CRW 1301: Beginning Poetry Writing

SECTION & CLASS: Section 1653, Class #11987

SEMESTER: Fall 2023

MEETING TIME: Thursdays 9–11 (4:05–7:05pm)

LOCATION: FLI 0121

INSTRUCTOR: Taylor Johnson EMAIL: taylorjohnson1@ufl.edu

OFFICE: Turlington 4343

OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays 2–4pm

"The impact of poetry is so hard and direct that for the moment there is no other sensation except that of the poem itself. What profound depths we visit then—how sudden and complete is our immersion! There is nothing here to catch hold of; nothing to stay us in our flight...The poet is always our contemporary. Our being for the moment is centered and constricted, as in any violent shock of personal emotion."

-Virginia Woolf, How One Should Read a Book

"At its best, the sensation of writing is that of any unmerited grace. It is handed to you, but only if you look for it."

—Annie Dillard, The Writing Life

The poem of the mind in the act of finding What will suffice.

—T.S. Eliot, "Of Modern Poetry"

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is focused on the reading, writing, and revision of poetry. The daily work of our class will consist of close readings, discussions, class exercises, and workshopping, all in the service of understanding the ways in which poems (a form that shows not only the result of thought but also the *process* of thought) can work—their particular magic. One major difference between this class and a literature course is that our work will focus on reading *as writers*, not only as critics and students of literature. This means that we will use poems and essays to help us better understand the practice of our craft, and we will pay special attention to *how* each poem utilizes poetic devices and forms in order to spark an event or experience for readers.

Throughout the semester, you will practice writing poems, as well as give critique to and receive suggestions from your classmates and instructor through workshops. By the end of this course, you will have a considerable foundation in the vocabulary of poetic devices and forms, and you will be able to read and talk about poetry in an academic setting. You'll be able to conduct yourselves as productive members of a creative writing workshop and demonstrate a sincere attempt to develop an independent writing practice. At the end of the semester, you will produce a final portfolio of revised work accompanied by an artist's statement.

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, clarity, coherence, and organization), 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 will include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes, and contexts. Students will 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 the 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 are required, and I highly recommend purchasing used copies of books to save money. These selections will be supplemented by additional poems posted on Canvas. Amazon is a good resource for discounted books, as are Thriftbooks.com, Abe Books, and Bookshop.org. You may also choose to support local bookstores like Book Gallery West and Third House Books. Keep in mind also that both Library West and the Alachua County Library System have options for curbside pick-up.

The Poet's Companion – Addonizio and Laux
The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry – McClatchy, 2nd ed.
The Tulip-Flame – Chloe Honum
The Last Visit – Chad Abushanab

ASSESSMENT

Assignment	Word Count	Points Available
Participation & Attendance	-	200
Close Readings	500 (x4)	100
Critical Analysis	1000 (x2)	200
Poet Study	1000	100
Discussion Leading	-	50
Workshop Poems	-	15 (x8)
Recitation	-	30
Final Portfolio	1000	200
Total	6000	1000

Note: For this course, your grade is based not solely on numerical assessments of your work, but also on your contributions to our shared experience as a class. As I see it, traditional grading systems have two main issues in a writing class like this one. First, students in these classes are often more concerned with their grades than with the quality of their writing, reading, and learning—which puts me, as instructor, in the place of an adversary rather than a collaborator. Second, these students may hesitate to take risks with their writing and thinking, despite the fact that risks and failures are necessary for growth. My goal in our assessment model is to provide you with the opportunity to experiment, so long as you complete everything required.

DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF ASSIGNMENTS & COURSEWORK

Participation & Attendance

To succeed in this course (and in this field), you must be willing to become an active member in the community. In this course, your active participation will take the following forms:

- Contributing to **class discussions** at least once per class.
- Performing every in-class and take-home writing activity with serious, thoughtful effort.
- Commenting on your peers' work in verbal and written forms. (More information regarding verbal and written comments can be found under "Workshop Poems.")
- **Completing the readings.** Important note: Reading quizzes may be implemented as a portion of your participation grade at any time.

