

ENGLISH 3150-004
INTERMEDIATE POETRY WORKSHOP
FALL 2021

Professor: Jehanne Dubrow
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Meeting Time: W 2:00 – 4:50 pm
Classroom: Auditorium Building 218
Office Hours: T 12:00 – 4:00 pm (Zoom)

1) COURSE DESCRIPTION –

Welcome to English 3150! By now, many of you may be familiar with the structure of creative writing classes and are on your way to becoming proficient in the practice of the workshop. This course will build upon previous training, asking that you hone your skills not only as writers but also as readers of poetry. Looking at a variety of texts, we will address important concepts such as diction, the line and line break, figurative language, image, rhyme, meter, and narrative. Throughout this class, you will focus on producing entirely brand-new poems that engage directly with the published texts we are studying.

2) REQUIRED TEXTS –

- *The Poet's Companion*, Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux
- *American Journal*, Tracy K. Smith

A Note About the Assigned Readings—Some of the required readings for ENG 3150 deal with what might be considered triggering topics such as abuse, death or dying, issues related to female health and reproduction, mental illness, self-injury, sexual assault, suicide, or violence. If you think reading any of these texts will induce in you a severely negative emotional or physical response, please exercise awareness and self-care. Of course, we will approach each text with sensitivity, empathy, and a curiosity about the ways that poetry can explore difficult subject matter without inflicting further trauma. These poems encourage us to think about how certain kinds of stories demand certain kinds of storytelling, trauma shaping the poets' language and revealing the profound relationship between form and content.

3) EVALUATIONS –

Your final grade will be calculated using these percentages:

Written Materials: 60%

- Batch A (multiple drafts of Poem #1 + revision note) = 20%
- Batch B (multiple drafts of either Poem #2 or Poem #3 + revision note) = 20%
- Batch C (multiple drafts of either Poem #4 or Poem #5 + revision note) = 20%

Class Participation: 40%

- Workshop = 15%
- Reading Discussions = 15%
- Individual Conference (deadline: by Week Eight of the semester) = 5%
- Attendance = 5%

4) GRADING SCALE –

UNT does not use pluses or minuses in its grading scale. Therefore, you can only earn one of five possible grades for somebody in this class:

- A (90.0 – 100)
- B (80.0 – 89.9)
- C (70.0 – 79.9)
- D (60.0 - 69.9)
- F (60.0 and below)

Final grades will not be rounded up.

5) WORKSHOP MATERIALS –

Workshop will function as an important element of most class sessions. At the start of the semester, I will provide a timetable so that students will know when their poetry is scheduled for workshop. You will each be put into a workshop group: A, B, or C. Everyone will have the opportunity to be workshopped five times, once for each of the five poems you will write.

Starting with second week of class, we will begin workshopping new drafts of your work.

No later than 24 hours prior to your workshop, you will be required to post a copy of your poem to the appropriate Discussions page on Canvas; your poem should be posted as a Word document attachment (**no PDFs, please**), so that everyone can easily

download the poem and print it out for class. Discussions of your poetry cannot take place *unless* everyone has received and read your work ahead of time.

When you are scheduled to be workshopped, please, come to class with prepared questions about your draft, which you will raise as part of our workshop discussion.

Unless we move to remote instruction, we will not use Canvas as a place for written critique or peer review. Instead, you should write your feedback on the printed poems to return to your classmates at the end of the discussion. Feedback includes line edits as well as a full paragraph of professional, constructive feedback that includes praise as well as useful questions for the poet. Be sure to sign your name to your comments and to approach the work respectfully and thoughtfully.

Please, note: I reserve the right to pull any submission for workshop from discussion, if I deem the draft to be unsuitable (either because of subject matter, insufficient evidence of work, or lack of compliance with the course's expectations and guidelines).

6) READING –

Reading and writing go hand in hand. Every class will be spent discussing some kind text. Always bring the assigned texts to class (these include published texts, your peers' work, and copies of your own work). Failure to perform this basic requirement will result in a lower class participation grade.

