

CRW 2300—Poetry Writing, Class #12419, Fall 2018

Instructor name: Alison Gaines

Course meeting time and location: Friday, 12:50-3:50 pm, Weimer 1094

Office Location and hours: Turlington office TBD,
office hours TBD and by appointment

Course website: Canvas

Instructor email: againes@ufl.edu

Course description: My thinking behind choosing these titles was that they are helpful for young poets. They are books that I studied at different points in my education and that helped me shape my idea of what poetry can be. The common thread, if one is needed, is that these collections all deal with questions of difficulty, whether personal or societal, and how to tell a personal story. We will, in this class, explore questions such as: What is the relationship between poetry and our own lives? What is the difference between a poem and a story? What, if any, is the use of the term “confessional”?

Another note about the texts: this is not intended to be a survey of all poetry. Really, I’m giving you a small cross-section: books from only 2 countries (this is including Northern Ireland as part of the UK), and from a span of about 60 years, all published originally in English. You will have an opportunity to “go and do better” during the Book Review assignment.

The goal is to improve your skills in reading critically, developing your own opinions on poetry, and writing different kinds of poetry yourself.

Since this is an honors class, we will be filling the 6,000-word requirement in fewer, longer assignments as opposed to weekly shorter responses. Also since this is an honors class, I expect hearty participation from each of you during every class period. There is a lot of reading as well—you’ll have roughly 100 pages to read every week, if you count the poetry plus the textbook.

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 poetic studies.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms. 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, learning to ask their own questions and develop their own opinions on poetry.

Required Texts: You need physical copies, not e-books. Books are listed in the order that we will read them. Sometimes, I will have additional reading material that you will be responsible for printing out. Failure to do so will result in a lower participation grade.

- *Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseau, Hadara Bar-Nadav, and Robert Wallace, 8th ed. ISBN: [9780205176052](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780205176052)
- *The Colossus* by Sylvia Plath. ISBN: 0-394-70466-5
- *Death of a Naturalist* by Seamus Heaney. ISBN: 0-571-09024-9
- *Geography III* by Elizabeth Bishop. ISBN: 978-0374530655
- *High Windows* by Philip Larkin. ISBN: 0-571-20275-6
- *Open House* by Beth Ann Fennelly. ISBN: 978-0-393-33607-8
- *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine. ISBN: 9781555976903

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

1. The weekly poem (12, two of which are revisions)
2. Leading a class discussion of the week's reading (1)
3. Essays (5)
4. Final Chapbook (1)

COURSE POLICIES

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance policy:* Attendance in this class is mandatory. If you miss more than two class periods (two weeks), you will not pass. If you miss a class with no notice, you'll forfeit the day's participation points. If you are more than 5 minutes late, you will be docked on your participation grade for the day. Absences for religious holidays, university-

sponsored events, and medical issues can be excused if proper notice and documentation are given to me **ahead of time**. However, if you are finding that lots of things are coming up in your life that chronically make it difficult for you to attend class, this may not be the right time to take this class.

3. *Poem format and submission*: Poems are single-spaced, in a serif font like Times, with a heading in the top right-hand corner. **Poems are submitted on Canvas and printed out.**
4. *Essay Format & Submission*: Essays are double-spaced, in a serif font like Times, with a heading in the top right-hand corner. **Essays are submitted on Canvas and printed out, stapled.**
5. *Late Papers/Assignments*: 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. *Late assignments after that extension*: If you have already used your extension, or do not contact me ahead of time for it, **your grade for the assignment will be docked 10% for each day it is late**. This is one letter grade per calendar day, not per class meeting. I won't accept an assignment more than one week late.
7. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*: Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
8. *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/>.
9. *Accommodations*: If you have a disability or any kind of mental or physical health issue you want me to know about, please tell me about it **at the beginning of the semester**, either in person or via email. If you need accommodations, I need to know up front. Students 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 me, the instructor.
10. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
11. *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.
12. *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>
13. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
14. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
15. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. I understand that paper comes from trees and that hard copies are becoming a thing of the past. However, I believe that working with hard copies of assigned reading and student work is essential to engaging with the text. **So I**

expect everyone to comply with this. However, I am always OK with recycled paper and/or double-sided printing.

POLICIES SPECIFIC TO ME

- You may call me Alison or Ms. Gaines.
- No open screens in the classroom. This means that you'll have to plan ahead and print out all the required materials for class. If you have a reason why you need to use a keyboard or screen in class, speak to me about it and I may accommodate you. Phone use during class will result in a lower participation grade.
- Email etiquette: You'll need to check your UF email once a day. It is the way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom or office hours, and how I will contact you if need be. When writing to me, please do not start an email with the word "Hey." Also if you use my name, spell it correctly.
- 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.
- 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.
- In general, students have difficulty in this class if they a) don't show up to class and b) don't come prepared. If you keep up with the schedule that appears on this syllabus and don't leave everything until the last minute each week, you'll find that the content is relatively friendly.

