

Course: Creative Writing Workshop in Poetry
March 24, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Harold J. Recinos, PhD
Professor of Church and Society

“The things that are said in literature are always the same. What is important is the way they are said.” Jorge Luis Borges, Argentinian poet and writer.

“Both art and faith are dependent on imagination; both are ventures into the unknown.” Denise Levertov, British-American poet.

“I think a poet’s work is essentially about not being in a hurry to imagine fresh ways to see, while convincing other people to pause for a few moments to observe the world with you.” Harold J. Recinos, Latino poet.

Course Structure

This course will be largely taught in the style of a poetry writing workshop in which participants will present work and the entire class, led by the instructor, will provide feedback of a constructive nature to the learner/poet. The learner/poet will engage in a process of looking at one’s culture and the world one inhabits, thus deepening self-identity in that culture and articulating a poetic response to/from it. The goal of the class is to bring poetry to life and to help you in the effort to write your own poems. In class, let us explore statements such as this: Is poetry helpful and relevant, or is it just a form of entertainment? How can we see the issues in our own lives reflected in the poetry we read, and, through an historical perspective, gain wisdom on how to live? What matters most—the author’s intent, or the reader’s response?

Required

Harold Recinos, *The Looking Glass: Far and Near*. RP-Wipf and Stock 2023.

_____, *Cornered by the Dark*. Paraclete Press, 2021.

Harold Recinos, Excerpts from four major works (A few Combined with the work of Photographers):

<https://www.htiopenplaza.org/contributors/harold-recinos>

Recommended

Allison Albino, Ryka Aoki, et al. *They Rise Like a Wave: An Anthology of Asian American Women Poets*. Black Oak Press, 2022.

Joseph Bruchac, ed. *Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian-American Poets*. Greenfield, 1983.

Scott Cairns, *Endless Life: Poems of the Mystics*. Paraclete, 2014.

Michelle Evory, *Naming the Unnameable: An Approach to Poetry for New Generations*. SUNY, NY. 2018.

X. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, ed. *Introduction to Poetry*, 13th Edition. Pearson, 2009.

Ted Kooser, *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets*. Bison Books, 2007.

Diane Lockward, ed. *The Practicing Poet: Writing Beyond the Basics*. Terrapin, 2018.

William Luis, ed. *Looking Out, Looking In: anthology of Latino Poetry*. Arte Publico, 2013.

Carl Morse and Joan Larkin, eds. *Gay and Lesbian Poetry in Our Time. St. Griffins, 1st edition. 1989.*

Duane Niatum, ed. *Harper's Anthology of Twentieth Century Native American Poetry*. Harper, 1988.

Mary Oliver, *Poetry Handbook*, Ecco, 1994.

Miguel Pinero, Nicolas Kanellos, et al. *Outlaw: The Collected Works of Miguel Pinero*. Arte Publico, 2010.

Susan L. Rattiner, ed. *Great Poems by American Women: An Anthology*. Dover, 1998.

Kevin Young, ed. *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*. Library of America, 2020.

Assignment

1. Write at 2 poems, each one based on a prompt provided or a theme of your choosing.
2. Prepare a companion statement on each poem: What do you want it to say? What was the inspiration for your poem? What is the overall message of your poem and how did you create that message using poetic devices such as metaphor, imagery, figurative language, and so forth?

Giving Feedback:

- Your response to other's work should be thoughtful, tactful, organic, and qualitative. Please avoid conventional modes of criticism like "the crap."
- Everyone is expected to contribute in the workshop, bear in mind the above when making comments in class.

- Avoid psycho-analyzing the writer, assuming their work to be biographical, or giving comments that are personal in any way. Things to consider when giving feedback:

Initial impressions:

- What's your 'gut feeling' about the piece, what first impressions do you have?
- What remains, are there certain images or ideas that linger in your consciousness?
- What were the strongest images or ideas?
- Did it feel fresh, original or distinctive?
- Was it hard to put down?
- What are its strong points? Its weaker areas?
- Are you left with a sense of satisfying mystery, or confusion?
- What do you think the piece is about?
- Did the piece provoke thought?
- Does the piece feel complete, rounded, or like a fragment?

Bio

Harold Recinos is Professor of Church and Society at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. A cultural anthropologist, he specializes in work and ethnographic literature dealing with undocumented Central American migrants and the Salvadoran diaspora. He has published numerous articles, chapters in collections, and written major works on this topic and Latino theology, including 16 collections of poetry. Recently, two new collections of poetry were released, *The Days Your Bring* (RP-Wipf and Stock, 2022), and *The Looking Glass: Far and Near* (RP-Wipf and Stock, 2023). Recinos' poetry has been featured in *Anglican Theological Review*, *Weavings*, *Sojourners*, *Anabaptist Witness*, *The Arts*, *Perspective*, *Afro-Hispanic Review*, *Hispanic Theological Initiative*, *En Foco*, among others. Since the early-1980s, Recinos has worked with and defended the civil and human rights of Salvadoran refugees in the States and in marginal communities in various ad different contexts in El Salvador.