7) REVISION –

Revision is a central tenet of this course and of the writer's life in general. Editing is when the writer alters just a few words, some punctuation; it is the work of cleaning up a draft and is often the final stage in the revision process. Conversely, revision may include altering the poem's point of view, its use of figurative language, its sentence structure, even the argument the text is making. Revision is the act of *re-envisioning* the entire poem and often involves making massive, systemic changes to every line—even every word—in the draft.

When you receive feedback in workshop, the point of that feedback is to help you revise your poems. When you receive feedback from me in individual conferences, the point of that feedback is to help you revise your poems. When you submit your work for assessment, I expect to see evidence of significant revision, and the grading rubric reflects this expectation. In my experience, those students who choose not to revise their poems are also choosing not to do well in this course.

8) GENERAL DISCUSSIONS –

I understand that some of you may find public speaking difficult. Please keep in mind, however, that learning is not supposed to be an effortless process. To give you an idea of my assessment of class participation:

- If you say **almost nothing** on most days: F-level
- If you make **1 helpful contribution** on most days: D-level
- If you make **2 helpful contributions** on most days: C-level
- If you make **4 helpful contributions** on most days: B-level
- If you make **countless helpful contributions** every day: A-level

Good participation is a matter both of quantity and quality.

9) INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES –

All students are **required to have at least one individual conference with me** by Week Eight of the semester. Attending this individual conference (and coming prepared to do serious work) is worth 5% of your final grade and is the easiest grade you will earn all semester. If you do not meet with me in conference by Week Eight, **you will earn a zero for this requirement.**

I do not give feedback via email, because then there's no possibility for dialogue; conversation is an essential part of the revision process.

Whenever your poem is critiqued in workshop, please, schedule a follow-up appointment to discuss the work with me via video chat. Office hours will be held on Zoom. For the rest of the semester, the URL for office hours is:

<https://unt.zoom.us/j/94900174222>

Under the Announcements on Canvas, I have posted an announcement that contains the current office hours sign-up sheet. As you contact me with your appointment requests, I will do update that schedule. This way, you can double-check the page, if you are ever uncertain about your appointment date or time.

On the morning of your meeting, please, email me a Word document containing a draft of the poem you wish to discuss. This way, we can easily look at your work together.

10) ATTENDANCE –

Absences—It is extremely important that you show up for class. I will take attendance every day. You are permitted one absence without penalty. **Any student who misses more than 4 classes (which is equivalent to four weeks of class) will risk failure this course.** And, although I recognize that emergencies do occur, all absences beyond the first one will be considered unexcused. Please, note that any student who leaves class early—because other commitments or priorities have arisen—will be marked as absent for the day.

Attendance is 5% of your final grade. Throughout the semester, you can determine what your attendance score will be, using this information:

- Up to **1 absence**: 100 points
- **2 absences**: 80 points
- **3 absences**: 60 points
- **4 absences**: 40 points
- More than **4 absences**: 0 points

Tardies—Promptness is essential. Three tardies will equal one absence.

Sometimes, after students miss a class, they'll ask me if they have "missed anything." Professors often sigh when they hear this question. If you wonder what you might have missed, as a result of an absence, please, review the course outline in the syllabus.

11) LATE WORK –

Assignments must be uploaded to Canvas by the start of class on their due dates. Late work will be penalized. Work submitted later in the day or after class is considered overdue and will be **marked down 5 points**. An absence from class is not a justification for late work.

An assignment that is more than 5 days overdue will receive an automatic F (scored as a number grade of "0"), which will be factored into your overall grade for the semester. So, for instance, an assignment due on Wednesday at 2:00 pm. must be submitted before the following Monday at 2:00 p.m., or it will earn a "0."

It is your responsibility to keep track of deadlines and to submit assignments on time. If you begin to struggle academically, be proactive about addressing the problems. This should include meeting with me for advice and mentorship; I can help you determine

whether you've irrevocably hurt your chances of passing the course and can advise you about possible next steps to take.

