



School of Writing, Languages & Cultures
COURSE SYLLABUS
EN170-01 Haiku & Zen Aesthetics
CRN: 13114
Term: Fall 2026

General Course Information

Dates/Times: W 12:00 pm – 12:50 pm
Location: SH412
Credit Hours: 1

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Randy Brooks
Office: SH434
Email: rbrooks@millikin.edu
Office Hours: W 1:00 – 2:00pm

< <https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/MillikinHaiku/courses/zen-fall2026/index.html> >

Purpose of the Course

Course Description:

English 170, Haiku & Zen Aesthetics, is a one-credit creative writing workshop modeled after haiku writer groups. This workshop meets weekly to consider Japanese Zen aesthetics and how they apply to reading and writing of haiku in English. We will have frequent KUKAI competitions throughout the semester. Our primary texts will be *Zen Art for Meditation*, *The Wordless Poem* by Eric Amann, recent issues of *MAYFLY* magazine, *School's Out* by Randy Brooks and *Bare Necessities* by Francine Banwarth. Students will read and write about Japanese Zen aesthetics and the haiku tradition and try approaches to composing their own original haiku in English based on tenets of Zen aesthetics.

Course Prerequisite:

none

Course Learning Outcomes:

Writing Goals—The primary goal of this course is to plan, develop, and complete a haiku collection with the support and critical response of peers. The secondary goal is to have fun sharing the creative process in a small workshop atmosphere. We will celebrate the variety of voices and experiences that will be evident in the projects. We will read and analyze work in the Japanese aesthetics and English haiku traditions.

School Learning Outcomes:

Students gain experiences in a variety of writing; in this course literary writing, editing, publishing and personal creativity.

University Studies Learning Outcomes (if applicable):

NA

Learning Environment:

This is a traditional once-a-week course. This course emphasizes a performance learning approach in which students read, share responses, write and perform their work for others. Students will engage as readers and writers exploring Zen aesthetics and the haiku traditions.

(1) For the startup for this class, to the following Podcast and enjoy listening to it. After listening to it, write about your realizations or questions about haiku.

< <https://www.haikuchronicles.com/podcasts/2012/e23-tea-talk-haiku-a-way-of-life> > (26 minutes)

Also answer these questions in your reflection—how can haiku be a means of learning to notice, observe or be more aware of your surroundings? How is haiku an art of awareness? Is haiku a way of life? What is that way of life? The haiku life?

Course MOODLE Page & Web Site

Resources and the grade book are provided through Millikin University course management software, Moodle. There is also a course web site featuring a continuously updated assignment blog and sample of student performance learning at:

<https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/MillikinHaiku/courses/zen-fall2026/index.html>

The course requires frequent submissions of written responses and informal writing at attachments (DOC or RTF file format) by email to me at <rbrooks@millikin.edu>.

ALL assignments are to be turned in as digital files attached by email. (Use your SAVE AS function and choose “Rich Text Format” or “DOC” for digital files emailed to <rbrooks@millikin.edu>. Please use RTF or DOC or PDF formats or paste your work directly into email. Ask for help on formats if needed.

E-mail: The email system on campus is a vital communications tool and may be used by the student, professor and other school officials in the delivery of information and instructions. Students are responsible for routinely checking their Millikin University e-mail for schedule changes, assignments, and/or other messages from the professor(s) or university representatives. Email addresses other than students’ Millikin email addresses will NOT be used for communication purposes.

Required Books from the Bookstore:

None.

Course Materials Provided By The School:

The class assignments blog is located at:

< <https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/MillikinHaiku/courses/zen-fall2026/assignments.html> >

Several free print or PDF books will be given to students from Dr. Brooks:

- (1) *Bare Necessities: Selected Haiku of Francine Banwarth*, (2024) Brooks Books. (PDF copy)
- (2) *School’s Out: Selected Haiku of Randy Brooks* (1999) Press Here. (PDF copy)
- (3) Amann, Eric. *The Wordless Poem: A Study of Zen in Haiku*. (1978). (PDF copy)
- (4) *Zen Art for Meditation*. Stewart W. Holmes & Chimyo Horioka. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1978. ISBN 978-0804812559.
- (5) Several MAYFLY haiku magazine issues & kukai competition award books.

How Learning Will Be Assessed

Assignments & Semester Grading Weight

All assignments are emailed to Dr. Brooks at <rbrooks@millikin.edu> and are due by midnight on Monday each week.

