

CRW1301—Beginning Poetry Writing, sec. 1653, Fall 2017

Instructor: Paul Roberts

Meeting Time/Location: W 10-E1/FLI 0111

Office: TBD

Office Hours: M/W 5, and by appointment

Instructor email: pdrob3@ufl.edu

This course emphasizes the critical capacity to read and write poetry, in the hopes of expanding 1) students' appreciation of the classic canon, and 2) students' concept of not just what poetry *is*, but what poetry *can be*. We will begin by establishing an historical context for how poems have been defined, and along the way we will read a mixture of old favorites and new experiments—some of which you may not even agree are poetry. This course will challenge you to integrate poetry into your day-to-day life.

Poetry is a medium which requires close attention. We will spend the first half of the semester acquiring a vocabulary and understanding of key terms and features, from alliteration to metaphor to visual aspects such as line and layout. Once we have established ourselves as attentive readers of poetry, we will begin writing our own poems for in-class discussion and workshopping in the second half of the semester. And, of course, we will continue to read and discuss established poets' work, including A. Van Jordan's collection *Macnolia*, and selected readings on the internet (still to come).

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
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- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Books

Writing Poems, Michelle Boisseau, Hadara Bar-Nadav, Robert Wallace: 8th edition, ISBN: 978-0205176052

Macnolia: Poems, A. Van Jordan, ISBN: 978-0393327649

Famous Americans, Loren Goodman, ISBN: 978-0300100037

Recommended, but not required:

The Elements of Style: Updated and Annotated for Present-Day Use, William Strunk, Jr. and Stanford Pritchard, 2nd edition, ISBN: 978-1469955902

There will also be supplemental readings and handouts throughout the course at the discretion of the instructor. Start a folder the first week of class and **keep everything**. You are responsible for having all class materials when needed and for monitoring your grades.

Assignments

Point Breakdown

8 first drafts of poems	200 points (25/poem)
5 revised poems	200 points (40/revision)
2 500-word essays on “What makes this a poem?” or “ <i>Is</i> this a poem?”	80 points (40 each)
3 1,200-word close reading essays/annotations	300 points (1st = 80/2nd=100/3rd=120)
1 1,200-word Poetry Anthology Introduction (partners; 600 words each)	80 points
Final Portfolio Introduction (800 words)	40 points
Participation/Journal	100 points
Total (6,000 words)	1,000 points

Assignment Descriptions

Poems (25 points each, 200 points total)

You will write eight(8) poems over the semester. Poems will be written to prompts from the instructor.

The first poem will not be workshopped, but will be treated as a “warm-up” poem. That means that only you and I will see what you turn in, and I can give you feedback before you have to start presenting work to the rest of the class.

Requirements:

1. To receive credit, poems must:
 - a. be single-spaced. PLEASE CHECK BEFORE YOU SUBMIT YOUR WORK. Microsoft Word and Google Docs, for example, space at 1.15 by default.
 - b. be left-justified (not center- or right-justified, although indentation and other variations in form are allowed)
 - c. be written in Times New Roman or Georgia font, size 12
 - d. **have a title**, written in bold
 - e. have your name and the assignment number at the top right corner of the page

2. Poems must respond to the assignment given. *No end-rhyming* unless the prompt specifically asks for it.
3. Poems must be written in complete sentences (that is, if the line breaks were eliminated, the text would read coherently and be grammatically correct).

Workshop Procedure:

You will submit poems in class every week, starting in Week #4. BRING ENOUGH COPIES FOR EVERYONE. I will read every poem and select a number of them to be workshopped, announced via email. Each student's work will be workshopped roughly an equal number of times throughout the semester.

Please read each poem selected carefully (at least two times), and mark up the copies with feedback. Prepare at least TWO POSITIVE and TWO CRITICAL comments for each poem, and be prepared to share them during workshop. Bring the copies to class on the day of workshop. At the end of class, you will return the poems to the poets who wrote them.

Two 500-word Essays (40 points each, 80 points total)

At the beginning and at the end of the semester you will write short papers answering the question "What makes this poem a poem?" The first essay will be written on assigned poems from the textbook, while the last will be about a poem of your choice from either Jordan's *Macnolia* or Goodman's *Famous Americans*. Please note you are allowed to take the opposite stance and argue that a certain text is *not* a poem.

