

EN 609-320: Form and Theory Practice *The Art of ...*: Surveying the Graywolf Press Series, or Choose Your Own Adventure

308 Morgan Hall, 11-11:50 a.m. T

Professor L. Lamar Wilson, 207 Rowand-Johnson Hall

Office Hours: By appointment (ideally 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays & Wednesdays)

Contact: llwilson4@ua.edu (profflamarwilson on Gchat)

*Allow 24 hours for response. After 9 p.m., the 24-hour window begins the following morning, when email likely will be read. *

Course Description & Learning Outcomes

We'll read, reflect, & play (or prep to play). Simply that. We'll start with books in the Graywolf series that focus upon risk & syntax in poetics; then meander into those that discuss characterization, real & imagined histories, & conflict resolution in fiction; & finally blur all lines & give time to the business of limning our lives in creative nonfiction. Along the way, you'll be encouraged to "choose your own adventure," across genres, & read books in whatever genres you divine whose modes of writing guide you deeper into or out of the spaces Graywolf's master artists highlight.

By semester's end, you will be empowered to:

1. Discuss and experiment with theories of poetics, fiction, and creative nonfiction from master artists.
2. Collate a portfolio of up to 25 pages of original creative work that engages this course's concerns.

Required Readings

Birkert, Sven. *The Art of the Memoir: Then, Again.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2015.

Bram, Christopher. *The Art of History: Unlocking the Past in Fiction & Nonfiction.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2015.

Danticat, Edwidge. *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2015.

D'Erasmus, Stacey. *The Art of Intimacy: The Space Between.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2015.

Doty, Mark. *The Art of Description: World into Word.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2010.

Phillips, Carl. *The Art of Daring: Risk, Restlessness, Imagination.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2014.

Voigt, Ellen Bryant. *The Art of Syntax: Rhythm of Thought, Rhythm of Song.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2015.

Possible Supplemental Readings

Poetry

Algarín, Miguel. *Time's Now/Ya Es Tiempo.* Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1982.

---. *Love Is Hard Work: memorias de Loisaida.* New York: Scribner, 1997.

Bond, Bruce. *Blackout Starlight: 1997-2015 and Sacrum.* Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2015, 2017.

Carson, Anne. *Eros the Bittersweet, Autobiography of Red, Nox, If Not, Winter, Decreation: Poetry, Essays, Opera.* New York: Vintage, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2010.

Collins, Martha. *Blue Front, White Papers, Admit One: An American Scrapbook.* Pittsburgh: UPitt Press, 2006, 2012, 2016.

Der Vang, Mai. *Afterland.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2017.

Dove, Rita. *Thomas and Beulah and Sonata Mullatica.* Pittsburgh, New York: Carnegie Mellon, W.W. Norton, 1986, 2010.

Forché, Carolyn. *The Country Between Us and The Angel of History.* New York: Harper Perennial, 1981, 1995.

ford, t'ai freedom. *how to get over.* Pasadena, Calif.: Red Hen Press, 2017.

Graham, Jorie. *From the New World: Poems, 1976-2014.* New York, Ecco, 2016.

Harris, Duriel. *Amnesiac, Drag, No Dictionary of a Living Tongue.* New York & Denver: Sheep Meadow, Elixir, Nightboat. 2010, 2013, 2018.

Hoang, Lily. *ABestary.* Cleveland: Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2016.

Jess, Tyehimba. *Olio.* New York: Wave Books, 2016.

Queen, Khadijah. *Black Peculiar.* Las Cruces, N.M.: Noemi Press, 2011.

Lee, Li-Young. *The Undressing.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2018.

Lowell, Robert. *Collected Poems: 1946-1977.* New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2010.

Paz, Oliver de la. *Post Subject: A Fable.* Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 2014.

Pico, Tommy. *Junk.* New York: Tin House Books, 2018.

Rankine, Claudia. *The End of the Alphabet and Plot.* New York: Grove Press, 1998, 2001.

Reed, Justin Phillip. *Indecency.* St. Paul, Minn.: Coffee House Press, 2018.

Sanchez, Sonia. *Does Your House Have Lions?* Philadelphia: Beacon Press, 1997.

Toomer, Jean. *Cane.* New York: Boni & Liveright/W.W. Norton, 1923, 2011.

Williams, William Carlos. *Paterson.* New York: New Directions, 1946-1968, 1995.

Wright, C.D. *String Light and One Big Self.* Port Townsend, Wash./Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press/Copper Canyon Press, 1991, 2003/2007. (*String Light* is out of print & on Blackboard.)

York, Jake Adam. *Murder Ballads, Persons Unknown, Abide, Murmuration of Starlings.* Denver & Carbondale, Ill.: Elixir & SIU presses, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014.

Fiction (Flash, Short Stories, Novellas, Novels)

Anderson, Sherwood. *Winesburg, Ohio and Horses and Men.* 1919, 1923.

Batuman, Elif. *The Idiot.* New York: Penguin, 2017.

