciation of the stories and poems. You will acquire critical tools and concepts such as genre, form, literary devices etc and apply them to the texts being read. The creative section consists of writing exercises related to the themes, requiring you to look closely at the skills and techniques covered in the readings.

**Week 1 - What is Poetry for?**

What is poetry for in these destitute times? This is a question posed by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. The issue of poetry’s relevance became especially urgent in the wake of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, when the arts and humanities, all the human beauty celebrated in literature seemed demolished, and language underwent a crisis, because it had been turned into an instrument of propaganda and torture. The critic Theodor Adorno declares that after Auschwitz, poetry is impossible.

Adorno has been proven wrong of course. Poetry has continued its song, of celebration as well as of despair. Paul Celan, a survivor of the concentration camp, found in poetry a means of witnessing, a possible salvation from human atrocity.
Poets writing in concealment in the Communist regimes, like Miroslav Holub and Wislawa Szymborska, invented an oblique poetry that gives their lyric voice freedom of expression and at the same time allows them to secrete a critique of the regime.

Poetry has not been diminished. On the contrary, it has flourished and reinvented itself in infinite ways. The experimental and free forms it has found are inspired by jazz, painting, film, technology etc. At the same time there is a continuous dialogue with traditional forms. Poets and all artists compose with centuries of influences, the voices of predecessors circulating in their bloodstream. “No poet has his complete meaning alone,” as T.S. Eliot says. Whatever the poet writes is connected by capillaries and filaments of thought and language to the writers he has read deeply. In Eliot’s voice you will find Shakespeare, Donne, Marvell, Verlaine, Baudelaire, and a whole host of other influences. Even if Eliot’s work is free and open in form, the lines are forged from a knowledge of inherited forms, from a dialogue with tradition. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland say in the anthology that poetic form is “a continuum, and not a finished product.”

Critical
1. What are the uses of poetry? Or does it have to be useful?
2. Poetry encompasses an infinite range of emotions from extreme grief to spontaneous joy. Pick three or more poems from the anthology to illustrate this and demonstrate how each poem embodies the emotions and thoughts, paying attention to the rhythm, imagery, mood etc.
3. Writing poetry involves a continuous conversation with poets and traditions. Each poem, even if it is open and improvisational in structure, echoes established forms. Read the notes on the sestina in the anthology. Read the following sestinas: Philip Sidney’s from “Old Arcadia,” Algernon Swinburne’s “Sestina,” and then Miller Williams’ “The Shrinking Lonesome Sestina” and Alberto Ríos’ “Nani.” How do the last two sestinas refer to and subvert the conventions of the sestina? What is achieved in the rewriting?

Creative
1. Write a poem about poetry and poets. Use imagery to show, avoid telling. An example is Billy Collins’ “Introduction to Poetry” which begins “I asked them to take a poem/ and hold it up to the light/ like a color slide/ or press an ear against its hive.”
2. Read the notes on the sestina in the anthology. Read the following sestinas: Philip Sidney’s from “Old Arcadia,” Algernon Swinburne’s “Sestina,” and then Miller Williams’ “The Shrinking Lonesome Sestina” and Alberto Ríos’ “Nani.” Now write your own traditional or modern sestina.

Week 2 – The Music of the Line

Poetry speaks to us intimately, gets close to and beneath our skin because it is intimate, spoken as if just to you, the solitary reader. It touches us, reaches that deep place in us because of its music, its breath, cadence, the way it sings. In earlier courses, we learn about meter and measure, the basic breath of poetry. Now we learn to listen for the composition as a whole, the chords, the way the poem sounds in its duration. How a poem sounds depends on its rhythm, its cadence, the number of stresses, the line length, whether the line runs on to the next (enjambment) or if it stops at the line (end-stopped), whether it has many pauses in the middle of the line (caesura), whether there are long and short words, complex or short sentences (syntax).
Critical

1. Read John Keats’ “To Autumn,” perhaps one of the most deeply melodious, sonorous, musically complex and perfect of poems in the English language. Is the poem merely about autumn? Does it evoke something more? An attitude towards life, death? How do the rhythm and the sounds reflect this?

2. Read Theodore Roethke’s “The Waking”? What is it about? How does the form of the poem create a cadence, a rhythm that mirrors the theme? Compare it with James Merrill’s “The World and the Child”? How does the form of the villanelle create the rhythmic sense crucial to the meaning of the two poems? How do the rhythmic movements and cadence differ?

