CALENDAR OF READINGS, PRESENTATIONS, AND WRITINGS

English 4530 Advanced Poetry Workshop

Aliki Barnstone

STILL TO SCHEDULE: Dinner at my house!

**WEEK OF 9/27 & 9/29**

September 29 — Liv: Wilfred Owen, Owen’s “Preface”

**WEEK OF 10/4 & 10/6**

*Pinsky, Introduction, “Theory,” “Accent and Duration” (3-24); Poets from Vol. 1 of NAMCP: Langston Hughes; try writing a ballad (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

October 4 — Adrian: Langston Hughes, poetry and poetics

October 6 — Guest: Tim Love or Rebecca Pelky

**WEEK OF 10/11 & 10/13**

*Pinsky, “Syntax and Line” (25-49), Poets from Vol. 1 of NAMCP: Emily Dickinson and Ezra Pound; try writing an ode (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

October 11— Aliki: Emily Dickinson (30-41), Emily Dickinson (870-873)

October 13 — Drew: Ezra Pound, Ezra Pound, from“How to Read” (939-941)

**WEEK OF 10/18 & 10/20**

*Pinsky, “Like and Unlike Sounds” (79-95); give special attention to the stanza (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

October 18 — Guest: J.D. Smith

October 20 — Guest: Tim Love or Rebecca Pelky

**WEEK OF 10/25 & 10/27**

*Pinsky, “Technical Terms and Vocal Realities” (51-77), Poets from Vol. 1 of NAMCP, William Carlos Williams and H.D.), Poets from Vol. 2 of NAMCP: Elizabeth Bishop; try writing a sestina (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

October 25 — Aliki: William Carlos Williams, HD

October 27 — Aliki: Elizabeth Bishop

**WEEK OF 11/1 & 11/3**

*Pinsky, “Blank Verse and Free Verse” (98-116), Poets from Vol. 2 of NAMCP:*

Frank O’Hara and Denise Levertov*; try writing in blank verse (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

November 1 — Sam: Frank O’Hara, poetry and poetics

November 3 — Sarah: Denise Levertov, poetry and poetics

**WEEK OF 11/8 & 11/10**

*Poets & poetics from Vol. 2 of NAMCP: Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Gwendolyn Brooks, A.K. Ramaujan; try writing a sonnet (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

November 8 — Michelle: Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision” (Michelle chose Levertov)

November 10 — Melanie: Gwendolyn Brooks, A.K. Ramaujan, “Where Mirrors are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections” (1115-111)

**WEEK OF 11/15 & 11/17**

*Poets from Vol. 2 of NAMCP: Philip Larkin, Margaret Atwood, Dylan Thomas; try writing a villanelle (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

November 15 — Alec: Philip Larkin, poetry and poetics (Alec chose Levertov)

November 17 — Julia: Margaret Atwood, Dylan Thomas, read some of Thomas’s poems, “Do Not Go Gentle,” Fern Hill,” especially, and his “Poetic Manifesto” (1062-1066), (Julia chose Levertov)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

**WEEK OF 11/29 & 12/1**

*Poets & poetics from Vol. 2 of NAMCP: Amiri Baraka, Sherman Alexi, Seamus Heaney; try writing an elegy (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

November 29 — Carlotta: Amiri Baraka, poetry and poetics (Carlotta chose Levertov)

December 1 — Kyra: Sherman Alexi, Seamus Heaney “Feeling into Words”

**WEEK OF 11/29 & 12/1**

*Poets from Vol. 2 of NAMCP: Frank Bidart, Charles Bernstein; try writing a pastoral (read about in* The Making of a Poem)

December 6 — Cody: Frank Bidart, Charles Bernstein “Semblance”

December 8 — Short readings of your work.

SESTINA

September rain falls on the house.   
In the failing light, the old grandmother   
sits in the kitchen with the child   
beside the Little Marvel Stove,   
reading the jokes from the almanac,   
laughing and talking to hide her tears.   
    
She thinks that her equinoctial tears   
and the rain that beats on the roof of the house    
were both foretold by the almanac,   
but only known to a grandmother.   
The iron kettle sings on the stove.   
She cuts some bread and says to the child,   
  
*It's time for tea now*; but the child   
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears   
dance like mad on the hot black stove,   
the way the rain must dance on the house.   
Tidying up, the old grandmother   
hangs up the clever almanac   
  
on its string. Birdlike, the almanac   
hovers half open above the child,   
hovers above the old grandmother   
and her teacup full of dark brown tears.   
She shivers and says she thinks the house   
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.   
    
