

## **Applying Meditation to the Study and Writing of Poetry**

Taught by: Marilyn Nelson  
U.S. Military Academy  
Spring, 2000

### Required texts:

Rebel Angels, ed. Jarman and Mason  
The Vintage Anthology of Contemporary American  
Poetry, ed. McClatchy  
Bird by Bird, Lamott  
Writing Without the Muse, Joselow  
Meditation for Dummies, Bodian

### Required commitments:

You will meditate for 5 minutes at the beginning of  
each class meeting.  
You will meditate seriously for at least 15 minutes  
daily outside of class.  
You will spend 45 minutes per class hour reading the  
texts on paper and on-line. NB: I shall expect you, reading at your  
own pace, to have read all of Lamott and much of Joselow by  
mid-semester.  
You will keep a meditation journal, worth 20% of your  
grade.  
You will write and revise 5 poems, each worth 4% of  
your grade.  
You will take a midterm examination, worth 20% of  
your grade.  
You will write 1 critical essay, worth 20% of your  
grade.  
You will take 4 unannounced quizzes, each worth 5%  
of your grade.

Tentative Syllabus: (subject to change at any point in  
the semester)

On paper reading:

Bodian  
Jarman & Mason  
McClatchy

On-line reading:

Introduction to meditation and writing  
Introduction to poetry

Class meetings

"meditating like the breeze"

- 1 Introductions and Logistics
- 2 Breath-Awareness meditation
- 3 Introduction to poetry
- 4 Ballads
- 5 The Image
- 6 In-class writing/workshop
- "meditating like the sea"
- 7 Figurative Language

8 Figurative Language  
9 Rhythm and Meter  
10 The Mantra  
11 Rhythm and Meter  
12 In-class writing/workshop  
"meditating like a pebble"  
13 Rhythm and Meter  
14 Video: "Il Postino"  
15 Couplets and Quatrains  
16 The Sonnet  
17 The Sonnet  
18 Workshop  
"meditating on forgiveness"  
19 Sestinas and Villanelles  
20 Sapphics  
21 Midterm Examination  
22 Robert Hayden and Richard Wilbur  
"noticing things"  
Spring Leave  
23 Video: "Walking Meditation"  
24 James Dickey and James Wright  
25 Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde  
26 Video: Galway Kinnell  
27 Video: Philip Levine  
28 Video: Sharon Olds  
29 Workshop  
"a question"  
30 John Ashbery  
31 Jay Wright  
32 Louise Gluck  
33 Charles Simic Portfolio of 5 poems due  
34 Jorie Graham  
35 Video: Seamus Heaney  
"Final meditation"  
36 Dickinson  
37 Dickinson  
38 Dickinson Journals handed in  
39 Dickinson  
40 Evaluation. Critical essay due.