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Semester, Day & Time of class meetings: Fall 2015 – Thursdays, 10am to noon

Course Description

Our memories are lovely mosaics pieced together by time and circumstance. Poetry is a wonderful way to reclaim our lives in ways that ask for truth over facts, and moments over monuments. This course will look at memoir poems of others and invite you to create your own poems. We will discuss sample poems in class and then write a poem on the session’s theme. Sharing your own poems is encouraged, but not required. Each week will also have an OPTIONAL at home assignment. In the last session we will create small handmade accordion books where you can hand-write a few of your poems, or if you prefer, cut and paste typed poems. The course goals is to write five to ten poems and create a handmade book for (some of) the finished poems.

Assignments and Requirements

Please note that all home writing is optional but I encourage you to write in and out of class. All sample poems for in class and at home assignments will be found in class reader. Poems that you write at home will be shared at next session.

Session 1: The Core of Me  
Define course. Discussion of idea of memoir. Overview of poetry concepts.  
In class writing: Who Am I.

Session 2: The People Who Helped Shape Me  
Poems to or about a parent, grandparent, family friend or elder who helped shape you.

Session 3: The Places Which Are Me  
Poems about a place, current or past, that helped or helps define you. This may be one room such as a kitchen, or on place, such as a particular mountain lake, beach or garden.

Session 4: A Picture in Time  
**Bring in a photograph of you by yourself or with someone else, or of someone in your family.**  
We hold memory in photos but often the photo itself is a story. How we were feeling that day or what it brings to mind. In this session we create a poem based on a photograph.

Session 5: Remember When  
In this poem we will make list poems of a series of “remember when(s)” directed at one person (living or not) who can appreciate the memories. The poems may be to a spouse, dear friend, child, parent, etc.

Session 6: Accordion book making. Please bring your own scissors and paper glue. Rulers are also helpful. I will provide other materials. A donation of $2.00 towards supplies (hand-made paper, matte board) is appreciated but not required. Class poetry reading.
Session 1: Home assignment – Autobiographical poem
Pick year at least 20 years ago. Title of poem Autobiography 19.
Poem may only be six (6) lines
Each line should have an odd number of syllables
Include: parents’ first names, county of birth, a favorite flower or tree, a favorite color (color and flower may not be the same)

Session 2: Home assignment – Children
Consider your child, or a child to whom you are/where related, who charmed you in some way or taught you. Write directly to them.
See Henry Dumas “My Little Boy” see my “poem to my daughter”

Session 3: Home assignment- The House Dreamed
See: The House by Dianne Bilyak
Using Bilyak’s format select a place and look at it from a number of points of view your, some else who does or has been in that place, possibly an animal, and the place itself.

Session 4: Home assignment – Love, Past or Present
This poem need not be written to a person but it should be spoken to the person, place, and spirit and within it either speak to the depth of your love or the reasons for your love. Try not use the word “love.” Also consider speaking your love if you were a tree, or if you were the ocean... see Henry Dumas “If I Were Earth”

Session 5: Home assignment
Write a poem on what you want to be or have done before you die. See Mary Oliver’s “When Death Comes” (poem in reader) as an example. You can model it if you like. Use first line but then go to your own place.