

CRW 1301 – Beginning Poetry Writing, Section 7622, Fall 2017

Instructor Name: Alison Gaines

Course meeting times & locations: Thursdays 4:05-7:05 PM, FLG 0275

Office Location and Hours: Mondays 2-3 PM, Fridays 11AM-12PM, and by appointment. Office location TBD

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: againes@ufl.edu

Course Description: The goal of this course, from my perspective, is to cultivate in you an appreciation for poetry and to help you to write and revise poems of your own. We will spend class time discussing the assigned readings and each other's work in a workshop setting.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C), and also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used in poetry.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students will learn to ask their own questions about poetry, and develop their own opinions. They will analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives.

Required Texts:

- *Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseau, Hadara Bar-Nadav, and Robert Wallace, 8th ed. I recommend you buy it used. You need a physical copy. ISBN: [9780205176052](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780205176052)
- The provided PDF, also called the Anthology, is also required. You do not have to print it all out at once, but you are required to bring printouts of the assigned poems to class on the days that we're discussing them. We'll tackle one section a week.

- One single-volume collection by a living author, to be chosen by you later in the semester.

Recommended Texts:

- A dictionary, although you all have access to the Oxford English Dictionary online via UF. www.oed.com
- The *Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms* by Meyers and Simms.

Assignments (see the end of the syllabus for grading rubrics and descriptions of each assignment):

1. The weekly poem (12)
2. Six short response essays of 400 words each
3. 1200 word essay: Taste
4. 1200 word essay: Book Review
5. 1200 word essay: Revision letter
6. Final chapbook

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:*
 - Since our class only meets once a week, each meeting counts for a lot. Please show up.
 - You are allowed two (2) absences for any reason, so long as you email me to let me know that you'll be missing class. You don't need to tell me why. It's a good idea not to waste these at the beginning of the semester in case you get sick or injured later on. If you miss a class with no warning, you'll forfeit that day's participation points.
 - It will be very difficult to catch up after missing more than two weeks of class. **Therefore, missing more than two classes is an automatic failure.** If there is something that is making you miss class with that level of frequency, I'd recommend dropping and taking the class in the future.
 - If you miss a class for any reason, you are expected to make up the work. Arrange with me on how to do this.
 - Tardiness is disruptive, so please be on time. If you are more than five minutes late three times, the effect is the same as an absence. If there is a valid reason that you're late (bus breakdown, you're on crutches, etc.), I'll allow it.
3. *Poem Format & Submission:* Poems are single-spaced, printed out on one side of the sheet, in a serif font like Times, with a heading in the top right-hand corner.
4. *Essay Format & Submission:* Essays are double-spaced, printed out on one or both sides of the sheet, in a serif font like Times, with a heading in the top right-hand corner.
5. *Late Papers/Assignments:* I won't accept late work. You may have **one extension to an assignment** this semester, good for one week, with no penalties, as long as you contact me before the assignment is due to request it. That means send me an e-mail before deadline. As long as I have that e-mail on record, your extension will be granted.
6. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
7. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

8. Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
9. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
10. *Grade Appeals*. Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
11. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

Other policies:

- You may call me Alison or Ms. Gaines.
- No open screens in the classroom. Keep your phones, laptops, tablets, and e-readers out of sight. This means that you'll have to plan ahead and print out all the required materials for class. It is also a good idea to have a notebook and a folder dedicated to this class. If you have a reason why you need to use a keyboard or screen in class, speak to me about it and I will accommodate. Instances of phone use during class will result in a lower participation grade.
- Email etiquette: Email is the best—nay, the only—way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom or office hours. Make sure that your emails have a beginning, middle, and end: that is, a salutation, a brief message, and a closing, at least for the first email in a thread. The email will not start with “Hey Alison,” or worse, “Hey Allison,” or worst of all, just “Hey.”
- This class is a no-judgment zone. Occasionally we will discuss personal or difficult topics, so it's important to respect each other, to listen intently, and not to talk about others' work outside the class. In that respect, this class can be compared to a visit to the therapist, or a trip to Vegas, whichever you prefer.
- I fully realize that this class might not be your top academic priority right now, but I do ask you to give it your best effort. And if you find yourself struggling, or behind, talk to me sooner rather than later.
- If you ever want to talk more in-depth about one of your poems, or seek clarification from me, or talk about anything poetry-related, that is what office hours are for. Please come by. Feel free as well to make an appointment if my regular times don't work for you.

