

CRW 1301 – Beginning Poetry Writing – Section 1651, Class 12466 – Fall 2020

Instructor Name: Michelle Lesifko-Bremer (preferred pronouns: she/her)

Course meeting times: Wednesdays Periods 9 – 11, divided into:

- Synchronous Zoom meeting (see below for link): **every Wednesday 4:05 – 5:50 pm EST**
- Asynchronous Discussion Boards/Writing Activities on Canvas: remaining 1.25 hours

Office Location and Hours: Wednesdays from 2 – 3:30 pm EST on Zoom (or by appointment)

My Zoom Meeting Room: <https://ufl.zoom.us/my/michellelb>

Course website: Canvas (<https://ufl.instructure.com/>)

Instructor Email: mlesifko@ufl.edu

Course Description:

“...it’s the greening of the trees
that really gets to me. When all the shock of white
and taffy, the world’s baubles and trinkets, leave
the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath,
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return
to the strange idea of continuous living despite
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,
I’ll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf
unfurling like a fist, I’ll take it all.”

--excerpt from Ada Limón’s “Instructions on Not Giving Up”

In this course, we will read historical and contemporary American, European, and South American poetry to investigate how poets from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and gender identities have managed to, as the title of our course epitaph states, not give up on poetry, as an art and a practice. We will begin by studying the vocabulary, structures, and subjects of poems, and by reading canonical and modern poems anthologized in our textbook and supplemented from other sources. We will examine the sounds and forms of poetry and develop conventions for talking about poetry in a workshop setting. Throughout the semester, we will write our own poems, making use of in-class writing exercise and weekly prompts to direct our writing practice. We will give critique to and receive suggestions from our colleagues through rigorous and respectful workshop of our work and produce a final portfolio of revised work. During our semester together, we will share our epiphanies, triumphs, and frustrations as we develop as poets and readers of poetry and will write our own “instructions for not giving up.”

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have a foundation in the vocabulary of poetic devices, structures, and forms, and to be able to read and talk about poetry in an academic setting. Students will be expected to be able to conduct themselves as productive members of a creative writing workshop and to demonstrate a sincere and honest attempt to develop their own writing practice.

COVID Statement: Because of the ongoing public health crisis, this course will be held remotely to ensure student and instructor health, safety, and wellbeing. The course will consist of weekly synchronous meetings during the scheduled class time (Wednesday 4:05 – 5:50 pm), as well as asynchronous discussions/activities to be completed on Canvas by specified deadlines. Please see the course schedule and Canvas assignments for more details.

Especially during a semester of remote learning, **regular communication is essential to our success.** Please plan to monitor your ufl.edu email address regularly. Please contact me ASAP if extenuating circumstances due to the public health crisis or otherwise prevent you from meeting course deadlines or

attending synchronous meetings. I'm committed to helping each of you succeed in this course during a semester of temporary disruption to our previously scheduled face-to-face workshops. We may even manage to enjoy meeting the challenge of a shift to remote learning (i.e. have a little fun).

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 within the academic discipline.
- **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 analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts (hard copies preferred to e-copies, for note-taking!):

- *The Tradition* by Jericho Brown
- *Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz
- *The Carrying* by Ada Limón
- *The Discovery of Poetry: A Field Guide to Reading and Writing Poems* by Frances Mayes
- Supplemental materials (poems, essays, articles, et. al.) posted on Canvas

All required texts are available "new" on Amazon, Indiebound.org, or Bookshop.org for a combined price of less than \$53! A steal!

Assignments:

Writing:

- 5 Critical Responses (#1 – 4: 750 words each, #5: 1000 words; 100 pts each): These critical essays will respond to questions about poetic devices and forms and consider how specific poems work.
- Canvas Discussion Posts (varying lengths, totaling 1,000 words, count towards participation): These Discussion Board posts will ask you to engage with your colleagues about the week's

reading by both posting your response and commenting on your colleagues' analyses. Word counts, required content, and due dates for individual posts will be made clear on our Canvas page and in my communications to you.

- 9 Poems (includes one revision; 35 pts each): Each week you will compose a poem based on a prompt that I will provide to you. Poems will be evaluated based on seriousness of undertaking, adherence to prompt, and professionalism/polish (free of typos/grammatical errors), not on their success or failure as first drafts. You are encouraged to take risks and go where your writing leads you.
- Final Portfolio (1,000 words [of critical writing], 200 pts):
 - Revisions of 4 poems: You will revise 4 poems of your choosing, taking into account my comments, your colleagues' comments from workshop, and your own artistic aesthetics, judgment, and intuition.
 - Artist's statement (500 words): You will write an introduction based on the poetic theory and philosophy you have learned to your final portfolio that explains the scope and purpose of your poetry and provides a context for the work you present therein.
 - Revision letter (500 words): You will write a short letter to your past self, the one that composed the first drafts of your revised poems. You will meditate on the revisions that you have made and include specific examples of the changes you have made and your reasoning behind them.