The goal of this assignment is to probe the boundaries between poems and other writing, in hopes of creating a cogent definition of "poetry." If you believe your chosen text is a poem, you will analyze the text for poetic elements we have learned about in class or in the textbook, and explain how and why they qualify the text as a poem. If you intend to argue that a text is *not* a poem, be aware that you will have to provide a clear defense of your position — e.g. don't just say "this text isn't a poem because it doesn't have line breaks," but *say WHY line breaks are necessary for a text to be a poem.*

Three 1,200-word Close Readings/Annotations (1st paper 80 points, 2nd 100 points, 3rd 120 points, 300 points total)

Close Readings are an exploration of how poems function. Each paper will critically engage with a poem, proposing a thesis on one or two specific elements in the poem (e.g. use of diction, image, symbol, etc). How do these elements interact with what the poem is saying? Do they support the literal text of the poem? Do they contradict the text? What effect do these elements have on your interpretation of the poem?

The first two of these essays will focus on individual poems assigned by me, while the third will cover a poetry collection of your choice and examine how multiple poems interact together to

form a book.

While each paper must contain a thesis, the papers do not need to follow any specific research paper structure. They do, however, require supporting examples from the text. Additionally, essays must be written in MLA format with correct spelling, grammar, etc.

There will be a more detailed handout on close reading and my expectations for these assignments to follow.

Poetry Anthology Introduction (80 points):

In pairs, you will create a mini-anthology (12-20 poems), centered around a theme of your choice. Possibilities include form, rhyme, repetition, era, subject, etc. Some poems may be drawn from the course readings, but at least half of the anthology must come from your independent reading (see me if you're looking for places to start). Pay attention to sequencing and pacing of your anthology as a collection.

When you have selected and ordered your poems, you and your partner will write an introduction to this proposed anthology explaining the theme, why the theme matters, and why your selections best encapsulate that theme. You will also give a short presentation on your anthologies to the class.

Final Portfolio (Revisions: 200 points; Introduction: 40 points; Total: 240 points)

Revisions (5 poems, 40 points each): By the end of the semester, you will revise *at least five* of your previously submitted poems, reflecting feedback received from your peers in workshop, from your instructor, and from your own reflection on the work. Revisions will be graded on their impact, not the number of changes—that is, if you change one word and it vastly improves the poem, that is sufficient. (*Please note that this probably will not be the case!*) What I'm looking for is the thought you've put into your revisions.

Introduction to Final Portfolio (800 words; 40 points): For this assignment, you will reflect on your writing processes for the poems you've written throughout the term, you will discuss your revision tactics, and you will examine your own growth as a poet. You will also look at your poems as a collected body of work and examine any themes or questions that arise from them being collected together. Sequencing is important!

Participation/Journal (100 points):

Because this is a discussion- and workshop-based class, you are expected to be an active participant. This does NOT mean interrupting or being otherwise disrespectful to your peers.

Class discussion: To receive full participation points, you should speak up at least once during each discussion. Students are responsible for completing all assigned readings each week.

Journal: Every Monday, you will turn in (via email) a short journal entry. These entries should be 12-15 lines of text, single-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman, 1” margins, and can cover anything relevant to the class or poetry in general. Examples include a comment you didn’t get to make in class discussion, a response to a class discussion or your own reading, or any questions you have about poetry or writing. Treat your journal as a freewriting session; I want you to think about poetry outside of class or more directed assignments. I’ll read aloud a few comments that strike me as we start class sessions.

Workshops: To receive full participation points, you should be a vocal but respectful participant in workshops. Students are responsible for reading the poems to be workshopped and for writing comments on them. Be specific with your comments, written and verbal, since greater detail will help the poet in revision. Please see “Workshop Procedure” above for further detail.

Course Policies

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance: Attendance and Tardiness*
 - a. You are allowed two unexcused absences. With three unexcused absences, you will fail the course.
 - b. An absence will count as excused only if the student is participating in a university-sponsored event (athletics, theater, music, field trip, religious holidays) and provides documentation from an appropriate authority. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me PRIOR to the date that will be missed.
 - c. Please come prepared. Forgetting your materials, using a computer or phone, or disrupting your peers will count as a tardiness and will have you dismissed from the class.
 - d. PLEASE NOTE: If you are absent it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates and to submit the next week’s assignments on time. You are also responsible for getting in touch with a classmate to find out what you missed in class. Save your absences for when you’re really ill. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences.
 - e. UF Statement on Attendance and Make-up Work:
 - f. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
3. *Paper Format & Submission:* Submit all assignments hardcopy. Additionally, submit essays online through Canvas. Essays must be formatted according to MLA guidelines.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:*
 - a. I will accept late work up to 24 hours past the deadline. Between the deadline and 24 hours after, work will be awarded half credit. Past 24 hours, work will be awarded no credit.
 - b. Failure of technology is not an excuse. Students are expected to factor in time for

- proofreading, revising, and printing/electronic submission. Assignments must be submitted by the correct time on the day assigned and in the specified format.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
 6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
 7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
 8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
 9. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
 10. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

Schedule

In addition to what's listed below, we'll be reading a number of poems from our anthology and online. If online, I will either bring copies or email the URL where they can be found and printed.

