Teaching is Messy
Chris Clark (Wakonse, May 25, 2014)

Day one and the syllabus is a tidy closet
Where goals and grading scales hang neatly.
The course calendar is a freshly set table
Of inviting readings and juicy assignments.

As weeks go by, the learning room hums,
Filling with the music of knowledge.
But teaching is messy - the place gets cluttered.
Grading turns tricky, plans become muddled.

The most engaging activities play out
Like bouncy games in the den.
They also make marks on the wall
And leave chaotic souvenirs.

Students munch on inspiring concepts
And drop breadcrumb bits of ideas.
I scoop them up and try to put them
Back together as a chocolate muffin.

The brightest assignments are taped to the fridge,
While misfired strategies get crumpled and tossed.
I straighten the frames on shiny test questions
And polish the murky ones.

As the final class days approach,
I find dust collecting under neglected skills
And cobwebs in corners that resist learning.
There’s not always time to be orderly.

Teaching is messy and that's all right.
I can deal with the disarray.
Picking up happy plates and midnight glasses
Reminds me that the venture was a hit.