

CRW 1301: Beginning Poetry Writing

[Section 1653]

[Thursday, 4:05 – 7:05 PM / MAT 0003]

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Office Hours: Fridays, 2 – 4 PM, Turlington 4307 *or* the Plaza of the Americas *or* via Zoom

Great poems clothe beautiful thought in equally beautiful language—language that is balanced, striking, and sonically alive. Our goal in writing poetry is not merely to communicate an idea, experience, or feeling—but also to show the power and the music of ordinary words. In this class, we'll learn to read and analyze poetry, stealing whatever we can along the way. Eventually, we'll use class to workshop your own original poems—but as all good writers begin as excellent readers, before we begin workshop, we'll take a few weeks to read carefully and develop a vocabulary with which we can meaningfully discuss poems.

Required Texts

Used copies are cheap online (try bookfinder.com—hyperlinked below). I will provide all additional readings as PDFs or printed handouts. *Note: as of 7/2/25, the total price (including shipping) for used copies of all texts in “good” condition is \$22.79.*

Nick Laird & Don Paterson, *The Zoo of the New*

(ISBN [9780141392493](https://www.isbn.org/9780141392493))

Ada Limon, *The Hurting Kind*

(ISBN [9781639550494](https://www.isbn.org/9781639550494))

Declan Ryan, *Crisis Actor*

(ISBN [9780374611897](https://www.isbn.org/9780374611897))

Assignments Overview

Poems

Each week, I'll give you a prompt. You will submit ten graded poems; poems are submitted one week before they are workshopped. The first is due in week five (September 18), after which you'll submit one every week until the end of the semester. *Submitting your poem means (1) uploading it to Canvas and, if you're submitting a poem scheduled for workshop, (2) handing out printed copies in class.*

Poems are graded on effort, timeliness, and completion of the prompt. Sloppiness (typos, grammar errors, and improper formatting) will lose you points. Poems are individually worth 25 points; collectively, they make up the largest portion of your grade. Failure to submit a poem will result in a score of 0/25 and a five-point deduction from your participation grade (which, together, would lower your overall grade in the course by 3%).

Nine Rules for Poems in 1301:

1. *Put your name and the assignment (e.g. Poem #3) at the top of the page.*
2. *Title your poems! No "Untitled" or "Poem."*
3. *12-point font (TNR or Garamond, nothing fancy), single-spaced and left-justified.*
4. *Don't write a poem about how you're having a hard time writing a poem.*
5. *Don't write a poem about a dream you had.*
6. *Avoid anything, including profanity, done for shock value.*
7. *Avoid cliché. If you've heard a phrase before, probably don't use it!*
8. *Avoid abstraction. If it's difficult to visualize, probably don't use it!*
9. *Avoid archaic words and sentence structures.*

Readings

Every week, I'll assign poems from the anthology (*The Zoo of the New*) and one of the collections (*The Hurting Kind* or *Crisis Actor*). Other readings—additional poems and a few essays—will be distributed as PDFs through Canvas or handed out in class. I expect you to come to class having read and annotated all assigned poems, and in class, I expect you to demonstrate your reading by actively participating in discussions.

Workshop Notes

I expect you to mark up your classmates' poems with suggestions, observations, and questions. This means (1) giving line notes, comments specific to particular bits of the poem (noting, for instance, a point at which you got confused, a vague abstraction, a cliché, a particularly beautiful image, etc.), and (2) writing your overall thoughts on the poem in a shortish (2-5 sentences) end comment. Everyone gets feedback from everyone else. Notes are due in workshop and are given to the poem's author.

Open Letters

These are letters written to your classmates. Topics will vary by assignment, but these should be at least 500 words long, with casual tone. Open letters may be exchanged in class on the day they are due (and are always to be submitted to Canvas), and may serve as the basis for small-group and class-wide discussions.