Creative

1. Listen to a song, a Miles Davis jazz track, a Chet Baker or Joni Mitchell song, or a German lieder, Debussy or anything. Now write a poem following the mood and emotional theme of the music. Is it about falling in or out of love, death and grief, or a burst of joyousness, exultation? Have you used long or short lines, enjambment or many pauses, heavy or light words?

2. Study Bishop’s villanelle and the other villanelles in the book. Read the notes on the form. Now write a villanelle of your own. You may depart from the form if you wish, but there should be some resemblance. Alternatively, write something like Brooks’ poem, a poem that echoes a music form.

Week 3 – The Sonnet

Critical

1. The sonnet is one of the most popular and enduring of poetic forms. Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Hopkins all left their imprint on the sonnet. Its fourteen-line shape allows a meshing of thought and feeling, a balance of the discursive and the lyrical. Read Shakespeare’s famous love sonnet and the notes on the sonnet. How does the form of Shakespeare’s sonnet relate to its argument?

2. Read John Donne’s “Holy Sonnet” and Gerard Manley Hopkins’ “Carrion Comfort.” Both are religious sonnets. How do the poems reflect the religious attitudes and struggles of the poets? Compare the two sonnets’ forms, the physicality of the lines, imagery etc.

Creative


2. Write either a Shakespearian or Miltonic sonnet. Read the examples of either form in the section on sonnets.

Week 4 – The Father Poem

Critical

Literature is awash with fathers, from The Odyssey, King Lear, Joyce’s Ulysses, to Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath etc. Almost every poet has written a father poem. The father is dominant, tyrannical, weak, errant, breadwinner, irresponsible, contradictory,
wandering, lost, absent, ineluctable. Writers also contend with literary fathers, influences they were shaped by and whom they try to honour and emulate.
1. Read Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays” and Sylvia Plath’s “Daddy.” Are the fathers very different in the two poems? Compare how the tones, the voices, the rhythms and images to see how they evoke the characters of the fathers and the relationships between the speakers and the fathers.
2. Compare Gjertrud Schnackenberg’s “Supernatural Love” and Dylan Thomas’ “Do Not Go Gentle Into the Good Night.” They are both elegies, poems for dead fathers. What are the attitudes towards the fathers and death in the poems? Explore how imagery and rhythms and tones reflect these.

**Creative**
1. Write a poem about your father. It doesn’t have to be serious. Remember to show rather tell, through imagery and tone etc what he is like and means to you. You can cite a few memories, distinct images of him doing things etc.
2. Michael Palmer’s “Sonnet” is a concealed father poem. Try doing something like these, just a hint of the father amidst a list of other things, but a strong and resonant hint.

**Week 5 – The Lyric**

**Critical**
The lyric is a short poem which expresses deeply the emotions and thoughts of the speaker. Unlike the epic and drama, the lyric is personal, spoken from a private space. It is almost musical speech, intimate and immediate. The voice is solitary, introspective and often intense, and the words seem to be just for the speaker and the reader, an intimate exchange which is sometimes beyond the words of the poem.
1. Read James Wright’s “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota.” Why does Wright use such a long title for a short lyric? What is the poem’s mood? What does it tell us about the speaker/poet? How does the poem convey this?
2. Edward Thomas’ “Rain” is also about a melancholy moment. What does the rain stand for? What is troubling the poet? How does he evoke the feelings of doubt, pain and uncertainty?

**Creative**
1. Recall one of the moments when you felt you were totally alone, islanded in your own existential space. Evoke the place where this happened. Write a lyric about it. You can take down notes in prose, discern the most revealing images and shape the lines into something like a lyric.
2. Read Derek Walcott’s “Midsummer, Tobago.” The poem captures in a short sequence of images the memory of the past, a feeling of loss. Think of something you have lost, a place, a part of your childhood, and put together a sequence of images, solid nouns if possible, and stitch them into a lyric.

**Week 6 – The Pantoum**

**Critical**
Read the notes on the origins and form of the pantoum.
1. Read Carolyn Kizer’s “Parents Pantoum” and Nellie Wong’s “Grandmother’s Song.” Relate the form, the rhythm and imagery to the theme in each poem.
2. Read Donald Justice’s “Pantoum of the Great Depression.” How does the form of the pantoum convey the theme?

