

**Classroom Observation of ENWR412**  
**Advanced Writing: Poetry**  
**Professor Susan Somers-Willett**  
**October 22, 2009**

This is an advanced writing class that, with Professor Somers-Willett's approval, meets once a week for a double period. The longer class time allows for workshoping student writing without rushing or having to take up a work left in mid consideration. While the benefits of this were evident during my observation, I was also struck by the easy relationship the instructor had established with her class and the class members had established with each other. The tone was serious without being severe, no easy task considering one of the works examined.

Dr. Somers-Willett had the class discuss two poems written by its members, the first a Grammarian's Ode to an unmentionable word that the poet handled with considerable wit and style. The second poem, which was on War, was completely different in tone and style. In both cases, the instructor invited a reading of the work followed by a discussion that sought to break down general considerations into more specific examinations of meter, form and language as well as meaning. Only after each student had contributed to the discussion did the instructor add some of her own comments and concerns. Finally, the writer was asked to respond to all that had been mentioned.

I mentioned the tone of the class earlier. What struck me was the respect with which the professor and the class members treated the examined work; remarks were often serious, occasionally comic, but always directed to the work and how it might be improved. Professor Somers-Willett obviously has created a comfort level for her students, based in her own combination of enthusiasm and seriousness about writing, that was reflected in their comments and actions. One student stopped me in the hall later to tell me that this was her favorite class and one of the few where she felt free to "try almost anything."

Plainly, this is exactly the response we would like to see from our students in any class. That all the class seemed as interested as the student who spoke to me is a credit to Professor Somers-Willett.



Daniel R. Bronson



Susan Somers-Willett

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