CRW 1301: Beginning Poetry Writing
(Section 398E, Class #12141)
University of Florida / Fall 2022

Instructor: Matt Vekakis (mvekakis@ufl.edu)
Course Meeting Time & Location: Thursdays, Period 9-11 (**4:05 PM - 7:05 PM**); ARCH 0215
Office Location & Hours: Thursdays, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM in Turlington Hall Rm. 4317

Course Description

A hearty welcome to you all! Whether you are here to better understand verse, to workshop, to read poetry, or to hone your own poetic craft—I am delighted you have chosen to take Beginning Poetry Writing with me. We will chart a passage this semester with our course texts: starting with an excellent "textbook" on craft: *Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseau, Hadara Bar-Nadav, and Robert Wallace. We will read two collections of poetry: Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* and Martín Espada's *Floaters*. We will write quite a bit, too—creatively and critically—all in service of navigating the magnificent world of verse.

COVID Statement

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones:

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.uf for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

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:
    - ○ <u>Content</u>: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
    - ○ <u>Communication</u>: 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.
    - ○ <u>Critical Thinking</u>: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts

- *Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseu, Hadara Bar-Nadav & Robert Wallace; 8th Edition*
- *Monument: Poems New and Selected* by Natasha Trethewey
- *Floaters: Poems* by Martín Espada

Recommended Texts

- *Oxford English Dictionary* (Paperback)

Assignments

Assignment	Word Count	Points Available
Close Readings	500 (x4)	200
Critical Analysis	1250 (x2)	400
Original Poem Drafts	--	15 (x8)
Final Portfolio	1000 + 500	200
Participation + Attendance	--	80
	6000 TOTAL	**1000 TOTAL**

<u>Assignment & Grading Breakdown</u>

- Close Reading #1 (500-words; on one Trethewey poem of your choice)
- Close Reading #2 (500-words; on one Trethewey poem of your choice)
- Close Reading #3 (500-words; on one Espada poem of your choice)
- Close Reading #4 (500-words; on one Espada poem of your choice)

*These assignments will require you to examine a poem carefully and deliberately. The aim is not mere summary; instead, you should advance an argument about what a poem does and how/why it does it - utilizing the conventions of poetry we've studied up to that point.

- Critical Analysis #1 (1250-words; on the Trethewey collection in its entirety)
- Critical Analysis #2 (1250-words; on the Espada collection in its entirety)

*Each Critical Analysis will give you space to explore the poetry collections we read during this course. While you'll still employ your close-reading abilities, Analyses should attend to and critique the ways in which poems across a collection interact, or the ways in which a given technique, formal element, motif, symbol, etc. manifests in and affects the collection. In short, you'll use close analysis of poems and parts of poems to say something broader about the collection at hand (your analysis should amount to something much more rigorous than "I really like this book," or "This book flows nicely"). In these analyses, you must use evidence from the text to support your arguments, but quotations should not exceed 10% of a paper's total word count. It will be impossible, of course, for you to discuss a collection's every poem in your response—it wouldn't be useful to attempt such a feat, either. On the contrary, you'll want to limit your argument to the most relevant poems.

- Final Portfolio (including a 1000-word Artist's Statement and 500-word Revision Reflection):

*With the aid of the feedback your peers and I will have offered on your poems, you'll revise four of them, and assemble them in an order that makes sense to you, as though you were putting together a mini-chapbook; each poem should interact meaningfully with those before and after, perhaps even coming together to present a shared theme or story. With each revised draft, you must include the original draft with my comments. The frontmatter of the portfolio will include a 500-word Artist's Statement, in which you'll call upon what you've learned from our readings and in class to describe the scope and purpose of your poetry, and the context in which it can be understood. It will also include a 500-word Revision Reflection, which will examine the ways in which your poetry and poetics have evolved through revision, incorporating evidence from your work and from the annotations thereon.

- Original Poem Drafts #1 - 8

*These poems will be responses to a prompt given in class. Ideally, the prompts will help you to fend off writer's block, but their main purpose will be to provide you with constraints that compel you to think outside the box and make innovative choices. When you revise these poems, you may choose whether or not to do away with the constraints of the prompt. Please make sure your poems include a title, along with your name and the assignment number. Poems must employ correct spelling and grammar, and be written in complete sentences. Additionally, you should strive to avoid fantasy, reliance on cliché, rhyme that feels forced, abundances of abstract concepts not rooted in the physical world, and attempts at sounding wise. Each poem's grade will depend on its earnest exploration, deliberate construction, grammatical polish, and adherence to the prompt, but not on its success or failure as a first draft.

- Participation, etc.:

*Class Discussion: Your frequent and insightful contributions to the conversations we have in class will contribute to your participation grade. In order to make such contributions, you'll have to complete the required readings for each week (it helps to take notes!) and come to class prepared and eager to engage. This class will be discussion-driven, so you must do your part to help us learn as a community.

