

CRW 2300—Poetry Writing, Class #13129, section 1644

Instructor name: Alison Gaines

Course meeting time and location: Friday, 12:50-3:50 pm, FLI room 0115

Office Location and hours: Turlington office 4415,
office hours TBD and by appointment

Course website: Canvas

Instructor email: againes@ufl.edu

*as the sweetapple reddens on a high branch
high on the highest branch and the applepickers forgot—
no, not forgot: were unable to reach*

--Sappho, trans. Anne Carson, fragment 105A

Poetry is an act of reaching toward something that may be unreachable. Much of poetry is about this failure to reach, failure to grasp, or the desire that comes along with this failure. Whether this is your first poetry class or you've already got some under your belt, my intention is to introduce you to poetry that illustrates this desire in different ways.

The titles I've chosen are ones that I studied in school, or in a few cases, that I *wish* I had studied in school. I've decided to go through the course with each week having a focus on a particular poetic device (metaphor, imagery, etc.). Therefore, the reading list is not entirely chronological. We'll begin using the Norton Anthology to get smaller cross-sections of older poetry, and then zoom in on three specific collections in the second half of the semester. The last of these is Anne Carson's masterful translation of Sappho, as quoted above.

The goal is to improve your skills in reading critically, developing your own opinions on poetry, and writing different kinds of poetry yourself. In the best cases, students emerge from poetry classes better able to offer and accept feedback, and better able to communicate with others. They also nearly always have an expanded definition of what poetry can do and what it can be.

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: 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](#)
- *The Norton Anthology of Poetry: Shorter 5th Edition* by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy. ISBN: 978-0-393-97921-3
- Natasha Trethewey, *Domestic Work*. ISBN: 978-1-55597-309-4
- Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*. ISBN: 978-0-06-073260-8
- Sappho, trans. Anne Carson, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*. ISBN: 9780375410673

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

1. The weekly poem (10)
2. Leading a class discussion on the week's textbook topic (1)
3. Essays/responses (6, of varying lengths)
4. Final Chapbook (1)

Critical essays: more detailed descriptions below.

1. Short response re: a ballad (300 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. Compare and Contrast: look at two poems by two different poets and discuss what elements of similarity you see. How does what you've learned from one poem inform the other? These poems have to be from the assigned reading, but cannot be poems we've discussed in class (1200 words)

5. Book Review: write a review of a book not assigned in this class by a living poet—run it by me first (1500 words)
6. Chapbook Introduction: think of it as an artist’s statement or just an explanation of your revision process (800 words)

COURSE POLICIES

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
1. *Attendance*: 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. 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.
2. *Tardiness*: If you are more than 5 minutes late, you will be docked on your participation grade for the day.
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. *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 early in the semester.
9. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
10. *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, 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>
12. 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>
13. *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/>

2. *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.
- 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
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.

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:

A couple of times during the semester (how many times depends on how many students we have in the class) you will lead a class discussion on the week's textbook reading. This is a combination of a presentation (around 10 minutes) and discussion/close reading (15 minutes or longer). Each week has a topic and we will sign up in advance. The topic has to do both with the textbook reading and the poetry reading for the week. In the second week, I will model what I expect from you. You'll need to use other resources (I recommend the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* or *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*) to help the class gain a wider understanding of the texts. You will then lead us in a close reading of at least one poem from that week's assigned reading.

Workshops:

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
(subject to change)

Date	On the Agenda	Read for today	Due Today
Week 1, January 11	Introductions to poetry and each other	n/a	n/a
Week 2, January 18	Early works, discussion of responses. Model discussion (me): Syntax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 1: "Starting Out: An Introduction" and chapter 2: "Verse" • Norton: Early Modern Ballads (pp. 86-97), Aphra Behn (pp. 318-323), and Chaucer, the Wife of Bath's Prologue (pp. 35-54) • Syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short ballad response
Week 3, January 25	Discussion: Line and line breaks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 3: "Making the Line" • Norton: Emily Dickinson, the first half of the poems listed (pp. 719-725) and Walt Whitman, from <i>Song of Myself</i> and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (pp. 679-689) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 1: twisted tale involving Aphra Behn or the Wife of Bath
Week 4, February 1	Workshop dress rehearsal. Discussion: Free verse/modernism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 4: "Making the Line (II)" • Norton: Emily Dickinson, the second half of the poems listed (725-732) and T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (pp. 862-866) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 2: something Dickinson-like—I have yet to decide— • Close Reading 1

Week 5, February 8	Workshop 1. Discussion: Rhyme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 5: “The Sound (and Look) of Sense” • Trethewey, <i>Domestic Work</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 3: dramatic monologue
Week 6, February 15	Workshop 2. Discussion: Imagery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 6: “Content” • Trethewey, <i>Domestic Work</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 4: French repeating form
Week 7, February 22	Workshop 3. Discussion: Metaphor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 7: “Metaphor” • Plath, <i>Ariel</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 5: Ekphrastic • Close Reading 2
Week 8, March 1	Workshop 4. Discussion: Tone—particularly irony.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 8: “Tale, Teller, and Tone” • Plath, <i>Ariel</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 6: Pastoral
(Week 9 spring break)			
Week 10, March 15	Workshop 5. Discussion: Translation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 9: “The Mysteries of Language” • Sappho, <i>If Not, Winter</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 7: something fragmentary
Week 11, March 22	Workshop 6. Discussion: Sentimentality and cliché.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 10: “Finding the Poem” • Sappho, <i>If Not, Winter</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 8: homolinguistic translation • Compare and Contrast essay
Week 12, March 29	Workshop 7. Discussion: Objective correlative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook chapter 11: “Devising and Revising” • Norton: more contemporary selections, TBA • Carson, <i>The Glass Essay</i> (PDF provided) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 9: poem about another poet
Week 13, April 5	Workshop 8, time for individual conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your chosen collection for book review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem 10: wild card
Week 14, April 12	Partner workshop on chapbook drafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your chosen collection for book review 	

Week 15, April 19	Final class: reading and celebration		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final chapbook (with Introduction)• Book review
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POINT BREAKDOWN OF CLASS

Item	Points possible	Quantity	Total points possible	%age of final grade
poems	10	10	100	10% (1% each)
first essay	30	1	30	3%
essays (close readings, compare and contrast, book review)	120	4	480	48% (12% each)
participation	10	14	140	14% (1% each)
leading a discussion	100	1	100	10%
final chapbook (including artist's statement)	150	1	150	15%
			1,000	