SCHEDULE

Date	On the agenda	Due today
August 24	Introduction to the course and each other, first exposures to poetry, ballads and oral tradition. Discuss section 1 of anthology.	None
August 31	What makes a poem a poem? Line and verse.	Read: Text chapter 1 & 2, Anthology section 2 Write: Instructional poem
September 7	Rhythm, meter, and	Read: Text chapter 3 & 4, Anthology section 3

	rhyme (or lack thereof). Introduce forms assignment.	Write: end-word assignment Short response essay 1
September 14	Forms day: presentations by you.	Read: Text chapter 5, Anthology section 4 Write: Your anti-sonnet Have forms presentation prepared
September 21	Workshop dress rehearsal.	Read: Text chapter 7, Anthology section 5 Write: Nature poem Short response essay 2
September 28	Workshop 1	Read: Text chapter 9, Anthology section 6 Write: This is just to say Essay due: Taste Essay
October 5	Workshop 2. Persona poems.	Read: Text chapter 8, Anthology section 7 Write: Persona or biography Short response essay 3
October 12	Workshop 3. Elegy. Introduce ekphrasis assignment.	Read: Text chapter 6, Anthology section 8 Write: One-end-word elegy
October 19	Workshop 4. Ekphrastic.	Read: Anthology section 9 Write: Ekphrastic poem Short response essay 4
October 26	Workshop 5. Odes. Introduce single-volume collection assignment.	Read: Anthology section 10 Write: Ode
November 2	Workshop 6. Little poems.	Read: Anthology section 11 Write: In miniature Tell me which collection you're reviewing. Short response essay 5
November 9	Workshop 7. Introduce final portfolio assignment.	Read: Anthology section 12 Write: Material things Essay due: Single-volume collection review.
November 16	Workshop 8. Dealing with content and identity in poems.	Read: Text chapter 10, Anthology section 13 Write: Wild card Short response essay 6
November 23	[no class]	Eat!
November 30	Final reading and party.	Final chapbook and revision letter.

GRADES

I hope you can appreciate the ridiculousness of the task given to me, putting a grade value on art. I also hope you can take the grading aspect of this class with a minimum level of seriousness. That said, I know you care about your GPA. Good grades in this class will be achieved through effort, responsiveness to feedback, and hearty participation in class discussions. I do not grade poems based on how much I

identify with them, or how much I personally like them. The grading system is just to encourage you to put in an effort and give your poems ample time to incubate.

The weekly poem:

The poems, as you write them, do not receive grades. You'll just receive credit, 10 points, for turning them in. I will make written comments on them and hand them back to you the following week. However, make sure that all your poems follow these guidelines:

- Use only complete sentences—if your line breaks were eliminated, it should read normally.
- Use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Have a title for all your poems.
- In the top corner, include a heading with your name, the date, and the course.
- Do your best to fulfill all aspects of the week's assignment.

Short response essays: 400 words each

Write in-depth about one of the poems you were assigned to read. This is a way for you to show me that you're engaged with the reading outside of class discussions, and to practice critical writing in a low-stakes way. Use the vocabulary you learn in class and in the textbook. These will be due on alternating weeks throughout the semester. The feedback you receive on these should guide you in writing your longer papers.

Questions to guide these essays: What is your response to this poem? What is the predicament, or central question, of this poem? What is unique about this poem? What is the poet doing to achieve the effect that the poem has on you, the reader?

Remember to refer to certain lines or stanzas, the same way you would refer to page numbers if you were writing about a novel.

Longer essays: 1200 words each

Taste essay. People always say “there's no accounting for taste,” but I want you to account for yours. Write about two different poems we have read so far in this class: one you liked and one you didn't. Explore your own biases and give reasons, or possible reasons, for the way you react. If a poem makes you feel bored, uninterested, excited, sad, nervous, or any emotion, why do you think that is? How does the poet accomplish these effects? You may take a “half-and-half” approach, writing first about one poem and then about another, or you may go back and forth between them throughout the paper. Credit for this idea comes from Sean McQuinney.

Book review. Choose a single-volume collection by a living poet. It does not have to be a poet we've discussed in this class, although it may. Get the book from the library or purchase it—I want you to have a physical copy. Write a review of the collection as a whole. What do you think about the way the poems were ordered? Do you find an overall theme, or characters? What surprised you? Spend at least one paragraph talking in-depth about one of the poems in particular. This is your chance to discover something off the class reading list. Would you recommend this book? To whom? Why or why not?