Informal Reader Response Writing & Haiku Writing	(each week) 10 points
Original Haiku Writing	(each week) 10 points
Haiku Collection	100 points
Haiku Collection Author’s Preface.....	10 points
Final Reading	10 points
Final Reflection (creative works self-evaluation)	10 points

Assignment Grades:

Informal Quick-Writes, Quizzes, Email Responses, Exercises & Planning Work
informal assignments will be graded with a simple check-system (10) (5) or (0) indicating completion of the assignment. These grades indicate that (10 = you have done an excellent, thoughtful writing), (5 = you have completed most of the assignment adequately, or (0 = you have not fulfilled the assignment).

Course grades will be determined as follows:

(A+=100, A=95, A-=90, B+=88, B=85, B-=80, C+=78, C=75, C-=70, D+=68, D=65, F=0)

Grading Scale & Methods:

ALL assignments are to be turned in as digital files by email. (Use your SAVE AS function and choose "Rich Text Format" or "DOC" for digital files emailed to <rbrooks@millikin.edu>. Please use RTF or DOC formats. Ask for help on formats if needed.

Formal Assignments:

The other assignments are considered formal which means that they should be printed, carefully edited, revised, prepared and designed for maximum effectiveness with the intended audience. Proper citation of sources and a works cited section is expected.

A = "exceptional" or "outstanding" work

B = "above average" Effort was put into the work above and beyond what was required.

C = "average" Note that "average" does not mean good or bad, just average as in like everyone else's work. The students completed the basic requirements as laid out in the directions.

D = "below average" This effort did not even meet the minimum requirements or was sub-par.

F = "below college standards" Very little effort went into the assignment.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

(A+=100, A=95, A-=90, B+=88, B=85, B-=80, C+=78, C=75, C-=70, D+=68, D=65, F=0)

Attendance & Participation

I am very strict about attendance. You are allowed three absences without penalty. After three absences, you are considered to be excessively absent and five per cent of your semester grade will be subtracted from your semester score for each day of excessive absence. Of course, extended illness will be exempt to this absence policy, usually resulting in an incomplete for the semester.

Please be respectful to your faculty and fellow students by not carrying on conversations that are not a part of class discussion. Be prepared for class and group meetings. Please, no children or disruptive interruptions. Please turn cell phones to silent or vibrate mode and properly dispose of your trash by the end of class.

Missed Assignments

Students are required to submit all assignments by email midnight before the class discussion. If your assignment is late, it is an F for formal assignments or a minus for informal assignments. Note that F's and minuses are averaged as 0% grades.

Millikin University Student Guidelines for All Courses

Full University-wide policies may be found at the following link: www.millikin.edu/syllabus-policy-language or via QR code:



These policies focus upon the following areas:

- Technical, Classroom, And College Policy Information
 - University Commitment to Student Success
 - Academic Integrity Standards
 - Disruptive Behavior Policy
 - Distance Delivery Components
 - Dropping a Course and the University Withdrawal Policy
 - Course Evaluations
- Millikin University Well Being Guidelines
 - Creating an Equitable and Inclusive Learning Environment
 - Title IX, Sexual Misconduct, and Gender-Based Violence
 - Disabilities Accommodations Policy
 - Gender Expression and Identity
 - Bias Incidents or Discriminatory Practices
 - Student Well-Being

Course Policies –

All writing assignments are to be submitted by email to: rbrooks@millikin.edu

The easiest way is to copy and paste your work into the email. However, you may attach a Word Doc or RTF file. Please DO NOT send me PDF files of your work.

When writing a response to a haiku by any author, please use the following means of citation. Always type the entire haiku (DO NOT CHANGE CAPITAL LETTERS or WORD SPACING!). Then include the author and an abbreviation of the publication source. Here is an example:

on hands and knees
I follow a toad
down the parsley row

Jeff Ingram, Mayfly 59, 16

Course Schedule & Plans

The course schedule is merely a guideline. The professor reserves the right to alter course content, class assignments/activities, and/or dates, as deemed necessary. The professor will announce assignments and due dates in class, via email, or course web site. The student is responsible for attending class to know what assignments will be required and when. Announcements in class or via email will take precedence over the written schedule.

Weekly Schedule & Assignments

1. Sharing and discussing favorite haiku from the reading assignments (emailed responses due midnight Sunday before the class).
2. Critical reading discussion on Zen aesthetics and haiku poetics.
3. Kukai selection of favorite haiku by each other.