Participation, etc:

- Class Participation (150 pts): You will earn class participation credit based on your preparedness and presence for active and mindful participation in Zoom workshops and designated Canvas discussions/activities.
- Submission of Work to Literary Journals (35 pts): You are required to submit **one** poem to **one** literary journal by the end of the semester. You will receive detailed information and guidance on how and where to submit.

Assignment	Word Count	Points
Critical Response #1	750	100
Critical Response #2	750	100
Critical Response #3	750	100
Critical Response #4	750	100
Critical Response #5	1000	100
Canvas Discussion Board Posts	1000	(included in participation grade)
Poem #1	N/A	35
Poem #2	N/A	35
Poem #3	N/A	35
Poem #4	N/A	35
Poem #5	N/A	35
Poem #6	N/A	35
Poem #7	N/A	35
Poem #8	N/A	35
Poem #9	N/A	35
Final Portfolio, including:		200
4 Revised Poems	N/A	
Artist's Statement	500	

Assignment	Word Count	Points
Revision Letter	500	
Class Participation	N/A	150
Submission to Journal	N/A	35
Totals:	6000	1200

Course Policies:

1. *Assignments:* You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* As my favorite fictional president, Jed Bartlet, said, “Decisions [and good poems] are made by those who show up.” However, life is especially unpredictable, so:

Given that we meet only once a week, you are allowed **one** absence without explanation or excuse. Subsequent unexplained or unexcused absences will affect your grade. **If you have more than 2 absences, per department policy, you cannot pass the course.**

If extenuating circumstances prevent you from attending our synchronous meeting or completing asynchronous assignments, please contact me via email as soon as you are able. Together, we will devise a plan for completing your assignments and making up missed synchronous meetings.

The above course-specific attendance policy is in keeping with the UF attendance policy, which can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>:

“Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first class meeting.

In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.

Students cannot participate in classes unless they are registered officially or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. The Office of the University Registrar provides official class rolls to instructors.

If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and they have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course or laboratory.

The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory.

After due warning, professors can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.”

3. *Tardiness*: Please arrive to our synchronous Zoom meetings at least 5 minutes early (4 pm or earlier) so that we can all connect, test video and sound, and be ready to begin exactly at 4:05 pm. **Three late arrivals** (more than 5 minutes and without advanced notice) **will count as one absence. Late arrivals to synchronous sessions will affect your participation grade.**
4. *Classroom Behavior*: Be respectful and attentive to your colleagues and to me when we are talking, whether during discussion of published poets or during workshop of our own work. In particular, be respectful of your colleagues' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs. Critique others as you would like to be critiqued—for me, that means substantive, actionable feedback that respects the intention and inherent validity of the submitted work.

In our synchronous Zoom meetings, please be focused on our class and refrain from using cell phones, doing online shopping, and completing other work during our time together. Barring technology failures, I expect everyone in the workshop to remain on camera for the duration of our meeting (with the exception of a 15-minute break). Any technology or other limitations should be discussed with me via email or office hours in advance.

I recommend, but don't require, that you plan to attend Zoom meetings in a physical space that prepares you for professional academic engagement (i.e. not lying down in your bed) and that is free of distractions from family, roommates, pets, etc. This recommendation is based on what I have learned while using Zoom professionally over the past 5 months.

5. *Sexual Harassment*: The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/policy-statement/>
6. *Paper Format & Submission*: All assignments should be typed in **12 pt font** with standard margins (Please: I am old and wear glasses and cannot comfortably read less than 12 pt font!). All critical response paper **should be double-spaced** (see above re: old and nearsighted). Submit all assignments on Canvas as specified in each assignment's instructions.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Acceptance of late papers/assignments will be at my discretion and dependent on circumstances. **Here, as with absences, advance notice is highly preferred.**
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.>

As specified by the current UF Student Honor Code: A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.

- b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

In short, show respect to yourself, your colleagues, and me by submitting original work earnestly and honestly produced by you for all assignments. **If you use previously written work as inspiration for a poem, notify me before submission. Turn-It-In will be enabled for all assignments.**

- 10. 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 your instructor early in the semester.
- 11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you.

UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

If you are experiencing unmanageable stress or other emotional or physical distress during the semester, please **ask me for help finding resources**. In addition to teaching you to read and write poetry, I am committed to helping you succeed in a rigorous academic environment and to introducing you to the myriad resources for mental, physical, and emotional help and for time- and stress-management available at UF.

- 12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
- 13. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. To request a grade appeal form, email Ms. Blount at cblount@ufl.edu. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
- 14. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

Grading Scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59
4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.00

Grading Rubrics:

Above all else, I expect you to seriously undertake any work required for this course and to always demonstrate a sincere and earnest attempt to produce your best effort. I will make my specific expectations for individual assignments clear to you when the assignments are introduced.

For critical responses and other expository writing, I will provide detailed grading rubrics on Canvas that are tailored to each specific assignment. All poems except your final portfolio will be evaluated based on three criteria: seriousness of undertaking, adherence to prompt, and professionalism/polish (i.e. free of typos, grammatical errors, etc).

Class participation points will be awarded each week based on your preparation for and engagement with the course material, including both assigned readings and your colleagues' workshop submissions. **I expect you to come to Zoom meetings and post on Canvas discussion boards prepared for thorough, substantive, and engaged discussion**, and I will show you the same respect by being well-prepared, too.

Please ask me for clarification on any assignment instructions, criteria for evaluation, or course policies at any time during the semester.

Syllabus and Course Schedule:

Our syllabus and course schedule including planned readings and assignment due dates follows on the next page. Syllabus and schedule are subject to change and adjustment at my discretion and/or due to severe weather, health/safety concerns, and other mitigating circumstances. **I will always advise you of any changes both in Zoom meetings and through email with advance notice.**

Date	Week	Wednesday Zoom Meeting & Reading (complete reading before Zoom)	Monday Asynchronous Work & Assignments Due by 8 am
9/2/20	Week One: Introduction	Reading: N/A Zoom: Syllabus & Selected Poems	*Tuesday 9/8* (to accommodate the holiday): Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #1
9/9/20	Week Two: Content What Are Poems About?	Reading: Mayes's Ch. 1 "Sources & Approaches" Zoom: Reading Discussion & Close Readings	Mon 9/14: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity
9/16/20	Week Three: Sound How Do Poems Speak?	Reading: Mayes's Ch. 2 "Words: Texture and Sound" & selections from Ch. 4 "The Speaker: The Eye of the Poem" Zoom: Reading Discussion & Close Readings	Mon 9/21: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Critical Response #1
9/23/20	Week Four: Images & Metaphor How Are Poems Built?	Reading: Mayes's Ch. 3 "Images: The Perceptual Field" Zoom: Reading Discussion & Close Readings	Mon 9/28: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #2
9/30/20	Week Five: Meter and Rhyme How Do Poems Sound?	Reading: Mayes's Ch. 5 "Rhyme and Repetition" & Ch. 6 "Meter: The Measured Flow" Zoom: Reading Discussion & Close Readings	Mon 10/5: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #3
10/7/20	Week Six: Form & Free Verse How Are Poems Formed?	Reading: Mayes's selections from Ch. 7 "Free Verse" & Ch. 8 "Traditional and Open Forms" Zoom: Reading Discussion & Close Readings	Mon 10/12: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Critical Response #2
10/14/20	Week Seven: Workshop	Reading: Selections from <i>The Carrying</i> Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 10/19: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #4
10/21/20	Week Eight: Workshop	Reading: Selections from <i>The Carrying</i> Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 10/26: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #5
10/28/20	Week Nine: Workshop	Reading: Selections from <i>The Tradition</i> Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 11/2: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Critical Response #3 Poem #6
11/4/20	Week Ten: Workshop	Reading: Selections from <i>The Tradition</i> & <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 11/9: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #7

11/11/20	Veteran's Day – no class!	N/A – no class!	Mon 11/16: Critical Response #4
11/18/20	Week Eleven: Workshop	Reading: Selections from <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 11/23: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Poem #8
11/25/20	Thanksgiving – no class!	N/A – no class!	N/A – no class!
12/2/20	Week Twelve: Workshop	Reading: Supplemental reading on revisions, Mayes's "Suggestions for Writing and Revising" pp 482 – 486, resources for submitting for publication, & Michelle's Must-Read poems Zoom: Reading Discussion & Workshop	Mon 12/7: Canvas Discussion/Writing Activity Revised Poem (for my eyes only)
12/9/20	Week Thirteen: Revisions, Conclusions, Tearful Goodbyes, and Readings	Reading: Player's Choice poems Zoom: Bring 2 Revised Poems to Read Aloud	Wednesday 12/16: Final Portfolios Critical Response #5