Baraka, Amiri/Jones, LeRoi. *Tales and The System of Dante's Hell.* New York: Grove Press, 1965, 1967.

Carson, Anne. *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangoes.* New York: Vintage, 2002.

Conrad, Joseph. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus.'* 1897, 1914.

Doctorow, E.L. *Ragtime.* New York: Random House, 1975.

Dumas, Henry. *The Echo Tree.* St. Paul, Minn.: Coffee House Press, 2003.

El Akkad, Omar. *American War.* New York: Vintage Books, 2017.

Falco, Ed. *The Family Corleone.* New York: Grand Central, 2012.

---. *In the Park of Culture.* Norte Dame, Ill.: Notre Dame Press, 2005.

Gaddis, William. *A Frolic of His Own.* New York: Poseidon/Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Gilchrist, Ellen. *Collected Stories.* New York: Little, Brown. 2000.

Gomez, Jewelle. *The Gilda Stories.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1991.

Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing.* New York: Knopf, 2016.

Herrera, Yuri. *Signs Preceding the End of the World.* Trans. Lisa Dillman. High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire: & Other Stories, 2015.

Johnson, James Weldon. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man.* Boston/New York: Sherman, French & Co./Knopf, 1912, 1927.

Jones, Gayl. *Corregidora.* Philadelphia: Beacon Press, 1987.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses.* London/Paris: Egoist Press/J. Rodker. 1922. (serialized in *The Little Review*: 1919-1920)

Keene, John. *Counternarratives.* New York: New Directions, 2015.

Kenan, Randall. *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead.* New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1992.

Machado, Carmen Maria. *Her Body and Other Parties.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2017.

Martin, Valerie. *Property and The Confessions of Edward Day.* New York: Vintage Books, 2004, 2010.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved, Jazz,* and *Paradise.* New York: Random House, 1988, 1992, 1995.

Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night.* New York: HarperCollins/Harper Perennial, 1996.

Murakami, Haruki. *After Dark.* New York: Vintage Books, 2004/2007.

Nabokov, Vladmir. *Pale Fire.* New York: Vintage, 1962/1989.

Nettel, Guadalupe. *The Body Where I Was Born.* Trans. J.T. Lichtenstein. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011.

Reed, Ishmael. *Mumbo Jumbo.* New York: Simon & Schuster/Scribner, 1988.

Ross, Fran. *Oreo.* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1966.

Sharma, Akhil. *Family Life.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2015.

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth.* London: Penguin/Hamish Hamilton, 2000.

Torres, Justin. *We the Animals.* New York: Mariner, 2012.

Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest.* New York: Back Bay Books, 1996.

Williams, William Carlos. *White Mule.* New York: New Directions, 1937.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando: A Biography.* London: Hogarth Press, 1928.

Yanique, Tiphanie. *How to Escape a Leper Colony: Novella & Stories.* Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2010.

Nonfiction (Memoir, Cultural & Literary Criticism)

Als, Hilson. *White Girls.* San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2013.

Batuman, Elif. *The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them.* New York: Macmillan, 2010.

Baldwin, James. *Collected Essays.* New York: Library of America (Literary Classics), 1998.

Baraka, Amiri/Jones, LeRoi. *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* and *Black Music.* New York: William Morrow, 1963, 1968.

Blow, Charles. *Fire Shut Up in My Bones.* New York: Mariner Books, 2014.

Carter, Steven D. (Ed.) *The Columbia Anthology of Japanese Essays: Zuibitsu from the Tenth to the Twenty-First Century.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

D'Agata, John & Jim Fingal. *The Lifespan of a Fact.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2012.

Danticat, Edwidge. *Brother, I'm Dying.* New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 2007.

Davis, Angela. *Women, Race, & Class.* London/New York: The Women's Press/Vintage, 1981, 1983.

Doty, Mark. *Dog Years: A Memoir (P.S.).* New York: HarperCollins/Harper Perennial, 2007.

Erlich, Gretel. *A Match to the Heart: One Woman's Story of Being Struck by Lightning*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Emerson: Essays & Lectures*. New York: Library of America (Literary Classics), 1983.

Harris, Duriel. "The Light of Death" and "Experiments in Joy: Cut the Cake or Ven Devórame Otra Vez." *Poetry Foundation*. 25 April 2018.

Loorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1982.

Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of a Young Black Girl in the Rural South*. New York: Dial Press, 1968.

Nelson, Maggie. *Bluets, The Art of Cruelty, Jane: A Murder, The Red Parts: A Memoir, and The Argonauts*. Berkeley/New York/Minneapolis: Wave Books, W.W.Norton/Graywolf, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015.

Phillips, Brian. *Impossible Owls: Essays From the End of the World*. London: Orion Publishing Group, 2018.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1998.

---. *The Devil's Highway*. New York: Little, Brown, 2004.

Wallace, David Foster. *Consider the Lobster & Other Essays*. New York: Little, Brown, 2006.