GRADES AND ASSIGNMENTS

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:

Each poem is worth 10 points. Your poems will receive either 5, 8, or 10 points when you turn them in. I will make written comments on them and hand them back to you the following week. Here is how I will grade the poems:

5 points	8 points	10 points
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Riddled with cliché.	Has a few clichés.	Is thoughtful and avoids cliché.
Fulfills few to none of the requirements of the prompt.	Fulfills some of the requirements of the prompt.	Fulfills all the requirements of the prompt.
Shows little understanding of what a sentence is.	Has a few sentence fragments.	Uses only complete sentences (unless I specify otherwise).
No regard for spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar. Looks like it was not proofread.	Some problems with spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	Uses correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
Has no title.		Has a title.
Has many formatting issues.	Has some formatting issues.	Is correctly formatted (left-justified, single-spaced, serif font, heading).

If your poem earns a 10, **this does NOT mean that there is no room for revision.** It simply means that you did everything I asked you to do.

Critical essays: more detailed descriptions to come.

1. Response to Eliot and O’Hara (750 words)
2. Close Reading 1: a close reading of one of the poems we’ve read so far (1000 words)
3. Close Reading 2, this time engaging a scholarly opinion (1200 words)
4. Book Review: write a review of one of the books assigned in this class OR, if you choose, a book not assigned in this class—run it by me first. (1500 words)
5. Revision Letter: think of it as an artist’s statement, an introduction, or just an explanation of your revision process. (1500 words)

Below is how I grade essays. I am fine with the use of 1st person, but not 2nd person. Some of the writing will be self-reflection, but the majority of your critical writing will be dealing with the work of another poet. Therefore, these guidelines mostly apply to that.

Area of evaluation:	A-quality work:
Compliance/content (worth 50% of grade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does what is asked in the assignment. • Has a thesis/main argument that is not overly broad. • Avoids excessive summary. • Shows original thought, but not simply opinion. • Fulfills word count.
Claims and evidence (worth 20% of grade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backs up all claims with evidence. • Correctly cites sources in-text, with line numbers (if a poem) or page numbers (if a longer work).
Organization (worth 15% of grade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses paragraphs, and generally sticks to one claim or idea per paragraph.
Mechanics (worth 15% of grade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates correct spelling, grammar, has no sentence fragments, and no 2nd person. • Correctly spells author's name and does not misgender them.

Final chapbook:

At the end of the semester, you'll choose 8 poems, minimum, to revise and make into your final chapbook. The grade will depend on how much effort you put into the poems, whether you took your time writing them, and whether your revisions were thoughtful. 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.

Leading class discussions:

Likely with another student (to be assigned), you will lead a class discussion on the week's reading. You will provide biographical information on the poet, the context of the book, and any other information that is helpful for us to understand the poems. I will provide some guidance. You will then lead us in a close reading of at least one poem per person (that is, per person leading the discussion).

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 is 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 and short stories read out loud?
- 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.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Date	On the Agenda	Read for Today	Write for Today
24 August	Introduction to the course and each other	None	None
31 August	Sign up for leading discussions Discuss Eliot, O'Hara, and textbook Plath discussion (led by me)	Eliot and O'Hara manifestos Textbook chapters 1&2 <i>The Colossus</i>	Response to Eliot and O'Hara (first essay) Poem 1

7 September	Plath discussion	Textbook chapters 3&4 <i>The Colossus</i>	Poem 2: "Mushrooms" imitation
14 September	Workshop dress rehearsal Heaney discussion	<i>Death of a Naturalist</i> Textbook chapter 5	Close Reading 1 due Poem 3: "Dockery" imitation
21 September	Workshop 1 Heaney discussion	<i>Death of a Naturalist</i> Textbook chapter 6	Mark up the workshop poems (this week and every week following) Poem 4: "Personal Helicon" imitation
28 September	Workshop 2 Bishop discussion	<i>Geography III</i> Textbook chapter 7	Poem 5: "Poem" imitation (ekphrastic)
5 October	Workshop 3 Bishop discussion	<i>Geography III</i> Textbook chapter 8	Poem 6 : Villanelle or other repeating form, such as sestina
12 October	Workshop 4 Larkin discussion	<i>High Windows</i>	Poem 7: Larkin imitation (deepest fear)
19 October	Workshop 5 Larkin discussion	<i>High Windows</i> Textbook chapter 11	Close Reading 2 due Poem 8 (revision 1)
26 October	Workshop 6 Fennelly discussion	<i>Open House</i>	Poem 9: Research poem
2 November	No class, Homecoming		
9 November	Workshop 7 Fennelly discussion	<i>Open House</i>	Poem 10: Dramatic monologue AND Poem 11: Revision 2

16 November	Workshop 8 Rankine	<i>Citizen</i>	Poem 12: Rankine imitation Book Review Due
23 November: no class, happy Thanksgiving	[Earlier in the week if possible: we will have conferences on your chapbooks]		
30 November	Final reading and celebration		Final chapbook and revision letter

Point breakdown of the class

Item	Points possible	Quantity	Total points possible	% age of final grade
poems	10	12	120	12% (1% each)
essays	100	5	500	50% (10% each)
participation	10	14	140	14% (1.4% each)
leading a discussion	120	1	120	12%
final chapbook	120	1	120	12%
			1,000	