12) A NOTE ABOUT TECHNOLOGY –

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Canvas. All assignments for this class are to be submitted electronically; it will be your job to make sure that work has uploaded correctly and promptly. I will not assess hard copies of any assignment. Technological difficulties will not be considered an acceptable excuse for late work.

13) CANVAS & EMAIL –

Please, get into the habit of checking Canvas and your UNT email account every day. If there are class or scheduling changes, I will post notifications on Canvas, frequently sending out messages through that site. Preparing for workshop will also require you to visit Canvas.

I provide all grades and written comments electronically. Once I have assessed an assignment, please, be sure to click the appropriate link on the Canvas gradebook, so that you can download my graded rubric and feedback on your poems. With each new assignment, I look for evidence that you have read and synthesized my previous critiques into your new work.

When you need to contact me, your first option will be email. When you email me, **please use your UNT email address**, which contains identifying information that will allow me to know *who is emailing me*.

When you email me, or any of your other professors, treat the correspondence as a professional exchange. Start the email with a polite salutation (i.e. "Dear Dr. Dubrow"). And end the email with a formal conclusion *and your name* (i.e. "Best wishes, Jane Doe"). Try to be as concrete and clear as possible, write in full sentences, be respectful, and proofread your email before hitting SEND.

I am prompt about responding to emails. But, in general, I do not answer emails from 10 P.M. to 10 A.M. Please, keep this timeframe in mind when writing to me with time-sensitive questions.

Finally, if I have cause to send you an email because I am concerned about your performance in this course, please, respond to my correspondence promptly and appropriately. Timely, clear communication is essential in such matters and can make

the difference between success and failure. And telling me that you “never check” your UNT email account is never a persuasive explanation nor a good excuse.

14) APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR –

At all times in this class, I ask for mature and respectful behavior from everyone. The following behavior is considered inappropriate:

- Sleeping in class.
- Letting your phone ring.
- Answering your phone.
- Texting, playing games on your phone, using your phone for matters unrelated to class.
- Using your computer for matters unrelated to class (i.e. social media, working on assignments for other courses, porn, etc.).
- Removing your shoes and/or socks. Removing other garments that might lead you to expose areas of skin inappropriate for a classroom setting.
- Arriving after class has begun. Leaving before class has ended.
- Leaving and returning numerous times for nonmedical reasons.
- Neglecting to bring the assigned materials. Neglecting to follow instructions. Neglecting to follow along with or to contribute to class discussions. Neglecting to participate in in-class writing prompts and other generative exercises.

UNT defines disruptive behavior as “behavior that interferes with the learning and teaching environment and/or the administrative student services function of the university.”

Failure to behave appropriately will result in a significantly lower grade for the semester. Disruptive behavior—impacting either my teaching, your peers’ learning, or the positive dynamics of the class—can cause you to fail the course.

15) ADA STATEMENT –

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA

notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

16) AND, FINALLY, A COMMENT ABOUT COMMUNITY –

The creative writing classroom is meant to be a community based on trust, respect, and a shared belief in the value of art and art-making. Such a community is the result of hard work, empathy, thoughtfulness, generosity, but also rigor. Ideally, it is a place where people feel comfortable sharing new, unpolished work. We must all strive to make this a supportive space, where everyone feels physically safe, a place where everyone is encouraged to be intellectually and emotionally brave.