Close Readings

Pick a poem to analyze in ~500 words. Discuss the author's stylistic and formal choices, and provide not just an interpretation of the poem's meanings, but an analysis of how it is constructed. Keep in mind, the point of this assignment is not to summarize the poem or state the obvious—it is to prove to me that you have read and considered it with care.

Presentations

Every week, one (or two) of you will present your reading of a poem to the class. Presentations must involve (1) reciting the poem, (2) a brief biography of the poet (to help your classmates contextualize what they've just heard you read), and (3) a close-reading analysis.

Essays

Topics may vary; I'll offer a few different prompts, and if there's anything specific that you're aching to write about, I encourage you to propose your own. The idea here is not to churn out a formulaic five paragraphs—I want you to write in a spirit of earnest, questioning exploration. The tone should be somewhat formal (no second-person, puns or jokes only when extremely funny, etc.), and most importantly, the ideas should be organized and clearly articulated.

Portfolio

This is the “final.” You'll pick five of your ten poems to substantively revise, and turn in your revisions alongside copies of the originals, along with a 200-400-word artist's statement clarifying your intentions and aspirations for the poems.

Extra Credit

For up to 20 points of extra credit, you can memorize and recite a poem with a minimum of 14 lines (where lines are at least eight syllables). One point of EC per line, capped at 20. EC recitations will take place during the last two classes of the semester.

Points Distribution

If you (1) attend class, (2) regularly participate, demonstrating your reading, and (3) complete the assignments with thought and diligence, you can expect an “A.”

If you (1) attend class, (2) occasionally participate, and (3) adequately complete the assignments, you can expect a “B.”

If you (1) skip classes, (2) rarely participate, and (3) merely complete the assignments, you can expect a “C.”

If you (1) skip many classes, (2) rarely participate, and (3) sloppily complete or do not complete the assignments, you can expect a failing grade.

On all assignments, students are graded individually and holistically. If, for instance, English is your second language, or you have less experience with the rules of English grammar, I may grade your writing mechanics with an eye to improvement rather than technical precision.

Assignment	Minimum Word Count	Points
Poems (x10)	N/A	25 (x10)
Workshop Notes and Participation (x10)	N/A	10 (x10)
Open Letters (x2)	500	50 (x2)
Close Readings (x5)	500	50 (x5)
Essays (x2)	1,250	100 (x2)
Portfolio	N/A	100
Totals:	6,000	1,000

Course Policies

1. No electronics. Take notes by hand; don't use your phone. If this restriction poses an accessibility issue for you, let me know and we can make arrangements. Otherwise, no laptops, no eBooks.
2. Participation is key, both to your grade and to the success of our class. This means you should come ready to share your thoughts on readings, be attentive during lectures, and provide considerate feedback on one another's poetry.
3. All submitted work must be your own. If you plagiarize your work or use AI¹ to compose it, you will not receive a good grade. (And yes, I can tell if a poem comes from ChatGPT.) If you turn in AI-written or AI-assisted work, your grade is immediately capped at a C (75%). If you do it a second time, your grade is capped at an F (50%).
4. You must attend class. We're a small(ish) group, and we meet only once a week – if you aren't here, the rest of us will suffer! You get one free unexcused absence, no questions asked – any additional unexcused absences result in a 6.25% (1/16) deduction to your final grade per absence (so, one additional unexcused absence brings you from a low A- to a B, etc.). If you miss class, whether or not it is excused, it is your responsibility to figure out what you missed.
5. Late work is not accepted. At least, if it's a poem for workshop, notes on a classmate's poem, or an Open Letter. These need to be turned in for the class to run smoothly. If you are facing an emergency and need more time for an assignment, let me know.

¹ In a class like this, I believe the issue posed by LLMs is essentially one of grade inflation; if you ask ChatGPT or other tools to analyze a well-known poem, it is usually very capable of churning out a sort of C-level paper—one that is, sure, grammatical and organized, but merely restates all the most obvious and oft-repeated things there are to say, and which offers no sense of an original, human perspective. Which should be the point. (And if you ask it to analyze a poem that isn't famous, about which it has nothing to parrot, whatever it produces is likely to be either obvious or false.) Remember: the close reading and essay assignments exist so you can prove to me that you have put effort into reading and thinking about poetry. An "A" paper is one that ChatGPT could not produce.

