

Introduction to the Writing of Poetry

Instructor: John Wood

This course is designed for older adults through younger adult high school students who might be interested in learning how poetry is made and how to make it. It will involve an *intensive* study of poetry's nuts and bolts (assonance, alliteration, metaphor, meter, forms, and so forth) in conjunction with reading a good bit of poetry that demonstrates these devices. If there is time toward the end of the course, and there may not be [or in a second course if there is interest], you will put what you have learned into practice. At that point it will function like a graduate-level poetry workshop with the poems submitted anonymously for critique by the instructor and the students who will by then have developed their critical skills well-enough to make useful critical comments from having been exposed to the form and theory of poetry.

It is important to keep in mind that this is not a class in which the primary or even secondary concern is reading each other's poetry and talking about it. This is a course in learning how to write poetry, which like any other art involves mastering the craft. But learning the craft of poetry is great fun in its own right because each major element of the craft reflects something about the workings of the human mind.

A text book is required, John Frederick Nims' *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*. Multiple copies at \$1.00 each are available on line through Abe Books. Go to: <http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchEntry?cmid=hp-search-advancedsearch> and type in Nims under author and Western Wind under title. This is a great book and you will love it for all the many wonderful things it will teach you, in addition to how to make a poem. **Do not buy a new copy from Amazon because it is nowhere near as good as the older edition; that new edition (co-edited by David Mason) costs over \$45.00 and is not worth the money. Please buy one of the cheap 1974 or 1983 editions solely edited by Nims.**

About the Instructor:

John Wood, who holds both the MFA in Creative Writing and a Ph.D. in English literature, lives in Saxtons River and is a poet and art critic whose books in both fields have won national and international awards. For 25 years he was the Director of the Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing at McNeese University where he taught the writing of poetry. Several of his students have received the \$20,000 NEA Poetry Fellowship, others the Ruth Lilly Fellowship in Poetry, still others a MacDowell Residency, an Amy Clampitt Fellowship, and a variety of other awards. And many of his former students have published books from leading presses. John and his teaching were the subjects of a *Los Angeles Times* front page article in 1999 and a full page article in 2005 in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.