Course Requirements & Grading Policies

This is a pass/fail course. To pass, you must do the following, assessed based upon the following point system:

- In-class participation/attendance of Visiting Writers & MFA Readings series.....200 points
- Portfolio of original work (up to 25 pages; due week of 11/27).....200 points

Desired Outcome	Assessment Apparatus	Point Value
Discuss and experiment with theories of poetics, fiction, and creative nonfiction from master artists.	In-class discussion & writing; class attendance	200 points
Revise and collate original work that grapples with techniques outlined in Graywolf books	Portfolio of up to 25 pages of original creative work	200 points

386-400 = A+ 357-346 = B+ 306-317 = C+ 266-277 = D+ <237 = F
 370-381 = A 330-345 = B 290-305 = C 250-265 = D
 358-369 = A- 318-329 = B- 278-289 = C- 238-249 = D-

Attendance Policy

This course's work involves discussion; weekly attendance is mandatory. **One** unexcused absence is allowed; all others will negatively impact your participation and final grades. If you come to class and clearly exhibit you have not read the assigned texts, you not only will be marked absent, but you may be asked to leave class. **Excessive tardiness (greater than 15 minutes) and arrival without work will count as an absence. Your second and subsequent absences will cost you 20 points of your participation grade. After three unexcused absences, you will automatically.** Illnesses and other emergencies may occur and will be considered as absences & participation grades are assessed.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Attending Visiting Writers & MFA Reading series is mandatory unless there's a course or work conflict. You're encouraged to attend and participate in as many Pure Products readings and other CW events as well.

8/26	Syllabus & Day Dreaming
9/4	Phillips
9/11	Phillips
9/18	Voigt
9/25	Voigt
10/2	El Akkad Master Class
10/9	D'Erasmio
10/16	Hollars Master Class
10/23	D'Erasmio/Danticat
10/30	Danticat
11/6	Bram
11/13	Bram
11/20	Birkert
11/27	Birkert (Portfolios due in class or by week's end)

On-campus Readings & Creative Writing Events

Making creativity part of your everyday life is a major part of this MFA journey. To that end, you are encouraged to interact with visiting writers and others in our community. The lineup so far:

- **Michael Martone & Mike Mejia Reading** (multigenre, metafiction, nonfiction)
Me&Me&Me&M: Melts in Your Mind, Thursday, Sept. 20, Chuck's Fish, 5 p.m.
- **Robin Behn** Master Class (poetry and music), Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2 p.m., 301 Morgan Hall
- **Robin Behn & Heidi Lynn Staples** (poetry), Monday, Sept. 24, 7 p.m., 205 Gorgas Library
- **Omar El Akkad** Master Class (fiction, *American War*, Honors One Book)
Tuesday, Oct. 2, 11 a.m., 301 Morgan Hall
- **Skype Class, "Cardboard Computer"** (on video game/digital narrative)
Thursday, Oct. 4, 9:30 a.m., 301 Morgan Hall
- **Meg Day** (poetry), Oct. 9, 7 p.m., 205 Gorgas Library
- **Akhil Sharma** (fiction), Thursday, Oct. 11, 7 p.m., 205 Gorgas Library
- **The Conversation** Readings & Master Classes (poetry)
Tuesday, Oct. 16, 3 & 6 p.m., 301 Morgan Hall & 205 Gorgas Library
Wednesday, Oct. 17, 3 & 7 p.m., 301 Morgan Hall & 205 Gorgas Library
- **BJ Hollars Craft Talk** (nonfiction, writing about/out of trauma), Oct. 23, 301 Morgan Hall
- **Ada Limón** (poetry), Monday, Oct. 29, 7 p.m., Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center
Craft Talk, Tuesday, Oct. 30, 9:30 a.m., 301 Morgan Hall
- **"Table Reading": *Breakfast at Tiffany's*** (playwriting), Sunday, Nov. 4, 2 p.m. Dinah Washington Center
- **Doug Nichol** (screenwriting), Nov. 6, 3 p.m., 301 Morgan Hall
California Typewriter Screening, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m., Bama Theatre
- **Steve Birch** (playwriting), "Is My Verse Alive?: A Play Emily Dickinson," Monday, Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m.,
Dinah Washington Center for Cultural Arts
- **Sloan Harris** (publishing/literary agency), Friday, Nov. 9, TBA time, 301 Morgan Hall
- **Pure Products**, Monarch Espresso Bar, Thursdays @ 7 p.m.: Sept. 6-Nov. 29
- **MFA Reading Series**, 7 p.m.: Wednesday, Sept. 19, Nov. 7, Nov. 28; Friday, Oct. 5

UAct

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Students With Disabilities

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please see me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations you need. I'm happy to help. If you have a disability, but have not contacted ODS, please call 348-4285 or visit 220 Research Drive to register. Students with disabilities must be registered before receiving academic adjustments.

Severe Weather Protocol

In case of severe weather, take shelter and stay safe! Visit www.ua.edu for general information in case of an emergency. Following an emergency/disaster, I will communicate any relevant course information via Blackboard.