*It was to be,* says the Marvel Stove.   
*I know what I know,* says the almanac.   
With crayons the child draws a rigid house   
and a winding pathway. Then the child   
puts in a man with buttons like tears   
and shows it proudly to the grandmother.   
    
But secretly, while the grandmother   
busies herself about the stove,   
the little moons fall down like tears   
from between the pages of the almanac   
into the flower bed the child   
has carefully placed in the front of the house.   
    
*Time to plant tears*, says the almanac.   
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove   
and the child draws another inscrutable house.

  —*Elizabeth Bishop*

BILINGUAL SESTINA  
  
Some things I have to say aren't getting said  
in this snowy, blonde, blue-eyed, gum chewing English,  
dawn's early light sifting through the *persianas* closed  
the night before by dark-skinned girls whose words   
evoke *cama, aposento, suenos* in *nombres*  
from that first word I can't translate from Spanish.  
  
Gladys, Rosario, Altagracia--the sounds of Spanish  
wash over me like warm island waters as I say  
your soothing names: a child again learning the *nombres*of things you point to in the world before English  
turned *sol, tierra, cielo, luna* to vocabulary words--  
sun, earth, sky, moon--language closed  
  
like the touch-sensitive *morivivir*, whose leaves closed   
when we kids poked them, astonished.  Even Spanish  
failed us when we realized how frail a word   
is when faced with the thing it names.  How saying  
its name won't always summon up in Spanish or English  
the full blown genii from the bottled *nombre.*  
Gladys, I summon you back with your given *nombre*  
to open up again the house of slatted windows closed  
since childhood, where *palabras* left behind for English  
stand dusty and awkward in neglected Spanish.  
Rosario, muse of el patio, sing in me and through me say  
that world again, begin first with those first words  
  
you put in my mouth as you pointed to the world—  
not Adam, not God, but a country girl numbering  
the stars, the blades of grass, warming the sun by saying  
*el sol* as the dawn's light fell through the closed  
*persianas* from the gardens where you sang in Spanish,  
*Esta son las mananitas,* and listening, in bed, no English

yet in my head to confuse me with translations, no English  
doubling the world with synonyms, no dizzying array of words,  
—the world was simple and intact in Spanish  
awash with *colores, luz, suenos*, as if the *nombres*  
were the outer skin of things, as if words were so close  
to the world one left a mist of breath on things by saying  
  
their names, an intimacy I now yearn for in English--  
words so close to what I meant that I almost hear my Spanish  
blood beating, beating inside what I say *en ingles.*

*—Julia Alvarez*

GRANDMOTHER GRACE  
  
I didn't give her a goodbye kiss  
as I went off in the bus for the last time,  
away from her House in Williamsburg, Iowa,  
away from her empty house with Jesus  
on all of the walls, with clawfoot tub and sink,  
with the angular rooms that trapped my summers.  
  
I remember going there every summer—  
every day beginning with that lavender kiss,  
that face sprayed and powdered at the upstairs sink  
then mornings of fragile teacups and old times,  
afternoons of spit-moistened hankies and Jesus,  
keeping me clean in Williamsburg, Iowa.  
  
Cast off, abandoned, in Williamsburg, Iowa,  
I sat in that angular house with summer  
dragging me onward, hearing how Jesus  
loved Judas despite his last kiss,  
how he turned his other cheek time after time,  
how God wouldn't let the good person sink.  
  
Months later, at Christmas, my heart would sink  
when that flowery letter from Williamsburg, Iowa  
arrived, insistent, always on time,  
stiff and perfumed as summer.  
She always sealed it with a kiss,  
a taped-over dime, and the words of Jesus.  
  
I could have done without the words of Jesus;  
the dime was there to make the message sink  
in, I thought; and the violet kiss,  
quavering and frail, all the way from Williamsburg, Iowa,  
sealed some agreement we had for the next summer  
as certain and relentless as time.  
  
I didn't know this would be the last time.  
If I had, I might have even prayed to Jesus  
to let me see her once again next summer.  
But how could I know she would sink,  
her feet fat boats of cancer, in Williamsburg, Iowa,  
alone, forsaken, without my last kiss?  
  
I was ten, Jesus, and the idea of a kiss  
at that time made my young stomach sink.  
*Let it be summer. Let it be Williamsburg, Iowa.*

*—Ron Wallace*