Revision letter. You've chosen 8 poems to revise for your final chapbook. How did you arrive on these eight, and how did you decide what changes to make? What advice did you decide to take, or leave? How did workshop or comments from me change the way that you felt about the poems? Do you feel that the poems you were assigned to read changed your writing at all, or at least made you think differently about it?

Final chapbook. At the end of the semester, you'll choose 8 poems, minimum, to revise and make into your final chapbook. Those will receive grades. The grades will depend on how much effort you put into the poems, whether you took your time writing them, and whether your revisions were thoughtful. Errors in spelling and grammar will, at this stage, lose you points. A good poem contains only what is necessary. This needs to be a physical book with a title and your name on it. You are free to decorate as much as you want.

Grading Rubric for Essays:

An "A" paper has a strong thesis and comes to an original conclusion about the poetry discussed. If a claim is made, it is backed up with evidence, perhaps a quote or a reference from the poem. There is a good balance between quoting/summary and analysis. It is not enough to simply talk through what "happens" in the poem. "I" statements are allowed if warranted. The paper will fulfill the word count and have flawless spelling and grammar. It fulfills the requirements of the assignment.

A "B" paper will have a thesis and come to a conclusion, perhaps an original one, about the poetry discussed. It presents an original argument, but ideas may need further development or clearer articulation. The argument is supported by evidence. Writing style is generally clear and organization is logical, but there is room for improvement. There are very few mechanical errors and sources are cited properly.

A "C" paper may not fully respond to the prompt. Argument is overly broad or in need of clarification and development. Some evidence is used to support the argument, but claims are not sufficiently defended. Writing style lacks clarity and organization is problematic. Several mechanical errors or incorrect citations.

A "D" paper may lack a thesis, be short on the word count, and have little to no original thought. It does not fully respond to the assignment prompt. Argument is underdeveloped or nonexistent. Little or no evidence is used to support claims. Writing style and organization are unclear. Many mechanical errors or incorrect citations.

An "E" paper fails to respond to the assignment prompt (including papers that do not meet the minimum word requirement). Papers that are late or plagiarized will also receive an "E."

Workshops:

Here's how workshops will work. Early in the semester, we will make a workshop schedule, so you'll know on which day(s) you will be workshopped. The week before you are slated to be workshopped, you'll need to bring copies of the work for the whole class and me. This allows us to prepare comments over the course of the week. We will then spend around 15 minutes discussing your poem as a class. During workshop, the poet generally shouldn't talk—this is an opportunity to see how your poem lands with your audience, which might be different from what you expected. At the end of the discussion, the poet will have a chance to ask questions of the class, or provide any clarifications.

What to submit to workshop: you may submit whatever poem you want that you've written for this class.

Participation: Every class period I'll give you a participation grade out of 10 points. Here's how to get a good participation grade.

- Be present and on time
- Have all the required material printed out/with you
- Contribute to discussions and ask questions
- Offer helpful feedback to your peers, both written and verbal
- Be respectful of me and your peers
- Don't use your phone during class

Extra Credit:

For extra credit (the amount of which to be decided), you may do one or several of the following:

- Attend the MFA@FLA reading series, at which my fellow MFA candidates will read their work out loud. These are usually on Thursday evenings at The Bull, 8 PM. I will apprise you with exact dates. To get extra credit, write a 300-word response to the work you heard. What struck you the most? What was it like to hear poems read out loud?
- Attend the Florida Writers' Festival, an annual event put on by the UF creative writing department. Famous authors come to Gainesville to give readings and craft talks. You can even meet them and get them to sign a book. This year's festival is in early November and will include Paul Muldoon and Lawrence Joseph. I will give you the details. Write a 300-word response to the work you heard.
- Submit your work to a literary magazine. I will give you suggestions of good journals for you, and I'll show you how to submit. Gain credit by forwarding me the confirmation email once you've submitted.

POINT BREAKDOWN OF THE CLASS

Assignment	Points possible	Quantity	Total points possible
Weekly poem	10	12	120
Short response essays	15	6	90
Longer essays	50	3	150
Final chapbook	75	1	75
Participation	10	15	150
Total			585