**Creative**

1. Write a pantoum about life in the neighbourhood, suburb, or street where you live.
2. Either write a parents pantoum in response to either Kizer’s “Parents Pantoum” or a grandmother/ grandfather pantoum using Wong’s “Grandmother’s Song” as a model.
3. Write a pantoum about the early settlement period in Australia. You can write from the point of view of a settler or a convict. Use Justice’s pantoum as a model.

**Week 7 – The Dramatic Monologue**

**Critical**

In a dramatic monologue, the poet assumes a persona, steps into the life of another person and speaks in his or her voice. The dramatic monologue also establishes the dramatic context, the physical setting and historical moment.

1. Read Ai’s “The German Army, Russia, 1943” and Wilfred Owen’s “Strange Meeting.” Compare the attitudes towards war in the monologues? How do the poems evoke the horrors and waste of war?
2. Read Sharon Olds’ “The Language of the Brag.” Who is talking here? What are the voice and tone like? How do the lines and rhythm convey this?

**Creative**

Write a dramatic monologue with one of these as a speaker: a war veteran, a nurse, a doctor, a migrant, a refugee, a prisoner, a missionary or a volunteer in Africa or India, an explorer, a sailor, a teacher, a housewife. Remember that while adopting a persona, you can also give free rein to your own obsessions and views.

**Week 8 – The Letter Poem**

**Critical**

The letter poem or epistle is a poem written like a letter to a specific recipient. Epistles are a conventional form in which the poet addresses his patron or friend with specific concerns, such as morality, politics, philosophy or friendship. Horace’s epistles are famous examples. Later, Augustan poets like Alexander Pope developed the epistle as a satirical form, especially in “An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot.” The contemporary letter poem is more likely to be intimate, as if the writer were addressing his or her self. Louis MacNeice’s “Letters from Iceland” is a good example.

1. Read Ann Finch’s “Letter to Daphnis, April 2, 1685.” What is the speaker saying here? Is this a love poem? Why has Ann Finch chosen the letter format?
2. Read Elizabeth Bishop’s “Letter from N.Y.” What can we infer from the letter about the relationship between the speaker and the addressee? Why has Bishop structured her letter in quatrains?
Creative

1. Write a letter poem to somebody you love. Use vivid imagery and try to pattern the poem with a stanzaic form.
2. Write a letter poem imitating Bishop’s “Letter from N.Y.” You may begin with the first two lines and end with the poem’s last two lines. Alternatively write a letter poem home from where you are travelling.

Week 9 – The Elegy

Some of the greatest and most profound poems ever written are elegies. In the elegy we are most vulnerable, reveal our innermost selves in the act of grieving. The overwhelming sense of loss finds a kind of appeasement in the elegiac form, as if writing the poem is a ritual one conducts in coming to terms with death. Read the notes on the origins and range of the form.

Critical

1. Compare Ben Jonson’s “On My First Son,” and Katherine Philips’ “Epitaph. On her Son H.P. at St. Syth’s Church where her body also lies Interred.” How do the poems convey the weight of loss of a son? Which in your opinion is more moving? Why?
2. Choose either Edward Hirsch’s “In Memoriam Paul Celan” or Garrett Hongo’s “The Legend” or David St. John’s “Iris.” Who is the subject being mourned in the poem? What do you perceive to be the speaker’s relationship to the dead person? How does the poem create a sense of loss and lament?

Creative

1. Write an elegy for somebody who is dead. Summon up images of the person, the vivid scenes. You may use photographs to aid you on the way. Probe them for meanings.
2. Write an elegy for an artist, musician, writer or a public figure you admire.

Week 10 – Voice

A writer’s voice is the distinct way in which his works sound. It is his signature, his stamp of originality. It is related to style, which is the way the writer puts his words and sentences together on the page. The factors influencing style are the theme, the preoccupations of the writer, the diction or word choice, the syntax or sentence structure, the imagery, the point of view, the poetic forms the poet inclines towards. But voice can also refer to the immediate context of the poem. If the poem is a dramatic monologue spoken from the point of view of a child, then it may have a child’s innocent and naïve voice. If the persona is a disillusioned politician, then it may be cynical, bitter, ironic, cold.

