

Beginning Poetry Writing
ENGL 3150.005 AUD 212
Tues/Thurs 2:00pm – 3:20pm

Professor: Lauren Kalstad

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Student Hours: AUSB 108 *North Texas Review* office

T/Th 9:30am – 10:30am (or by appt)

“Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world,
and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar.”

— Percy Bysshe Shelley

“Poetry is a matter of life, not just a matter of language.”

— Lucille Clifton

“If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.”

— Emily Dickinson

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A poetry professor once said to me as an undergraduate, “Poetry is a vocation, not a career.” Meaning, we are called to do it. Something within us sings and reaches out to the page in ways that our peers, friends, and family might not understand. As a poet you walk a very different and sometimes isolating path. If you stroll through life, observant and open, and those little lines pop into your head from the ether – you are a poet. If you carry a journal and fill it with images and descriptions of the world around you – you are a poet. If your notes app is filled with sometimes unintelligible fragments that you quickly jotted down at 3am because you were overcome with inspiration – you are a poet.

This course will act as both a poetry workshop and an introduction to poetry & poetics. Together, we will explore image, voice, form, sound, diction, and rhythm. You will engage in writing poetry through your lived experience, observation, and emotional perspective. Throughout the semester, you will workshop these poems in a group setting and then revise based on thoughtful and critical feedback from your instructor and peers. Our intention is to celebrate the unique art of poetry through reading, discussion, exploration, and writing. Poetry serves as a vessel for humanity’s yearning to feel, to know, and to be understood. It is a shell held to the heart listening for our deepest truths. I look forward to taking this journey with all of you over the course of this spring semester, and I cannot wait to see what beautiful things we can create in this room.

REQUIRED TEXTS

No required textbook for this class. All reading materials will be provided digitally or as hard copies. Poems will be distributed as hard copies and it is your responsibility to bring them back to class for workshops.

COURSE OBJECTIVES & LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Develop Foundational Knowledge of Poetry and Poetics

Students will be able to identify and analyze core poetic elements - line, stanza, rhythm, meter, imagery, metaphor, diction, and form - by reading a range of historical and contemporary poems.

2. Apply Poetic Techniques in Original Work

Students will demonstrate an understanding of poetic craft by composing original poems that experiment with form, sound, imagery, and voice, showing intentional stylistic choices informed by course readings.

3. Cultivate Skills in Close Reading and Critical Response

Students will be able to interpret poems through written and oral analysis, articulating how meaning is shaped by formal and thematic elements, and using appropriate poetic vocabulary in discussion and written critique.

4. Engage Productively in Workshop and Revision Practices

Students will participate thoughtfully in peer workshops by offering constructive, specific feedback, and will revise their own poems in response to feedback and reflection.

5. Reflect on Poetic Process and Artistic Development

Students will be able to reflect critically on their own creative process and growth as writers through revision statements and short reflective essays.

WORKSHOPS

Over the course of the semester, we will engage in **five poetry workshops** during class. For these workshops, I will provide you with a copy of the poems in advance and it is your responsibility to not only read and annotate these poems after a careful analysis, but to return to class on workshop day with the physical copy on hand. Each session will last 15 minutes: the first 10 minutes will consist of discussion among the poet's peers while the poet only listens and takes notes accordingly, and in the last five minutes the poet may speak, ask questions, and clarify meaning or inspiration related to the poem. **If you miss your workshop, we cannot make up that time.** You will forfeit your workshop if you choose to miss class on the day your poem is up for discussion.

COMMUNICATION

Please email me through my UNT email address or use Canvas Messenger. During the week, I will be especially responsive on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10am and 3pm. Please allow 24 hours for a response Mon-Fri, and on weekends I may not respond until Monday morning. If you are absent, or find yourself falling behind, please reach out to let me know. I am willing to work with you, but only if you keep me in the loop. Additionally, if at any time you find yourself struggling - don't suffer in silence! I'm here to listen and find resources that might help if you find yourself in a tough spot.

PARTICIPATION

Each class will allow for plenty of time for open discussion, either in small groups or as a unit. I encourage you to not only read the texts & poems but respond in class to questions and prompts. This is a poetry class, so we'll be discussing matters of writing, experience, craft, emotion, observation, and human nature. Your point of view is important to the diversity of the class. Plus, part of your grade is based on participation. Just stay engaged, and we'll all have a great time.

CIVILITY

We are all poets, and members of an academic community, where it is our shared responsibility to cultivate a climate where all students/individuals are valued, and their ideas are treated with respect. Therefore, I expect you to conduct yourself in a professional and respectful manner during all online interactions and class-related activities. I expect you to listen to and acknowledge the viewpoints of others, even if you disagree with them. When you do voice your disagreements, do so in a civil manner. Remember that you are accountable for all of your actions in this course, including your submitted work, your grades, and your interactions with me and with other students. We're all here to support one another, and our art, so let's make it a warm, welcoming environment.

