



The Poetry Project 2020

Spine, Arc, & Eye

Teaching Artist: Gretchen Marquette

Winter/Spring Term:

Tuesday Evenings, 6–9 p.m.

January 28–April 14, 2020

Summer Meetings:

Saturdays: June 20, July 18, August 15, 2020, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Fall/Winter Term:

Tuesday Evenings, 6–9 p.m.

September 15–December 8, 2020 (no class November 24)

Final reading:

Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 7 p.m., in the Performance Hall at Open Book

The time has come to gather and assemble your work. Individual poems that stand alone can, with purposeful ordering, also reinforce and illuminate each other. In this class you'll find what anchors and grounds your collection, you'll cultivate your gut feeling for a satisfying and strategic arc, and you will discover and articulate your work's primary concerns. You'll also discover how your collection stands in conversation with other good work being done in contemporary poetry today.

Over the course of the next calendar year, we will:

- write earnestly and revise discerningly, looking, as Jane Hirshfield says, “to edit the poem in service to itself, and not the poet.”
- read and discuss brilliant collections that embody everything a book of poems can be.
- converse with three authors (Roy Guzmán, Elena Cisneros, and D. Allen) who've recently published first collections, as well as some TBD poets who've assembled many books over the course of their careers.



- interview professionals to discuss the process of bringing out a book from a publishing angle.
- develop the resources to cultivate and nourish a writing life, far beyond the end of our time together.

Reading List:

Deaf Republic by Ilya Kaminsky

The Black Maria by Aracelis Girmay

Like a Beggar by Ellen Bass

Book of Hours by Rainer Maria Rilke

Diván del Tamarit by Federico Garcia Lorca

Blood Dazzler – Patricia Smith

Quiver of Arrows by Carl Phillips

I Wish I Had a Heart Like Yours, Walt Whitman – Jude Nutter

Narrow Road to the Interior by Kimiko Hahn

Haiku by Richard Wright

Books by Guest Authors:

Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude by Ross Gay

In the Shadow Country by Elena Cisneros

A Bony Framework for the Tangible Universe by D. Allen

Underground by Jim Moore

Catrachos by Roy Guzmán

The authors of all of these assigned readings will join us for in-class discussions. The purpose of these visits is to introduce students to powerful collections of poetry, and the people who wrote them. I hope that you'll take advantage of the



opportunity to ask thoughtful questions and listen attentively to the answers. These visits will be largely informal, and include ample opportunity for interaction.

Our work in the first session will range over several topics. To begin, we'll focus on how various elements of poetry work in concert. We'll also consider the architecture of our projects and begin to work immediately on putting plans into place. The main focus of the course will be workshop-based, but we'll also read and study a series of collections.

Workshop

The purpose of the workshop is to help students understand their own work. To this end, we will read, comment upon, and thoroughly discuss each other's poetry. In our class we will be using Liz Lerman's workshop model. We'll learn more about this in class, but on a basic level, workshops function like so:

1. The readers state what was "working" in the group of poems/section of the collection.
2. The writer asks question about their poetry. The readers answer the questions *without* suggesting changes.
3. The readers ask the writer neutral questions about their work.
4. The readers ask the writer for permission to offer opinions about the submitted work.

The work you share with your peers should be relatively polished and sophisticated. This is not to say it needs to be "perfect" or "complete." (This would obviously eliminate the need for a workshop!) However, the work should be well-written and carefully presented. Each workshop will last between 45-60 minutes.

Teaching Artist Consultations

Each student will be asked to meet individually with me regularly during the year. Meetings will be scheduled as follows, with allowances for flexibility in everyone's schedules: one meeting during the winter/spring term, one meeting at the



beginning of summer, one at the end of summer, and one at the conclusion of the poetry project, when we'll discuss your final manuscript. This final one to one meeting must happen no later than February 28, 2021 - no exceptions. The purposes for these meetings will be wide-ranging, but their primary function is to discuss the work as it's in progress, ways in which to manage time, larger concerns regarding the writing life, and what to do with your collection when the year is complete. Each meeting will be scheduled for one hour.

At the end of the project, students will be expected to submit their final and complete manuscript. I will read each submission (up to 70 pages) and provide a written critique (1-2 typewritten pages). I will meet individually with each of you to present my critique and answer what questions remain.

Final manuscripts will be due on the last day of the class in the fall/winter session. If you finish prior to then, please submit them early. I will be reading 12 collections at the end of this year, and any head starts will be much appreciated. Final manuscript consultations will be completed by February 28, 2021.

Students will be asked to give a final, public reading from their collection at The Loft, in the Target Performance Hall, on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. Each reading will be around seven minutes long. Consider this a celebration!

PLEASE NOTE: final manuscripts must be properly formatted and turned in no later than Tuesday, December 8, 2020, which is the final class meeting. Single-sided manuscripts ONLY. Pages must be numbered. It is the responsibility of the student to finish their manuscript by the final class meeting. If a student fails to complete it, I will only read what has been submitted on the final day of class.

Please note that enrolling in this course does not ensure publication of your book. I will, however, do my best to help you locate potential good homes for your work, and to help you navigate the process of sending your work out for consideration as part of our last one-on-one meeting together. I have read more than 1,500 book length submissions for various national poetry contests, and am equipped to help you shape your collection into something others will be interested in picking up.



Designated Workspace at The Loft

During the times of year when we're not meeting regularly, The Loft has reserved our classroom as a community workspace for you during the same hours that we'd regularly have class. I hope that you'll use it to gather and write and encourage each other.

The Course Schedule

Please note: Further discussion of specific elements of craft and content will be added based on our class's individual desires and necessities. Each week we will be reading and discussing collections as well as individual poems (supplied by your teaching artist.)

January 28:

- Introductions
- Expectations/Syllabus Review
- What Makes a Collection Publishable?
- First Collection Assigned

February 4:

- What is your book "about?"
- Epigraphs, Frontispieces, and guiding Images
(If possible, please bring all of the required texts with you tonight!)

February 11:

- Big Picture Revision Strategies
- Visiting Author #1

February 18:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____



February 25:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____
- Second Collection Assigned

March 3:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____

March 10:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____

March 17:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____

March 24:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____
- Third Collection Assigned

March 31:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____

April 7:

- Workshop _____
- Workshop _____

April 14:

- How are we progressing? Have goals shifted or changed?
- Setting new goals/Looking Ahead
- How have our texts informed you?
- Fourth and Fifth Collection Assigned



Looking ahead: **Summer Meetings**
Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

June 20

July 18

August 15