

ENGLISH 4110
ADVANCED POETRY WORKSHOP
FALL 2021

Professor: Dr. Jehanne Dubrow
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Meeting Time: Thursdays 2:00 – 4:50 pm
Classroom: Language 318
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00 – 4:00 pm (Zoom)

1) COURSE DESCRIPTION –

Welcome to English 4110! By now, all of you have taken at least one lower-level workshop. This course will build upon your previous training, asking that you hone your skills not only as writers but also as readers and scholars of poetry. Expect to be challenged; this course is difficult, asking that you push yourself both creatively and intellectually. Using six poetry collections as models for our own work, we will address concepts of diction, the line and line break, figurative language, image, rhyme, meter, and narrative. These books show us the wide spectrum of contemporary American poetry, from poems rooted in the construction of narrative and the use of archival research to those that favor musicality, lyricism.

2) REQUIRED TEXTS –

- *The Wild Iris* (1993), Louise Glück
- *The Orchard* (2004), Brigit Pegeen Kelly
- *Late Wife* (2005), Claudia Emerson
- *Native Guard* (2008), Natasha Trethewey
- *Temper* (2009), Beth Bachmann
- *White Blood* (2020), Kiki Petrosino *** Winner of UNT's 10th Annual Rilke Prize***

A Note About the Assigned Books—Some of the required readings for ENG 4110 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, as all students are asked to read all assigned texts. Of course, we will approach each book with sensitivity, empathy, and a curiosity about the ways that poetry can explore difficult

subject matter without inflicting further trauma. These books 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 (introduction + multiple drafts of all six poems)

Class Participation: 50%

- Workshop = 20%
- Literature Discussions = 20%
- Book Facilitation = 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 or B. Everyone will have the opportunity to be workshopped six times, once for each of the six poems

you will write. There will also be an optional revision workshop at the end of the semester.

Starting with second week of class, we will begin workshoping 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.

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 each workshop.

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 entirely painless 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) DISCUSSION FACILITATION –

Each person in the class will be responsible for one “discussion facilitation.” Students will work in small groups, leading the class in an examination of the published text. You will provide a detailed handout of the assigned book, which will serve as a study guide for your peers.

10) CONFERENCES –

I do not give feedback via email, because then there’s no possibility for dialogue; conversation is an essential part of the revision process. Therefore, I encourage you to meet with me frequently throughout the semester in individual conferences. Conferences will function as an important part of your development as a writer and can help to improve your class participation grade.

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 update that schedule. This way, you can double-check the page, if you are ever uncertain about your appointment date or time.

11) 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 struggle to pass 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**: 70 points
- **4 absences**: 60 points
- More than **4 absences**: 0 points

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

12) 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 Thursday at 2:00 pm. must be submitted before the following Tuesday 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.

13) 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.

14) CANVAS & EMAIL –

Please, get into the habit of checking Canvas and your emails 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 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 scenario. 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.

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. The following behavior is considered inappropriate:

- Sleeping in class.
- Letting your phone ring.
- Answering your phone.
- Texting. Using your phone at all (unless given permission).
- Working on your computer (unless given permission).
- 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.
- Neglecting to bring the assigned materials. Neglecting to follow instructions. Neglecting to follow along with or to contribute to class discussions.

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, 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.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One (8/23)

- Introduction of Syllabus, Handouts, and Workshop schedule.
 - In-Class Exercise: Imitation Is the Sincerest Form of Flattery.
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Week Two (9/2)

- Read for Class: All of *The Wild Iris*.
→ Content information: religion, faith, nature.
 - Workshop: Poem #1, Group A (inspired by *The Wild Iris*).
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Week Three (9/9)

- Workshop: Poem #1, Group B (inspired by *The Wild Iris*).
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Week Four (9/16)

- Read for Class: All of *The Orchard*.
→ Content information: violence (including violence against animals), myth, nature.
 - Workshop: Poem #2, Group A (inspired by *The Orchard*).
 - HW Due: **Group #1 will prepare and facilitate discussion of *The Orchard*.**
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Week Five (9/23)

- Workshop: Poem #2, Group B (inspired by *The Orchard*).
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Week Six (9/30)

- Read for Class: All of *Late Wife*.
→ Content information: marriage, divorce, death, cancer.
 - Workshop: Poem #3, Group A (inspired by *Late Wife*).
 - HW Due: **Group #2 will prepare and facilitate discussion of *Late Wife*.**
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Week Seven (10/7)

- Workshop: Poem #3, Group B (inspired by *Late Wife*).
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Week Eight (10/14)

- Read for class: All of *Native Guard*.
→ Content information: interracial relationships, racism, white supremacy, Civil War history, domestic violence.
 - Workshop: Poem #4, Group A (inspired by *Native Guard*).
 - HW Due: **Group #3 will prepare and facilitate discussion of *Native Guard*.**
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Week Nine (10/21)

- Workshop: Poem #4, Group B (inspired by *Native Guard*).
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Week Ten (10/28)

- Read for class: All of *Temper*.
→ Content information: gender violence, murder, PTSD, family.
 - Workshop: Poem #5, Group A (inspired by *Temper*).
 - HW Due: **Group #4 will prepare and facilitate discussion of *Temper*.**
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Week Eleven (11/4)

- Workshop: Poem #5, Group B (inspired by *Temper*).
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Week Twelve (11/12)

- Read for class: All of *White Blood*.
→ Content information: American chattel slavery, racism, white supremacy, ancestry.
 - Workshop: Poem #6, Group A (inspired by *White Blood*).
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Week Thirteen (11/18)

- Workshop: Poem #6, Group B (inspired by *White Blood*).
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Week Fourteen (11/25): *Thanksgiving, NO CLASS*

Week Fifteen (12/2)

- Revision Workshop: Anyone who wants feedback from the class should upload a significant revision of one of the poems previously drafted and workshopped.
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Week Sixteen (12/6 – 12/10) – *Finals Week, NO CLASS*

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

PLEASE NOTE:
This syllabus is subject to change.