PLEASE NOTE:

This syllabus is subject to change.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One (8/25) *Get Started*

- Introduction of Syllabus, Handouts, and Workshop schedule.
 - Read in Class: Kumunyakaa's "Facing It"
 - In-Class Exercise: Ekphrastic Poetry...Describing a Work of Art.
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Week Two (9/1): *What You Know, Poem #1*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Writing and Knowing."
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing Your Area of Expertise.
 - Workshop: Poem #1 (Group A).
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Week Three (9/8): *Family Secrets, Poem #1*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "The Family: Inspiration and Obstacle."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Beatty's "Sister as Moving Object" (pp. 32-34), Diaz's "My Brother at 3 A.M." (pp. 42-43).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Family Member Through an Inanimate Object.
 - Workshop: Poem #1 (Group B).
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Week Four (9/15): *The Art of Losing, Poem #1*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Death and Grief."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Trethewey's "Elegy" (pp. 83-84), Phillips's "Mercy" (pp. 96-97).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Letter to the Dead.
 - Workshop: Poem #1 (Group C).
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Week Five (9/22): *Netflix & Poem*, Poem #2

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Writing the Erotic."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Sealey's "Object Permanence" (p. 85), Hayes's "At Pegasus" (pp. 100-102).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing What's Erotic.
 - HW Due: Upload Batch A to Canvas by Wednesday at 2:00 p.m.
 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group A).
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Week Six (9/29): *Second Self*, Poem #2

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "The Shadow."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Girmay's "Second Estrangement" (p. 9), Scafidi's "For the Last American Buffalo" (p. 107).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing Shame.
 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group B).
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Week Seven (10/6): *Everything Is Political*, Poem #2

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Witnessing."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Chang's "Story of Girls" (pp. 59-60), Kaminsky's "We Lived Happily During the War" (p. 67).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing Your Community.
 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group C).
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Week Eight (10/13): *No Place Like Home*, Poem #3

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Poetry of Place."
- Read for Class: *American Journal*, De le Paz's "In Defense of Small Towns" (pp. 10-11), Range's "Flat as a Flitter" (pp. 13-15).
- In-Class Exercise: Writing Your Childhood Place.
- Workshop: Poem #3 (Group A).

*****DEADLINE: To get credit for an individual conference (5% of final grade), you must have attended an individual conference by the end of this week in the semester.*****

Week Nine (10/20): *In the Image*, Poem #3

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Images."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Gay's "Becoming a Horse" (p. 47).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Photograph.
 - Workshop: Poem #3 (Group B).
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Week Ten (10/27): *Like and Is*, Poem #3

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Simile and Metaphor."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Limon's "Downhearted" (p. 46), Young's "Crowning" (pp. 86-87).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Metaphor for Your Daily Life.
 - HW Due: **Upload Batch B to Canvas by Wednesday at 2:00 p.m.**
 - Workshop: Poem #3 (Group C).
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Week Eleven (11/3): *Sing Out*, Poem #4

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "The Music of the Line."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Turner's "Phantom Noise" (p. 68).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing an Emotional Outburst.
 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group A).
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Week Twelve (11/10): *Say It, Poem #4*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Voice and Style."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Ewing's "Requiem for Fifth Period" (pp. 90-93), Young's "Romanticism 101" (pp. 105-106).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing in a Famous Person's Voice.
 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group B).
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Week Thirteen (11/17): *Dreams & Nightmares, Poem #4*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Rasmussen's "'Reverse Suicide'" (p. 44), Wright's "Charlottesville Nocturne" (p. 45).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Nonsensical Story.
 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group C).
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Week Fourteen (11/24): *A Formal Feeling, Poem #5*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Meter, Rhyme, and Form."
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing Repeating Images.
 - Workshop: Poem #5 (Group A, ½ of Group B).
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Week Fifteen (12/1): *Talking in Circles, Poem #5*

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "More Repetition: Villanelle, Pantoum, Sestina."
 - Read for Class: *American Journal*, Yau's "Music from Childhood" (pp. 23-24), Dubrow's "The Long Deployment" (p. 64).
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing a Villanelle.
 - Workshop: Poem #5 (½ of Group B, Group C).
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Week Sixteen (12/6 – 12/10) – *Finals Week, NO CLASS*

- HW Due: **Upload Batch C to Canvas by Monday, December 6 at 2:00 p.m.**

PLEASE, NOTE THAT THE SUBMISSION DATE IS A MONDAY!