If you have an unexcused absence and miss in-class participation activities, I cannot offer makeup credit for the activities you miss.

Close Readings

You will complete **4 Close Readings** of 4 different poems over the course of the semester (see schedule for dates). These should be at least 500 words in length. In these, you are expected to engage as a critic and an artist with a recent (i.e., since the prior Close Reading assignment) assigned reading, and explain precisely *how* you feel a piece is working. Close Readings should be written without referring to outside critical sources: while such engagement is also very important, the purpose of these responses is not for you to find a "correct" outside interpretation of the piece, but

to show me how *you* attend to and read it. Close Readings cannot be written over a poem previously discussed in class. Examples and further instruction will be provided in class.

Critical Analysis

Students will write two Critical Analysis papers that analyze aspects of two or more poems. These papers are intended to incorporate criticism, terminology from the textbook, and personal observations. Include evidence from the text to support your ideas and arguments. The response should be rigorous.

The entries will be evaluated based on the following criteria: 1) demonstrated reading of the works, 2) critical thinking, 3) depth of analysis, 4) use of textual evidence, and 5) engagement with the discussion of craft. Your analytical and critical skills are expected to improve over the course of the semester. "I" statements are allowed but should be used sparingly. You may include quotes from the poems or from the textbook, but the quoted material may not exceed 10% of the word count. The Critical Analysis may be written in MLA or Chicago format. The word count for each Critical Analysis is 1000 words.

Poet Study

Choose a poet whose work you're interested in and write a brief essay considering some shared elements in 3-5 of their poems. 1,000 words.

Discussion Leading

You will lead a fifteen-minute class discussion once during the semester based on a poem you've chosen.

Workshop Poems

Workshopping one another's work together as a class will be a key portion of this course. Your approach to workshop should be constructive and professional. Our workshop is a **community**; the shared goal is for you and your fellow workshop participants to become better writers. In order for this to happen effectively, you need to combine respect for the writer with thoughtful, serious, and insightful criticism about each piece. Our workshop is also a **contract**. You will be exchanging rough drafts with each other, and it is crucial that you extend trust to your fellow workshop members as they extend trust to you. Respect your classmates' privacy; be careful and responsible with each other's work. You should be kind, not conflate the poem with the person who wrote it, and keep your critiques focused on craft, not on the person.

At all levels of discussion, comments need to be well-qualified, offering explanation or evidence from the text for assertions, without sliding into jargon. A workshop should not be a poll, so it isn't OK to say things like "I loved this line / section" or "This doesn't work for me" without further elaboration. Finally, the aim of workshop is to make the piece more fully and effectively *itself*. Your job is to **meet each piece where it lives**, rather than trying to make it into something else.

Every member of this class will be **workshopped at least 2 times** over the course of the semester based on the schedule we determine in the first week of class. You will be required to **write a total**

of 8 poems. These poems will be submitted as a single-spaced, left-aligned, 12pt serif font document. Additionally, each poem will include a title, as well as your name and poem assignment number in the top left corner of the page. Poems must employ correct spelling and grammar and be written in complete sentences.

Furthermore, poems should be submitted on time and should adhere to the given prompt. 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. Each poem will be turned in via hard copy in class and in Canvas.

Recitation

Memorizing poems is an ideal way to get inside elements such as rhythm, meter, voice, and rhyme. You will recite a memorized poem during class. The poem will be at least 14 lines long. If not chosen from assigned material, the poem must be approved by me. Your recitation will be graded on fluency of delivery and embodiment of the material in question.