***This schedule is subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments and readings are DUE THE DAY THEY ARE LISTED on the syllabus, not the following week.

Date	Reading Assignment/Discussion	Writing Assignment
8/23	Syllabus; In-Class Exercise: "Which of These are Poems?"	
8/30	<i>Writing Poems (WP)</i> Chs.1, 6; Writing Style Handout	"What Makes This a Poem?" #1
9/6	<i>WP</i> Ch. 2 (Verse, Linebreaks); Description/Image; Close Reading exercise	
9/13	<i>WP</i> Chs. 7, 10 (Metaphor; Finding the Poem)	Close Reading #1; Poem #1
9/20	Individual Conferences Poem #1; <i>WP</i> Ch. 3 (Meter & Rhythm)	
9/27	Practice Workshop; <i>WP</i> Ch. 4 (Form, Free Verse, Line)	Poem #2
10/4	<i>WP</i> Ch. 5 (Sound & Vision)	Poem #3; Close Reading #2
10/11	<i>WP</i> Ch. 8-9 (Narrative, Identity, Experiments in Form)	Poem #4
10/18	<i>MacNolia</i> ("Z," pgs 1-71)	Poem #5
10/25	<i>MacNolia</i> ("A," pgs 73-131)	Poem #6
11/1	<i>Famous Americans</i> ; Postmodernism & the Avant-Garde	Poem #7; Close Reading #3
11/8	<i>WP</i> Ch. 11 (Revision); continue <i>Famous Americans</i>	Poem #8; "What Makes This a Poem?" #2
11/15	Anthology Presentations (pt. 1)	Bring in at least two revisions
11/22	NO CLASS — Thanksgiving (aptly named)	
11/29	Anthology Presentations (pt. 2)	Anthology Introductions
12/6	Forgeries; The Parting of the Ways; Showing Off; Exuberance	Final Portfolio

Grading Scale

A = 4.0 = 93-100%	C = 2.0 = 73-76%
A- = 3.67 = 90-92%	C- = 1.67 = 70-72%
B+ = 3.33 = 87-89%	D+ = 1.33 = 67-69%
B = 3.0 = 83-86%	D = 1.0 = 63-66%
B- = 2.67 = 80-82%	D- = 0.67 = 60-62%
C+ = 2.33 = 77-79%	E = 0.0 = 0-59%

Grade	Essays	Poems
A	An “A” paper responds to the assignment prompt in full. It presents an original, specific, and clearly worded argument supported by sufficient evidence from authoritative sources. Writing style is engaging, clear, and concise, and the paper employs a logical organization. It is free from mechanical or formatting errors and cites sources using the proper citation format.	An “A” poem responds to the assignment prompt in full. It uses vivid and carefully considered language and follows an original and cohesive vision. It employs poetic techniques discussed in class to a constructive purpose. Its sentences make complete grammatical sense and it is free from mechanical or formatting errors.
B	A “B” paper responds to the assignment prompt. It presents an original argument, but ideas may need further development or clearer articulation. The argument is supported by evidence. Writing style is generally clear and organization is logical, but there is room for improvement. There are very few mechanical errors and sources are cited properly.	A “B” poem responds to the assignment prompt. It presents a unique vision, but ideas may need further development. It uses poetic techniques but could be doing more to bring craft and drama to the poem. Language used is effective but may need some refining. There are very few mechanical errors.
C	A “C” paper may not fully respond to the prompt. Argument is overly broad or in need of clarification and development. Some evidence is used to support the argument, but claims are not sufficiently defended. Writing style lacks clarity and organization is problematic. Several mechanical errors or incorrect citations.	A “C” poem may not fully respond to the prompt. Vision is disjointed or overly clichéd. Poetic techniques are not used to their fullest potential. Language seems hastily chosen or unoriginal. There are several mechanical errors.
D	A “D” paper does not fully respond to the assignment prompt. Argument is underdeveloped or nonexistent. Little or no evidence is used to support claims. Writing style and organization are unclear. Many mechanical errors or incorrect citations.	A “D” poem does not fully respond to the assignment prompt. Poem seems hastily written with little overall vision to hold it together, unoriginal word choices, and many mechanical errors. Poetic techniques are missing or misused.
E	An “E” paper fails to respond to the assignment prompt (including papers that do not meet the minimum word requirement). Papers that are late or plagiarized will also receive an “E.”	An “E” poem fails to respond to the assignment prompt. Poems that are late or plagiarized will also receive an “E.” Man, what happened?