6. Be kind. Sharing poetry with others is an intimate thing. Be conscious of this fact, and conduct yourself with sensitivity and tact. Criticism is the point of workshop (no suggestions, nothing accomplished), but it should be specific and constructive. Try to mention a strength of the poem before you say anything else.

Schedule

Date	Agenda	Homework
Week 1 Aug. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions / How to Read Poetry 	
Week 2 Aug. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Tools of Poetry • History of Poetry • Exchange OLs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OL #1 Due • Read Handout #1
Week 3 Sep. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetic Form • Discuss Handout #1 • Mini-Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • Bring 4x Copies of Poem #0
Week 4 Sep. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images and Logic • Discuss Limon & Ant. Poems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • CR #1 Due
Week 5 Sep. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor and Simile • Discuss Limon & Ant. Poems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • Submit Poem 1
Week 6 Sep. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounding Good: Kinds of Rhyme • Discuss Limon & Ant. Poems • Workshop #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • Submit Poem 2 • CR #2 Due
Week 7 Oct. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meter • Discuss Limon & Ant. Poems • Workshop #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 3 • Read
Week 8 Oct. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Ryan & Ant. Poems • Workshop #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 4 • Read
Week 9 Oct. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Ryan & Ant. Poems • Workshop #4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 5 • CR #3 Due • Read
Week 10 Oct. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Ryan & Ant. Poems • Workshop #5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 6 • Essay #1 Due • Read
Week 11 Oct. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Ryan & Ant. Poems • Workshop #6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 7 • CR #4 Due • Read
Week 12 Nov. 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Misc. & Ant. Poems • Workshop #7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 8 • Read
Week 13 Nov. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Misc. & Ant. Poems • Workshop #8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 9 • CR #5 Due • Read

Week 14 Nov. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Revision • Discuss Ryan, Limon, & Ant. Poems • Workshop #9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OL #2 Due • Read
Week 15 Nov. 28	NO CLASS: Holiday	
Week 16 Dec. 5	NO CLASS: Reading Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay #2 Due • Read Anyways

Your final Portfolio is due on December 11, or whenever we decide is a better date.

Grading Scale

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59

For information on UF Grading policies, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

General Education Designation: Composition (C)

Communication courses afford students the ability to communicate effectively, including the ability to write clearly and engage in public speaking. Composition (C) is a sub-designation of Communication at the University of Florida. Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive, require multiple drafts submitted to the instructor for feedback prior to final submission, and fulfill 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement. Course content must include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students are expected learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

University Policies and Resources

Attendance policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Students requiring accommodation

Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting

<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF course evaluation process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at

<https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at

<https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

University of Florida students are bound by the Honor Pledge. On all work submitted for credit by a student, the following pledge is required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Student Honor Code and Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code, as well as the process for reported allegations and sanctions that may be implemented. All potential violations of the code will be reported to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. If a student is found responsible for an Honor Code violation in this course, the instructor will enter a Grade Adjustment sanction which may be up to or including failure of the course. For additional information, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

In-class recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party-note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Procedure for conflict resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Carla Blount (cblount@ufl.edu). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).

Resources available to students

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- University Police Department: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

- GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call [352-273-4450](tel:352-273-4450).

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at [352-392-4357](tel:352-392-4357) or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, [352-392-1601](tel:352-392-1601). Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call [866-281-6309](tel:866-281-6309) or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, Call [352-392-2010](tel:352-392-2010), or to make a private appointment: [352-392-6420](tel:352-392-6420). Email contact: teaching-center@ufl.edu. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, [352-846-1138](tel:352-846-1138) | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information](#).
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information](#)