*Workshop: The golden rule here is to critique as you'd like to be critiqued. Read each poem up for workshop carefully, at least twice, before you come to class, and leave at least 4-5 annotative comments/questions on the poem (you're encouraged to hand your annotated copy to whomever wrote it after workshop ends). Focus on the poem and what it's doing on the page or what it could do in the next draft. In nearly every case, your focus should be on the speaker of the poem rather than the poet. Try your best to further the discussion at hand whenever possible, and always make honest, constructive, and respectful feedback your goal. Your fellow poets depend on this, as does your participation grade.

Course Policies

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1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

2. *Attendance:* Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. **You will fail this course if you accrue more than two unexcused absences.**

For further information regarding university policies on absences:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies

3. *Tardiness:* **3 tardies = 1 unexcused absence.** We only meet once a week. Plan accordingly!

4. *Classroom Behavior & Etiquette:* Please be respectful and attentive to your colleagues and to me when we are talking, whether during class discussion or 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—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.

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

5. *UF's policy on 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:* 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:* Late assignments will only be accepted if student provides at least 24 hours advance notice of assignment deadline.

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.

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.

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 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/

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, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact 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://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/.

Grading Scale and General Rubric

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

"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

*Note: This schedule is subject to change; I will give you at least one week's advance notice of any changes to this schedule.

Week 1 (8/25)

What we'll cover in class: Introductions / Ice Breakers / Syllabus / Cavafy
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 1 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 1-19)
- o Read from Part I of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Domestic Work*)

Week 2 (9/1)

What we'll cover in class: Diction / Syntax / Clarity / Cliché
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 2 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 23-40)
- o Read from Part I of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Domestic Work*)

Week 3 (9/8)

What we'll cover in class: Line Breaks / Enjambment / Poetic Forms / Balance
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapters 3 & 4 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 41-76)
- o Read from Part II of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Bellocq's Ophelia*)
- o Write Close Reading #1 on Trethewey (due 9/14 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 4 (9/15)

What we'll cover in class: Meter or Free Verse? / Stresses / Line Length / Syllabics
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 5 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 77-94)
- o Read from Part III of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Native Guard*)

Week 5 (9/22)

What we'll cover in class: Repetition / Alliteration & Assonance / Rhyme / Onomatopoeia
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 6 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 97-116)
- o Read from Part III of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Native Guard*)
- o Write Close Reading #2 on Trethewey (due 9/28 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 6 (9/29)

What we'll cover in class: Subjects and Objects / Memory / Imagery / Resonant Detail
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 7 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 117-136)
- o Read from Part III of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Native Guard*)

Week 7 (10/6)

What we'll cover in class: Metaphor / Figurative Language
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Chapter 8 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 137-157)
- o Read from Part V of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Thrall*)
- o Write Poem #1 (due 10/12 @ 11:59 PM)
- o Write Critical Analysis #1 on Trethewey (due 10/19 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 8 (10/13)

What we'll cover in class: Speaker / Pacing & Tense / Tone / WORKSHOP #1
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read from Part VI of Natasha Trethewey's *Monument* (selections from *Articulation*)
- o Write Poem #2 (due 10/19 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 9 (10/20)

What we'll cover in class: WORKSHOP #2
What you'll do for homework:
- o Read Selections from Espada's *Floaters*
- o Write Poem #3 (due 10/26 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 10 (10/27)

What we'll cover in class: WORKSHOP #3
What you'll do for homework:
- Read Selections from Espada's *Floaters*
- Write Poem #4 (due 11/2 @ 11:59 PM)
- Write Close Reading #3 (due 11/2 @11:59 PM)

Week 11 (11/3)

What we'll cover in class: WORKSHOP #4
What you'll do for homework:
- Read Selections from Espada's *Floaters*
- Write Poem #5 (due 11/9 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 12 (11/10)

What we'll cover in class: WORKSHOP #5
What you'll do for homework:
- Read Selections from Espada's *Floaters*
- Write Poem #6 (due 11/16 @ 11:59 PM)
- Write Close Reading #4 (due 11/16 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 13 (11/17)

What we'll cover in class: WORKSHOP #6
What you'll do for homework:
- Read Chapter 11 of *Writing Poems* (pp. 201-218)
- Write Poems #7 & #8 (due 11/30 @ 11:59 PM)
- Write Critical Analysis #2 (due 11/30 @ 11:59 PM)

Week 14 (11/24)

NO CLASS; THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Week 15 (12/1)

What we'll cover in class: Exploring / Focusing / Shaping / WORKSHOP #7
What you'll do for homework:
- Revise Poems #1-8 for Final Portfolio (due 12/11 @ 11:59 PM)
- Write Portfolio Reflection (due 12/11 @ 11:59 PM)