International Poetry Guild (IPG) Mentor Seminar  
Winter Term 2012  
Instructor: Eli Zemper  
2218 SEB  
Thursdays 4:00- 6:00  
Phone 734-272-8615  
Email: elib@umich.edu  

The Purpose of This Course  
This seminar is intended to provide an opportunity for U of M students to share their enthusiasm for writing with student writers while concurrently exploring their own creative writing. It also is intended to provide a place where high school and middle school writers can explore their interest in writing in a safe environment. We'll see these goals within the framework of the International Poetry Guild (IPG), a web-mediated writing project in which high school and middle school writers share their work with peers and with you.  

IPG was founded and continues to exist on the assumption that young writers often don’t have enough safe and supportive places to pursue their work. We consider it a most significant endeavor to try to stake out such a place for these young people. As you take on the role of “mentor” this term, your primary responsibility is pointing the way to this ideal. Much of the work of mentoring is searching for ways to offer support to young writers while also striving to model behavior and approaches to discussing creative work that will help some of our IPG participants begin to see themselves as writers who have something important to say. In short, your job is to help some young writers along the way.  

Because it is often easier to talk about a process when we are practitioners ourselves, a portion of each class will be spent looking at our own development as writers. By grappling with the process our young poets are working through, our feedback will have much more context and immediacy than if we were merely “armchair” editors.  

Course Grading  
Virtually every mentor in the history of IPG has been here because he or she is interested in poetry and in helping kids to feel more confident in and excited about his or her writing. As a consequence of this, most mentors are highly invested in the project and do excellent work. That said, you will be taking this course for a grade, so the following are the criteria upon which your grade will be determined:  

1) Diligence and quality of reflective thought as shown by your participation in the three segments of each seminar meeting (personal creative writing, daily lesson, practicum. . . these will be addressed later in the syllabus)
2) The quality of and level of investment in your assignments (your poetry, your daily reflective pieces, weekly log entries, final submission of a poetry portfolio and final reflection over the semester.)

3) Your attendance. Because this class is a three-credit class and only meets thirteen times, it is important to attend class. Class time is devoted to discussing the week’s activities as well as make presentations and problem solving. Please do not arrange any other activities that interfere with this two hour block. **Because participation is vital to this class each class absence results in a reduction of 5% in your final grade.**

4) Most Importantly. . .the depth and quality and frequency of your on-line interactions with the students. **Your online mentoring work is the MOST important aspect of this course.** Once the online project starts later this month, **you’ll be expected to spend 5 hours per week doing your online mentoring**, being consistent with crafting and posting your responses and trying your best to keep up with the flow of the poems. Depending on the length of your responses, this should equate to **15 responses to poems per week.**

**Awards**

I will be asking each of you to give awards at the end of the term. The number of awards will be contingent on the number of poems posted, how prolific particular IPG groups are etc. For the moment, I simply want to call attention to this task, so you’re thinking about it from the beginning of the course, noting appropriate poems or candidates for awards. Awards can be for group accomplishments, for particular poems or particular poets. I’d like you to take free-rein in creating award categories that reflect both the poems/poets and your sensibilities (I’ve included a brief sample list of recent award categories for illustrative purposes only) Awards will be posted by the group at the end of the semester.

*The “Beauty of poetic Frustration” Award*
*Best Poem in Commemoration*
*Chow Time Award (for poem(s) about food)*
*Dennis Miller Sardonic Poetry Award*
*Best Ann Landers Poem (Advice to live by)*
*Best “Love Kills” poem*
*Best Fred Astaire Poem (it sings, it dances)*

**Course Pacing**

What follows is a brief summary of each week’s focus. It is broken down into the creative writing portion, the lesson for the day, and a practicum focus. Because the first few weeks will be spent thinking about the art of mentoring, we will spend them
on looking at ourselves. After those first few weeks we will be using that final hour of class to discuss issues as they relate to our on-line mentoring. Each student will be responsible for leading a particular week’s discussion. Students will be responsible for crafting an essential question or focus (a theme) for the day as different concerns or observations are made about the writing or students within the guild. Additionally, each person will also introduce us to his/her favorite writer by reading a selection of his/her work and discussing an aspect of that writer’s work.

**Week One:**

Writing: Human Bingo/ Exquisite Corpse

Lesson: Read “Learning to Read” Write: how do you understand the student’s comments at the end. Is she right?

Practicum: What experiences have you had with writing and critique?

Homework: Finish Learning Inventory, Read “Teaching Poetic texts” Write two-page reflection on the teaching of poetry and what you found out about your learning style. What do you think will be easy for you and what will challenge you as you begin to think about becoming a mentor? What are your concerns as they relate to your readings? Bring paper to class next week

**Week Two:**

*Turn in Two-Page reflection*

Writing: Diary entry: you at 13. (Day in the life)

Lesson: Look at and discuss two pieces of student work. What do we comment on? How do we comment?

