

ENGLISH 3150
BEGINNING POETRY WRITING
SPRING 2021

Professor: Jehanne Dubrow

Zoom Office Hours: W 2:00 – 6:00 pm

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

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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.

Please, note: this course is being offered as an **asynchronous remote class**. This means there is no set meeting time. Instead, weekly discussions will run from 6 pm on Sundays to Fridays at 6 pm and will be held on Canvas on discussion threads. My weekly office hours will substitute for face-to-face live interactions. If you had planned to take a class in which there are weekly live workshops, you will need to enroll in a **synchronous remote class** instead. Your academic advisor can provide you with additional information about the difference between these two kinds of remote instruction.

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: 50%

- Final Portfolio (multiple drafts of 5 poems + cover letter)

Class Participation: 50%

- Weekly Workshop Discussions / Poems for Workshop = 24%
- Weekly Creative Writing Prompts = 24%
- Individual Conferences
 - Conference #1 = 1%
 - Conference #2 = 1%

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) CLASS PARTICIPATION –

The workshop feedback that you provide to your peers on Canvas every week will be 24% of your final grade. Please, write one full paragraph of critique for each poem posted on the weekly Discussions page.

Completing the weekly creative writing prompts will be another 24% of your final grade. We will use the Canvas "Discussions" forum for our "in-class" writing prompts. Each week I will pin the reading response questions and the writing prompt below the workshop discussion.

To do your writing exercise, follow the instructions in the prompt, and then post a rough draft of your piece in this discussion thread.

Please, keep in mind: all discussion posts will lock automatically at 6 pm every Friday. If you post your draft in response to the creative writing prompt no later than Friday morning, I will have time to write some brief feedback on your exercise. But, if you wait until Friday afternoon to post your draft in response to the writing prompt, I will not have time offer feedback before the post locks. You will still receive credit for completing the writing prompt, but you will not receive any feedback.

Good participation is a matter both of quantity and quality.

6) WORKSHOP MATERIALS –

We will use the Canvas "Discussions" forum to hold weekly workshops. **When you are scheduled to be workshopped, please, post your poems by Sunday at 6:00 pm.**

Discussion posts will be kept open from 6 pm on Sundays to Friday at 6 pm; at 6 pm, the post will automatically close. Thus, you will be able to compartmentalize the work of the class, and it won't take over your entire week. Even though this course is asynchronous, I want the workload to be a manageable part of your life.

Every week, your feedback on your peers' poems should run at least one full paragraph per poem. Be thoughtful, be generous, be specific with your critiques.

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).

7) READING MATERIALS –

Every week, you will be assigned readings in *The Poet's Companion* and in *American Journal*. Please, keep up with these readings. The writing prompts and the poems you write will be inspired by these assigned texts.

8) 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.

9) INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES –

Attending two individual conferences will be 2% of your final grade. These are the easiest grades you will earn all semester; all you need to do is show up prepared, by following the instructions below. Our conferences will focus on the revision process. You are of course *very* welcome to attend more than two individual conferences, if you wish (and I encourage you to make ample use of my office hours throughout the semester); many students meet with me every week or every other week.

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) POETIC CRAFT SESSIONS—

In addition to holding weekly office hours, I will supplement your training by holding poetic craft sessions. I encourage you to drop in—either for the whole hour or for part of it—with your questions about free and formal verse, reading and analyzing poetry, and other topics that arise over the course of the semester. Everyone is welcome at every craft session, and no appointment is necessary.

These sessions will be held every other week from 1 to 2 pm. The URL is:
<https://unt.zoom.us/j/98783702541>.

Craft sessions will be held on the following dates:

Tuesday, January 26
Tuesday, February 9
Tuesday, February 23
Tuesday, March 9
Tuesday, March 23
Tuesday, April 6
Tuesday, April 20

11) ATTENDANCE –

A creative writing class—even one that is taking place online—is a community; its success is dependent on the participation and commitment of each person in the group. **If you neglect to participate in a weekly workshop or writing prompt, you will be counted as absent and will earn a zero for that thread.**

12) LATE WORK –

The final portfolio must be uploaded to Canvas by the specific times listed on the syllabus. Late work will be penalized. Work submitted after the listed deadlines is considered overdue and will be **marked down 5 points**.

A final portfolio 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, if the portfolio due on Monday at 2:00 pm. must be submitted before the following Saturday at 2:00 p.m., or it will earn a “0.”

It is your responsibility to keep track of deadlines and to submit work 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.

13) A NOTE ABOUT TECHNOLOGY –

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

14) 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 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 polite and respectful, and proofread your email before hitting SEND. If you are feeling cranky when you write to me, please, wait an hour before sending me the message; you may decide, after some contemplation, that your email needs to be revised.

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 neither a persuasive explanation nor a good excuse.

15) APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR –

At all times in this class, I ask for mature and respectful behavior from everyone. When you post feedback to your peers’ work or responses to the assigned readings, please, use language that is considerate of other people’s feelings and that is composed in a thoughtful, professional manner.

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.

16) 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.

17) 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 and often vulnerable work. We must all strive to make this a supportive space where everyone is encouraged to be intellectually and emotionally brave.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One (1/11 – 1/15): *Getting Started*

- Introduction of Syllabus, Handouts, and Workshop schedule.
 - Read: Ellen Bryant Voigt's "Winter Field."
 - In-Class Exercise: Imitation Is the Sincerest Form of Flattery.
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Week Two (1/18 – 1/22): *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 (1/25 – 1/29): *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 About a Family Member.
 - Workshop: Poem #1 (Group B).
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Week Four (2/1 – 2/5): *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 About Loss.
 - Workshop: Poem #1 (Group C).
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Week Five (2/8 – 2/12): *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 About Desire.

 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group A).
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Week Six (2/15 – 2/19): *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 Our Hidden Shadows.

 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group B).
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Week Seven (2/22 – 2/26): *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 About Traumas Beyond the Self.

 - Workshop: Poem #2 (Group C).
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Week Eight (3/1 – 3/5): *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 About the Place You're From.

 - Workshop: Poem #3 (Group A).
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Week Nine (3/8 – 3/12): *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 Pictures Made of Words.

 - Workshop: Poem #3 (Group B).
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Week Ten (3/15 – 3/19): *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 Life of Strange Comparisons.

 - Workshop: Poem #3 (Group C).
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Week Eleven (3/22 – 3/26): *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 the Sound of Feeling.

 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group A).
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Week Twelve (3/29 – 4/2): *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 Another's Voice.

 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group B).
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Week Thirteen (4/5 – 4/9): *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 Non-Story.
 - Workshop: Poem #4 (Group C).
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Week Fourteen (4/12 – 4/16): *A Formal Feeling*, Poem #5

- Read for Class: *The Poet's Companion*, "Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues."
 - In-Class Exercise: Writing Images Through Repetition.
 - Workshop: Poem #5 (Group A, First ½ of Group B).
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Week Fifteen (4/19 – 4/23): *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 (Second ½ of Group B, Group C).
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Week Sixteen (4/26 – 4/30)

- HW Due: **Upload Final Portfolio to Canvas by Monday, April 26 at 2:00 p.m.**

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change.