CANVAS

Announcements, discussions, assignments, and grades for this course will all be handled within UNT's CANVAS Learning Management System. You must be able to access CANVAS regularly in order to succeed in this course. All students have access to CANVAS through their UNT accounts. For more information on using CANVAS, see <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. If you have any questions regarding your use of the Canvas learning management system, please contact the student help desk at: Email: helpdesk@unt.edu, Phone: 940-565- 2324.

GRADES

Six Poems.....	30%
Journaling & Discussion.....	20%
Feedback.....	20%
<u>Final Portfolio.....</u>	<u>30%</u>
TOTAL	100%

POEMS

I'm not one for hard rules when it comes to poetry, but for the purposes of continuity and unifying factors in this course, please adhere to the following "rules."

To receive credit, poems must:

- be written in Times New Roman font, size 12
- have a title, written in bold
- have your name & workshop number at the top right corner of the page
- must coincide with the theme of the week (a loose theme that allows for creativity and freedom)

FINAL PORTFOLIO

In lieu of a final exam, you will turn in a portfolio which consists of all six poems written over the course of the semester edited and revised for final submission. Along with your poems, you will write a 1000-word reflection that outlines: your revision process, how your poetry changed over the semester, takeaways, memorable poems we covered, and more. Further details to come as we approach the end of the semester.

ADA/ODA ACCOMMODATIONS

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must **discuss expectations with each instructor prior to implementation in the classroom**. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu

Additionally, if anything should arise that might hinder your success in this class – please do not hesitate to speak with me. We are in a safe space, and what we discuss stays between us (assuming you are not planning to harm yourself or others).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No phone or headphone use during class! Phones should be out of sight for the duration of class. This policy is important for participation in the course and as a general exercise in focusing our attention and showing respect for the classroom space. If I see you using your phone during class, I can mark you as absent. If you have an issue that requires you to have your phone out during class, please inform me beforehand.

LANGUAGE

We're lucky to have the freedom in poetry to express ourselves without the limits of other conventional writing genres. We can write in fragments or play with punctuation and form. That being said, in this classroom we will not engage in any poetry that uses hateful or offensive language that could hurt someone. We do not use our poetry to attack anyone, or to purposefully antagonize. While it's fine to express your opinion, or engage with current events, let's be wary of language that could potentially be harmful to those around you. If you do craft a poem that crosses the line, we will have a conversation that comes with a warning. Should the behavior continue, we will discuss further consequences (e.g. removal from the class).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

TUES 1.13

Intro + Syllabus

THURS 1.15

"Poetry" by Marianne Moore

"Introduction to Poetry" by Billy Collins

"Mary Oliver's Tips for Writing Poetry" by Kera Hollow
Imagery & Figurative Language

DISCUSSION BOARD: Introduction due Sunday, January 18th by Midnight

POEM: Initial poem only for Professor Kalstad due Sunday, January 18th by Midnight

WEEK 2

TUES 1.20

Best American Poetry 1991 Introduction by Mark Strand
Why Poetry?

Imagery & Figurative Language

"Tulips" by Sylvia Plath

"Fish R Us" by Mark Doty

ASSIGNMENT: Poem 1 due by Wednesday, January 21st by Midnight

THURS 1.22

"The Shape of the Void: Towards a Definition of Poetry" by Elisa Gabbert

Workshop Overview & Discussion

WEEK 3

TUES 1.27

Workshop 1

THURS 1.29

Workshop 1

WEEK 4

TUES 2.3

Workshop 1

THURS 2.5

Workshop 1

WEEK 5

TUES 2.10

Workshop 1

Sound, Line, & Form

ASSIGNMENT: Poem 2 due by Wednesday, February 4th by Midnight

THURS 2.12

Sound, Line, & Form

WEEK 6

TUES 2.17

Workshop 2

THURS 2.19

Workshop 2

WEEK 7

TUES 2.24

Workshop 2

THURS 2.26

Workshop 2

WEEK 8

TUES 3.3

Workshop 2

Voice, Speaker, & Persona

THURS 3.5

NO CLASS TODAY

WEEK 9

TUES 3.10

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
HAVE FUN!

THURS 3.12

WEEK 10

TUES 3.17

Voice, Speaker, & Persona

ASSIGNMENT: Poem 3 due by Wednesday, February 18th by Midnight

THURS 3.19

Workshop 3

WEEK 11

TUES 3.24

Workshop 3

THURS 3.26

Workshop 3

WEEK 12

TUES 3.31

Workshop 3

THURS 4.2

Workshop 3

Imitation & Ekphrasis

WEEK 13

TUES 4.7

Imitation & Ekphrasis

ASSIGNMENT: Poem 4 due by Wednesday, February 4th by Midnight

THURS 4.9

Final Portfolio Conferences

WEEK 14

TUES 4.14

Final Portfolio Conferences

THURS 4.16

Workshop 4

WEEK 15

TUES 4.21

Workshop 4

THURS 4.23

Workshop 4

WEEK 16

TUES 4.28

Workshop 4

THURS 4.30

Workshop 4

Last Day Activity

FINAL PORTFOLIO: due by Sunday, May 2nd by Midnight