Detailed Weekly Topical Schedule

Course Assignments Schedule: Reading & Writing Assignments by Dates

This detailed schedule is available online with the course syllabus blog located at:

<https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/MillikinHaiku/courses/zen-fall2026/assignments.html>

Course Assignments Schedule:

for 08/26

(1) Read the introduction to Zen Art for Meditation. Write an email to me about your plans to find a quiet place to relax and meditate on the paintings and haiku you read for this class.

(2) Read issue of MAYFLY magazine (in class) and write (after class) about 1 of your favorite haiku.

Due midnight Thursday 08/27: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 09/02

(3) Go to following Podcast and enjoy listening to it. After listening to it, write a response about your realizations or questions about a life of writing haiku.

<https://www.haikuchronicles.com/podcasts/2012/e23-tea-talk-haiku-a-way-of-life>

Also answer these questions in your reflection—how can haiku be a means of learning to notice, observe or be more aware of your surroundings? How is haiku an art of awareness? Is haiku a way of life? What is that way of life?

Here is a quote on a Zen approach to haiku:

Alan Watts noted that a good haiku was “a pebble thrown into the pool of the listener’s mind, evoking associations out of the richness of his own memory.” A moment “when we were aware of being alive in an unusually vivid way....the reader is invited to share in the mood which the poet implies...and the poem is successful to the degree that the reader shares the same poetic experience, which however is never explicitly stated.

(4) Sit in your quiet place and write 3-5 first haiku attempts. These may come from ideas from the podcast or from favorite haiku in your MAYFLY. You may want to find and start writing a haiku journal.

Due midnight Sunday 08/30: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 09/09

(5) Read Chapter One of The Wordless Poem. Write an email to me about your responses to Amann’s explanation of how haiku is a Zen art. What questions do you have?

(6) Find another quiet place (or return to your previous one) and write 3-5 additional haiku attempts.

(7) Write a reader response to 1 favorite haiku from kukai 1 favorites

Due midnight Sunday 09/06: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 09/16

(8) Read & meditate on Zen Art for Meditation, tenet 1 – **everyday things**. Write a response about 1 favorite haiku from this tenet.

(9) Read another MAYFLY and write about a favorite haiku that demonstrates writing about “everyday things”

(10) send me 2 variations or edit alternatives to haiku from [haiku to edit 1](#)

(11) write about 1 favorite haiku from [kukai 2 favorites](#)

(12) Write 3-5 haiku on everyday things from your recent life experiences.

Due midnight Sunday 09/13: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 09/23

(13) Read ZEN ART tenet 2 – **perceptions** and write a response to a favorite haiku or artwork.

(14) Read “This Haiku of Ours” by Raymond Roseliep in the introduction and read HAIKU DECK and write about 2 favorite haiku that demonstrates writing about “perception”

(15) Write 3-5 haiku based on tenet 2 – perceptions

Due midnight Sunday 09/20: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 09/30

(16) Read HAIKU DECK by Randy Brooks and write about 3 haiku and how they illustrate a Zen approach.

(17) Write 3 haiku in response to favorites from Randy Brooks

Due midnight Sunday 09/27: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 10/07

(14) Read ZEN ART tenet 3 – **everything exists in relation** and write a response to a favorite haiku.

(15) Read another Mayfly issue and write about a favorite haiku that demonstrates writing about “everything is in relation to other things”

(16) Write 3-5 haiku based on tenet 3 – everything exists in relation to other things.

(17) write about 1 favorite haiku from [kukai 3 favorites](#)

Due midnight Sunday 10/04: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 10/14

(18) Read Chapter Two of The Wordless Poem. Write an email to me about your responses to Amann’s explanation of how haiku is a wordless poem. In what ways are haiku wordless?

(19) Read ZEN ART tenet 12 – **words are not living** and write a response to a favorite haiku.

(20) Read new MAYFLY issue and write about a favorite haiku that demonstrates the idea of being a wordless poem or just perceptions and images.

(21) Write 3-5 haiku based on going beyond words or how words are not enough.

Due midnight Sunday 10/11: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 10/21

(21) Read Chapter Six of The Wordless Poem. Write an email to me about Amann's emphasis on "selflessness" in haiku? Write about a favorite haiku example from this chapter by Amann.

(22) Read ZEN ART tenets 4 – **the self** – and write a response to 1 favorite haiku or artwork.