Final Portfolio & Artist Statement

This assignment will be the culmination of our work together this semester. The **Final Portfolio** should include a cover page, all 8 of your original drafts with my comments, and 5 extensively revised poems. These revisions should not simply consist of line edits and minor fixes. (In all likelihood, your final drafts will bear little resemblance to your first drafts.) Upon submission, it should be clear that you took into account 1) my feedback, 2) your peers' feedback, and 3) the craft techniques we studied over the course of the semester. In addition, you will submit a 1000-word **Artist Statement** that discusses your views of poetry, who/what influences your writing, what styles of writing you're interested in, what creative vision you have for your work, what creative risks you took with revision and why, and so on.

COURSE POLICIES

- 1. Assignments: You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
- 2. Attendance: Given that we meet only once a week, you are allowed **one** absence without explanation or excuse (though prior notice would be greatly appreciated given the nature of the course). Subsequent unexplained or unexcused absences will affect your grade. **If you have more than 2 absences, you cannot pass the course.**
 - Excused absences, such as athletic events, theater commitments, illnesses, family emergencies, etc. require appropriate documentation AND advance notice given to me. You will be responsible for meeting with me outside of class to make a plan for completing work missed due to absences. You will also be responsible for turning in any assignments regardless of whether you are in class or not. For UF's official attendance policy, you can visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/
- 3. *Tardiness:* Be on time to show respect to your colleagues and me. Should lateness be unavoidable, understand that 3 late arrivals without advance notice = 1 absence.

4. *Classroom Behavior*: Please 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.

You are also responsible for keeping up with your UF email, as this is how I will contact you outside of class. Feel free to reach out to me via Canvas messaging anytime—I'll try to respond within 24 hours on business days.

No use of phones or laptops during class, unless I specifically instruct you to use your laptops for in-class work.

- 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/about/title-ix-rights/
- 6. Paper Format & Submission: All assignments should be typed in a readable, 12 pt. font with standard 1 in. margins. All assignments except poems should be double-spaced. (Poems should be single-spaced.) Submit all poems, whether to me or for workshop, on paper in class AND on Canvas. If your poem is due for workshop, you will be responsible for bringing the specified number of copies. Submit all other assignments (Critical Analyses, Close Readings, etc.) 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 key.
- 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 (https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/) 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.

- 10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, https://disability.ufl.edu/), 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 https://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 at (352) 392-1575. You can also contact them online at 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 on campus.

- 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 in the Department office (4008 TUR). 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
- 15. *Writing Studio*. At any point in the course, feel free to utilize the Writing Studio. Students at all levels and in every discipline are welcome. They are located in 2215 Turlington Hall. To schedule an appointment, visit their website: www.writing.efl.edu

GRADING SCALE AND GENERAL RUBRIC

A	A-	B+	В	В-	C+	С	C-	D+	D	D-	Е
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

"A"- A paper at this level is truly high quality. It demonstrates a clear understanding of critical concepts, creatively addresses the subject matter, and exceeds the expectations of critical analysis. A paper with this grade will be free of grammatical errors.

- "B"- A paper with this grade has met the standards of the assignment at a high level. This assignment may need revision but is organized in a logical way and avoids fallacies or mistakes in critical analysis. A paper with this grade may contain grammatical errors but will be readable.
- "C"- A paper that earns a "C" has done everything that was required, but no more. This assignment may require significant revision to more thoroughly examine critical elements or may need reorganization. A paper with this grade will generally contain a few grammatical errors but will still be readable.
- "D"- This paper does not adequately fulfill the assignment to a satisfactory degree. One portion of an assignment may be missing or there may be a misused critical element. Papers with this grade tend to be disorganized and contain many grammatical errors.
- "E"- This paper does not address the assignment prompt or is unreadable/incomplete.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note:

- This schedule will likely change as we progress through the semester. Updates will be posted on Canvas and announced in class.
- Additional work and reading may be assigned in class that is not detailed on the calendar. It is your responsibility to ask a classmate about missed assignments if you are absent.
- Readings and assignments are listed on the day they're due.
- All poem assignments are due by 4:05 p.m. via Canvas & paper.
- Readings must be read thoroughly—not skimmed—by class time.
- Addonizio and Laux's *The Poet's Companion*, one of our required texts, is referred throughout as *PC*.

