

CRW 1301: WRITING POETRY

[Section 1653 / Spring 2026]
[Thursday, 4-7 PM / MAT 0003]

Instructor: Jonathan Wolf (he/him)

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Office Hours: [TBD], Turlington 4307 or the Plaza of the Americas or via Zoom

Great poems clothe beautiful thought in equally beautiful language. 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 speech. In this class, we'll learn to write, read, and understand poetry, stealing whatever we can along the way. Eventually, we'll use class to workshop your own original poems.

REQUIRED TEXTS

I will provide all additional readings as PDFs or printed handouts. For the Muldoon and the Schiff, I recommend finding used copies online (try bookfinder.com). You should have all required texts—physical copies, not eBooks—by week three.

Nick Laird & Don Paterson, *The Zoo of the New* (2018)

Paul Muldoon, *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002)

Robyn Schiff, *Information Desk* (2023)

OPTIONAL TEXTS

Donald Justice, *Compendium* (2017)

Lewis Turco, *The Book of Forms*, 5th Ed. (2020)

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. So, if you were scheduled for a workshop on, say, March 26, you'd hand out your poem in class on March 19. The first is due in week five (on Feb. 12), after which you'll submit one every week until the end of the semester.

Submitting your poem means (1) uploading it to Canvas and (2) handing out printed copies in class. If you're scheduled for workshop, you must bring printed copies for the entire class; if you are not scheduled for workshop, bring just one printed copy.

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, and collectively, they make up the largest portion of your grade.

Guidelines for Writing Poems in 1301:

1. *Put your name at the top of the page.*
2. *Title your poems! No "Untitled" or "Poem."*
3. *Poems should be grammatical by default.*
4. *12-point serif font (TNR is fine), single-spaced and left-justified by default.*
5. *Don't write a poem about the difficulty of writing a poem.*
6. *Don't write a poem about a dream you had.*
7. *Avoid anything, including profanity, done for shock value.*
8. *Avoid cliché. If you've heard a phrase before, probably don't use it!*
9. *Avoid abstraction. If it's difficult to visualize, probably don't use it!*
10. *Avoid archaic vocabulary and syntax. And try to have fun!*

READINGS

Every week, I'll assign poems from the anthology (*The Zoo of the New*) and one of the collections (Schiff or Muldoon). Other readings—additional poems and a few essays—will be distributed as PDFs through Canvas or handed out in person. 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 participating in discussion.

WORKSHOP NOTES

You will 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 a shortish (2-5 sentences) end-comment summarizing your overall thoughts on the poem. 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. Imagine you're an engineer or future archaeologist, examining some unearthed mechanical object. How does it work? What might it have been built for? Where does its motion come from; how does it travel? Discuss the author's stylistic and formal choices, and provide not just an interpretation of the poem's meaning, but also an analysis of how it is constructed.

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. You can use notes, but don't simply read from a page—keep it conversational, and try to provoke discussion among your classmates with surprising and well-timed questions.

ESSAYS

Topics may vary; I will 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 prompt. 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 formal (no second-person, etc.), and 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 poetry from the assigned texts. One point of EC per line, capped at 20.

POINTS DISTRIBUTION

If you (1) come to class, (2) participate, (3) read, and (4) thoughtfully complete all assignments, you can expect an “A.” 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 AI to compose it, you will not receive a good grade. If you turn in AI-written or AI-assisted work, your final 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 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, but additional unexcused absences will result in a 6.25% (1/16) deduction to your final grade per absence.
5. **Late work is not accepted by default.** 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. On other assignments (close readings, essays, poems that are not scheduled for whole-class workshop), I pretty much always grant extensions when asked.
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 Jan. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions / How to Read Poetry 	
Week 2 Jan. 22	<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 Jan. 29	<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 Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images and Logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • Submit Poem 1

Week 5 Feb. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor and Simile • Workshop #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • CR #1 Due • Submit Poem 2
Week 6 Feb. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounding Good: Kinds of Rhyme • Workshop #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read • Submit Poem 3
Week 7 Feb. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meter • Workshop #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 4 • Read • CR #2 Due
Week 8 Mar. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 5 • Read
Week 9 Mar. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 6 • CR #3 Due • Read
Week 10 Mar. 19	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Anyways
Week 11 Mar. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 7 • CR #4 Due • Read
Week 12 Apr. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 8 • Read
Week 13 Apr. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Poem 9 • CR #5 Due • Read
Week 14 Apr. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Revision • Workshop #9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OL #2 Due • Submit Poem 10 • Read
Week 15 Apr. 23	READING DAY—NO CLASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Essay Due • Read Anyways
Week 16 Apr. 30	EXAMS—NO CLASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Portfolio Due • Read Anyways

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.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.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](tel: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](tel:352-392-1111) (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call [352-733-0111](tel: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](#)