Critical

1. How would you describe the voice in Allen Ginsberg’s “America”? How does this relate to the theme? How does Ginsberg achieve this voice?
2. Read either Carolyn Forché’s “The Colonel.” How many voices are there? How does this underscore the meaning of the poem?
Creative
1. Reread a poet you like. It could be any poet from the anthology or elsewhere. Imitate the style, the voice, by taking one of the poems you like and writing something similar.
2. Adopt the persona of one of these: a farmer, a man who comes home from work to find his wife has left with his child and the furniture, a woman waiting for her lover to return, a disillusioned soldier, a conceited politician, a rock star, a lonely child. Take time to find the voice and speak imaginatively from the person’s perspective.

Week 11 – Memory
William Wordsworth says that poems are “emotions recollected in tranquillity.” For him poetry captures “the spots of time,” the moments when life seems coherent and meaningful. Poetry is about redeeming, salvaging otherwise forgotten moments from time, giving an order and shape to our lives. The act of recall is not simply nostalgia; it is an attempt to revisit the past in order to give it a meaning, place it in a meaningful relationship to the present.

Critical
1. Read Philip Levine’s “Smoke.” Who is the speaker addressing? What is being remembered? What does smoke symbolise in the poem?
2. Read Janet Lewis’ “Remembered Morning” and “Derek Walcott’s “Midsummer, Tobago.” Compare how the two poems evoke the past.

Creative
1. Write about a memory from childhood, a moment with a friend, your parents, a moment which has been so deeply etched in your mind.
2. Now let’s try some free or automatic writing. Let all random images of the past surface. Record them as they arrive. Arrange them in a list. Can you see a poem there, a certain shape and meaning perhaps?

Week 12 – The Journey Poem
Poetry abounds with journeys; from The Odyssey, Basho, Li Po, Wordsworth, to Baudelaire and Rimbaud, poetry records movement between places. There are poems about exile and migration, about the joy of wandering and walking, about the search for solitude and identity. Often the journey is not only about physical travel, but also about an interior movement, a quest for understanding and self-transcendence.

Critical
1. Adrienne Rich’s “Diving Into the Wreck” uses an extended metaphor. What does the journey, the underwater exploration stand for? It can be boring to use an extended metaphor. How does Rich avoid that, making the poem so engaging and intense?
2. Read Hayden Carruth’s “Saturday Morning at the Border.” How does the form of the poem enact the theme, the event recounted?
Creative

1. Write a poem about journey, a train ride, a country hike, a mountaineering expedition, being lost in a strange city or the bush. Describe the external journey but at the same time allude to what is happening within you. Make it as much a physical journey as a journey of self-discovery.
2. Write a poem about crossing borders, moving from one country to another. Now turn it into a metaphorical journey about the transition from one phase of your life to another.

Week 13 – Revisioning the Poem

Revision is an intense and often painful process. It involves letting go, discarding lines and images you laboured to achieve, dismantling the entire edifice and rebuilding it from a few salvaged lines. In the attempt to find the focus of the poem, to get to the heart of the matter, you have to dig past the layers, get rid of the obscure and superfluous images. You may have to go through twenty or more drafts, shaping, shape and meaning of the poem. Robert Lowell was always revising, even the published poems. Elizabeth Bishop was also a furious revisionist, churning out draft recasting, chiselling and hammering. It is about re-visioning, learning to see the real after draft on the way to the real poem.

Checklist
Is the shape of the poem right? Is the form, the way it looks on the page right to you?
Is it in the right voice?
Is there too much telling?
Is there too little imagery? Too many images?
Is there a sustained metaphor that becomes boring, makes the poem too predictable?
Does the imagery relate to the theme?
Are the rhythms right? What about the music?
Are the lines too long, too short? Are the line breaks in the right place?
Look for clichés, stale verbs and adjectives?
Are there adverbs you can replace with vivid verbs?
Is it too predictable, too sentimental, too clichéd?
Is there a sense of movement towards knowledge, sense of quest?
Have you allowed for a sense of mystery, the unknown or have you explained it all away?
Is there more to be explored?
Do the lines flow, the stanzas connect, the images link?
You may have to leave the poem for a while. Read around, read more poetry. Take notes in your journal. You may stumble for an image, the solving line or shape. When you come back to it with renewed vision, you may discover the real poem revealed.