Week 1 (Aug. 23-25)

Read	PC: "Introduction," pp. 11–18
Class	Introductions, syllabus, first day survey, discuss reading & workshop schedule,
	workshop & discussion leading sign-up
Assignments	

Week 2 (Aug. 28-Sep. 1)

Read	PC: "Images," pp. 85–93; "The Family: Inspiration and Obstacle," pp. 30–38
	The Tulip-Flame: "Spring," p. 7; "Ballerina in Winter," p. 8; "Visiting Hours," p.
	11; "Assembling Faith," p. 13
Class	Reading, attention, annotation practices; what is a poem?, patience, close
	reading
Assignments	Close Reading #1 by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 3 (Sep. 4–8)

Read	PC: "Simile and Metaphor," pp. 94–103
	Anthology: "The Bight," p. 22; "Cuttings," p. 40; "For an Album," p. 358
	The Tulip-Flame: "Thirteen," p. 17; "Ballerina at Dawn," p. 21; The Tulip-Flame," p. 24
Class	Abstract vs. concrete language (i.e., "showing" vs. "telling"), the image,
	metaphor, associative movement, narrative
Assignments	

Week 4 (Sep. 11–15)

Read	PC: "The Music of the Line," pp. 104–114; "Meter, Rhyme, and Form," pp. 138–150
	Anthology: "Strawberrying," p. 100; "Willowware Cup," p. 248; "Ode to the Maggot," p. 538; "The Paperweight," p. 571
	The Last Visit: "Cheating in a Small Town," p. 19; "Necessary Rituals," p. 41; "The Last Visit," p. 47
Class	The line: form, structure, and syntax; introduce metrical terminology
Assignments	Close Reading #2 by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 5 (Sep. 18-22)

Read	PC: "The Shadow," pp. 56–63
	Anthology: "At the Fishhouses," p. 25; "The City Limits," p. 272; "Morning Song," p. 370; "Whelks," p. 414; "Mock Orange," p. 508; "Pillow," p. 584
Class	Symbols, sounds, and resonance; discussion leaders 1 & 2
Assignments	Poem #1

Week 6 (Sep. 25-29)

Read	PC: "Voice and Style," pp. 115–128
	Anthology: "Wanting to Die," p. 308; "You Can Have It," p. 314; "Lady Lazarus," p. 376; "Keeping Things Whole," p. 381; "When Death Comes," p. 413

	The Tulip-Flame: "Bright Death," p. 46; "Last of the Ballerina I Was," p. 47
	The Last Visit: "Confession: Sylvia's Quarry," p. 13
Class	Voice and strangeness; persona poems and dramatic monologues; discussion
	leaders 3 & 4
Assignments	Poem #2; Close Reading #3 by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 7 (Oct. 2-6)

Read	PC: "Witnessing," pp. 64–73
	Anthology: "And Ut Pictura Poesis Is Her Name," pp. 281–82; "Palais des Arts," 507; "Signs," p. 572
	The Tulip-Flame: "Seated Dancer in Profile," p. 12; "Danse des Petits Cygnes," p. 18
	See folder in Canvas: "Ekphrastic Poems"
Class	Ekphrastic poems; ars poetica; workshop mechanics, expectations, and
	commenting; discussion leaders 5 & 6
Assignments	Poem #3

Week 8 (Oct. 9–13)

Read	PC: "Death and Grief," pp. 39–45
	Anthology: "The Hospital Window," 156; "Variations on a Text by Vallejo," p. 201; "The Day Lady Died," p. 208; "The Truth the Dead Know," p. 306
	The Tulip-Flame: "Alone with Mother," p. 19; "Leaving the Hospital," p. 23
	The Last Visit: "Visiting My Own Grave," p. 30; "Small Funeral," p. 36; "Desert Elegy," p. 37
Class	Elegy; discussion leaders 7 & 8; workshop Poem #3
Assignments	Poem #4; Critical Analysis #1 due by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 9 (Oct. 16-20)

