

Adrian Matejka: Sample Lecture Topics

The Music in My Head: Five Ways of Hearing a Poem

The great poet Etheridge Knight said, “Making jazz swing in / Seventeen syllables AIN’T / No square poet’s job,” but what is a poem that doesn’t embrace its inner music? In this 1 week intensive course, we will look at 5 different ways to make the sounds in a poem more melodious: lines, rhymes, repetition, interior sounds, and exterior sounds. We will read a range of poets who will illustrate each type of music making and will also consider ways in which to implement these types of music in our own work.

The Masks We Want: Persona Poetry & Its Possibilities

Persona poetry is one of the earliest styles of poetry. The word persona comes from the Latin term for the masks ancient Greek actors used to exaggerate their features during performances. Over the last 30 years, a number of poets—including Rita Dove, Andrew Hudgins, Natasha Trethewey, and Kevin Young among many others—have adopted linguistic masks in their work as a way to create new and complicated narratives.

This talk will consider the possibilities and implications of contemporary persona poetry. How do we negotiate those spaces that aren’t from our experience? What kinds of opportunities and permissions does writing in persona offer us? How can we write in persona with ethical and creative clarity? By answering these questions, we are better positioned to take advantage of one. It’ll Have You Trippin’: Pacing & Payoff in Stand-up Comedy & Verse
This talk presents a study in stylistic transference, exploring the work of three diverse storytelling comedians—Moms Mabley, Richard Pryor and Dave Chappelle—to illuminate strategies for pacing and payoff that poets can borrow to reward their audiences. Such storytelling devices as plot, climax, resolution and character development will be discussed. (Includes adult language).

With a Voice Like that....: Finding the Poet’s Voice

The poet’s ultimate representation on the page is the speaker. Sharon Olds sounds like “Sharon Olds” because of her language choice, syntax, and line breaks. Yusef Komunyakaa’s linguistic swing is identifiable in a room full of poets thanks to his unique understanding of assonance, consonance, and imagery. Fortunately, the “voice” of the isn’t always the same thing as the “voice” of the speaker in a poem. This workshop will be relaxed and ideal for beginning poets as well as more advanced writers who are interested in experimenting with voice and persona.