(23) Read Bare Necessities: Selected Haiku of Francine Banwarth and write about a favorite haiku that demonstrates writing about "selflessness" or how "the self is not separate from the universe"

(24) Write 3-5 haiku where it is NOT ALL ABOUT ME (selflessness) or write about being the "universal self"

Due midnight Sunday 10/18: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 10/28

(25) Read ZEN ART tenets 5 – **collaborating with nature** & 6 – **no ego** – and write a response to 2 favorite haiku or artworks from these tenets.

(26) Read DAPPLED SHADOWS by Jim Brubaker and write about a favorite haiku that demonstrates collaborating with nature or being "egoless" in nature.

(27) Go for a walk and write 3-5 haiku on being in nature or collaborating with nature. Avoid letting yourself be the center of the haiku . . . become the background of your haiku.

Due midnight Sunday 10/25: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 11/04

(28) write about a favorite haiku from KUKAI 07

(29) Read Zen Art for Meditation, tenet 7 – **true insight** – and write about a favorite haiku example.

(30) Read Chapter Four of The Wordless Poem. Write an email to me about Amann's emphasis on "nothing special" in haiku? Write about a favorite haiku example from this chapter by Amann.

(31) Write 3-5 open topic haiku in response to these chapters on insight from nothing special – everyday things noticed and enjoyed fully.

Due midnight Sunday 11/01: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 11/11

(32) Read ZEN ART tenets 8 – **emptiness** and write a response to a favorite haiku or artwork.

(33) Read new MAYFLY issue about a favorite haiku that demonstrates the emptiness of not bringing assumptions, just being in the moment.

(34) Write 3-5 haiku from your readings or the artwork from tenet 8 – emptiness

Due midnight Sunday 11/08: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 11/18

(35) Read ZEN ART tenets 9 – **thinking versus acting** and write a response to a favorite haiku or artwork.

(36) Read DUST OF HORSES by Chad Lee Robinson about a favorite haiku that demonstrates thinking versus acting or just doing.

(37) Write 3-5 haiku from your readings or the artwork from tenet 9 – thinking versus acting

Due midnight Sunday 11/15: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 11/25 – Thanksgiving Break

EXTRA CREDIT assignment (NOT REQUIRED) – write 5 Thanksgiving haiku (email to me)

Additional Extra Credit Opportunities:

10 points - listen to a HAIKU TALK podcast by Ben Gaa - write a response paragraph and haiku in response

<https://www.youtube.com/@HaikuTalk>

You may earn up to 40 extra credit points (10 for each podcast response)

for 12/02

(38) Read ZEN ART tenet 10 – **the unknown** and write a response to a favorite haiku from this section.

(39) Read Chapter Seven of The Wordless Poem. Write an email to me about Amann's emphasis on "oneness" in haiku? Write about a favorite haiku example from this chapter by Amann.

(40) Read SCHOOL'S OUT by Randy Brooks about a favorite haiku that demonstrates being present in the moment.

(41) Write 3-5 haiku on the mysteries of the unknown and the feeling of "oneness" with things that are bigger or larger than yourself.

Due midnight Sunday 11/29: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 12/09

(42) Read ZEN ART tenets 11 – **the present moment** and write a response to a favorite haiku or artwork. Why are haiku written in present tense?

(43) write about 2 favorite haiku from our final KUKAI 08

(44) Create a collection of your best haiku into a booklet. Give it a title and write an introduction on the art of writing haiku. You may make a paper copy and/or Power Point PDF for presentation

Due midnight Sunday 12/06: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

for 12/?? - tba- Final Public Reading – invite friends!

Final Exam - A Public Haiku Reading

12:00 - 1:50 pm
tba

(45) Go for a walk or find a place to sit and observe what is happening around you. Meditate or quietly sit and notice what's going on. Let yourself observe and connect to your own feelings, memories, or thoughts arising from this place and time. And just write. Send me a reflection about your time & place and send some of the resulting haiku from being there.

(46) Write about 2 or 3 of your favorite haiku you have written this semester? Why are these your favorites? How do they relate to the Zen aesthetics we've studied?

(47) Also write about what you have learned about yourself through this course from Zen aesthetics and meditation. How will this course help as you develop a life of meaning and value? What have you learned about writing haiku from this course?

Due midnight Sunday 12/13: EMAIL your assignments to me at: rbrooks@millikin.edu

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