Read	PC: "Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments," pp. 129–137
	Anthology: "My Sad Self," p. 231; "A Renewal," p. 244; "The River of Bees," p. 257; "Clear Night," p. 393; "Meditation at Lagunitas," p. 463; "Beach Glass," p.
	467; "From 20,000 Feet," p. 541

Class	The "engine of thought" in poems; meditations and assertions; discussion
	leaders 9 & 10; workshop Poem #4
Assignments	Poem #5

Week 10 (Oct. 23-27)

Read	PC: "More Repetition: Villanelle, Pantoum, Sestina," pp. 161–170
	Anthology: "One Art," p. 37; "The Waking," p. 44
	The Last Visit: "Custody Denied," p. 27
	See folder in Canvas: "Repeating Forms"
Class	Villanelle & sestina; discussion leaders 11 & 12; workshop Poem #5
Assignments	Poem #6; Close Reading #6 due by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 11 (Oct. 30-Nov. 3)

Read	PC: "Writing and Knowing," pp. 19–29
	Anthology: "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," pp. 23; "Learning the Trees," p. 121; "Paired Things," p. 530; "Supernatural Love," p. 572
	The Last Visit: "Negatives Under a Microscope," p. 5; "Toward Your
	Understanding," p. 11; "Hometown Knowledge," p. 45
Class	Integrating allusion, research, and outside sources within poems; discussion
	leaders 13 & 14; workshop Poem #6
Assignments	Poem #7

Week 12 (Nov. 6-10)

Read	PC: "Poetry of Place," pp. 74–84
	Anthology: "Filling Station," p. 33; "A Hill," p. 162; "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," p. 290; "San Sepolcro," p. 550
	The Tulip-Flame: "June in Arkansas," p. 42; "January in West Texas," p. 48
	The Last Visit: "Poem Begun in a West Texas Corn Maze," p. 23; "On the Dred
	Ranch Road Just Off 283," p. 44
Class	Place-based poems; the senses; discussion leaders 15 & 16; workshop Poem #7
Assignments	Poem #8

Week 13 (Nov. 13-17)

Read	PC: "Writing the Erotic," pp. 46–54
	Anthology: "The Shampoo," p. 28; "Cracked Looking Glass," p. 94; "The Illiterate," p. 111; "Movement Song," p. 403; "Misery and Splendor," p. 465; "Eros," p. 508
	The Last Visit: "Love Poem with Five Lines Stolen from VHS Boxes," p. 32; "Love Poem with Desert and Stars," p. 43
Class	Love poems; introduce Poet Study assignment; discussion leaders 17 & 18;
	workshop Poem #8
Assignments	Critical Analysis #2 due by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 14 (Nov. 20–24)

No class. Thanksgiving Break.

Week 15 (Nov. 27-Dec. 1)

Read	PC: "The Energy of Revision," pp. 186–194
	The Tulip-Flame: "Spring," p. 7; "Spring II," p. 25; "Ballerina in Winter," p. 8; "Ballerina at Dawn," p. 21; "Ballerina, Released," p. 27; "Last of the Ballerina I was," p. 47
Class	Poems as series; Intro to Final Portfolio and Statement; revision practices;
	author visit via Zoom from Chad Abushanab (?)
Assignments	Poet Study due by 11:59pm via Canvas

Week 16 (Dec. 4-Dec. 8)

Read	PC: "Self-Doubt," pp. 195–198; "Writer's Block," pp. 199–203; "Getting
	Published," pp. 217–224
Class	The writing life, writing practices, discussion of and crash course in publication
Assignments	Recitation (in class)

^{*}Final Portfolio Due: December 14th by 10:00am via Canvas