Practicum: Discuss learning inventory. Read “Thirteen ways of Seeing a Blackbird”

Homework: Read “The Art of Teaching Writing” Write a poem in the style of the “13 Ways of Seeing. . .” and bring in a copy of it next week. Bring in a picture (of anything) from a magazine.
Week Three:
*Bring two copies of “13 Ways” write and a picture from a magazine

Writing: Write a story of the 20 minutes that happened right before this picture.

Lesson: Writer’s workshop- model as a group then workshop each other’s “13 ways” from last week

Practicum: Go over literary terms, look at “Journal Jumpstarts” as a way in to talking to the poets, Trade writes from the beginning of class and provide feedback using a few of these prompts.

Homework: Finish providing your in-class author with feedback (one page) using the feedback methods we have modeled today. Bring this feedback to class next week. **Students are expected to begin their online work this week. Remember that your expectation is 5 hours of online work per week- please comment on 15 poems this week.**

Week Four:
*Bring one page feedback

Writing: Brainstorm the most important objects in your life? How does this object define you or your lifestyle? Odes- Pablo Neruda’s Elemental Odes

Lesson: Reimagining Barbie Jigsaw. Workshop pieces, discuss in larger group

Practicum: Ten minute quick write “Issues and Observations” from online comments this week

Homework: Close Look- 2 page response about the process of choosing and responding to a poem. What did you notice about the poem? What were the challenges of responding to this poem? Did you comment on everything your noticed? Why did you make the choices you did? Please bring a copy of this to class next week- we will be using these in practicum. **Begin weekly online log homework at ipg.icsmich.org.**

Week Five:
*Two page “Close Look” reflection

Writing: Haiku Circus- Students write three topics, put in the hat, pass hat around. Students will write and illustrate 3 haiku based on these topics.
Lesson: First student-led discussion- use Close Looks as a basis. Author share.

Practicum: Share “Close Looks” and discuss recurring themes.

Finish Haiku and illustration. Chose one object to write an “Ode” to (patterned after Pablo Neruda), weekly log entry

**Week Six:*
*turn in Ode and Haiku*

Writing: Dialogue Poems- Short Stories- The Hills are like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway

Practicum Student- led discussion “How do I respond when this writer’s experience is so far outside of my experience/ comfort level”. Author share.

Homework: Write your own 2-3 page dialogue piece, weekly log entry.

**Week Seven:*
*turn in Dialogue Piece*

Writing: Superheroes that didn’t make the cut. . . (Dr Horrible’s Sing Along Blog)

Lesson: Voice and Point of View- “The True Story of the Three Little Pigs”

Practicum: Student- led discussion “Mentor concerns- challenges and celebrations as related to our writers”. Author share.

Homework: Write a piece about a superhero that didn’t quite make it., respond to poets- bring a copy of a piece you would like workshopped to class next week. Weekly log entry.

**Week Eight:*
*Bring 2 copies of superhero write*

Writing: Focus on mid term this week

Lesson: Writers workshop

Practicum: Student-led Discussion. “Reflection on the difference (?) between commenting on your colleagues work versus commenting on our student poet’s work.” Author Share.

**Week Nine:**
*Midterm due*

Writing: Life Graph- Write yours this week

Lesson: What makes poetry? Performance versus written word- watch “Slamnation”

Practicum: no practicum this week.

Homework: Finish Life graph. Take one example from your life graph and tell the story two ways. First, from your perspective, secondly, “Rewind” the story and tell it from another person’s perspective. Weekly log entry.

**Week Ten:**

Writing: Storytelling through senses- Sandra Cisneros

Lesson: Student led discussion- open topic. Author share

Practicum: Conference call to one of our teachers (?)

Homework: Take one incident from the life graph and tell it through the senses-Cisneros style. Weekly log entry.

**Week Eleven:**
*Bring a copy of the sense write*

Writing: Language Use- Onomatopoeia- “Jabberwocky”- Lewis Carroll- In pairs make up a dictionary of 10 new words, words that sound like what they are.

Practicum: Student-led discussion of student work. Author share

Homework: Use the dictionary of 10 words to write a poem or a short story. Print a copy of a piece you want workshopped and bring to class. Weekly log entry
Week Twelve:
*turn in Jabberwocky write, bring a copy of a piece you want workshopped

Lesson: Writer’s workshop

Practicum: Student led discussion. Author share.

Homework: with an eye toward giving out awards both to our poets, begin thinking of the ten awards you will give to the poets. Final reflection is due next week. Final Portfolio is due next week. See course pack for details. Final weekly log entry

Week Thirteen:
*Bring list of awards for students, Final reflection, Final portfolio with 5 polished creative pieces.

Practicum: Student-led discussion. Final evaluation of the semester. Author share.

Wrap-up- adjourn to the computer lab to post final awards as a group and to finish evaluations.