

Poetry Workshop: Fall 2025

Instructor: Matthew Baker

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Class time/location: TH, 4-6:45pm, FN 2.210

Office Hours: Fridays, 9-11, either online or by appointment, or in location TBD (working on getting a space on campus!)

Course Overview

Welcome to CRWT 3351: Poetry Workshop! This semester we'll write and discuss each other's poems as we read and think about various contemporary U.S. poets. My goal in this class is to expose you to a number of poets and at least one recent collection (in the last ~10 years) that I think display a variety of approaches to poetry but also give you a wide selection of styles to potentially imitate (if you want to do so—imitation is flattery!). While this is not a traditional literature class, we will discuss “meanings” in the poems we look at in class and that I ask you to read, but we will move beyond discussing what a poem is “about” to think more thoroughly about how the poem is put together and why its language excites or disgusts us (trust me, it happens). Then you will put those discussions into practice by writing your own poems that we will share with the class and revise as the semester progresses. At the end of the course, you should come away with a better understanding of how to write and discuss poems as well as how to write about and conceptualize your own creative practice.

Required Materials

A notebook or writing implement of some kind to record exercises and notes in, access to the internet to upload assignments and view discussion boards, and a copy of the following book (you can buy it, rent it, procure it in some way that is financially feasible for you): *Wade in the Water* by Tracy K. Smith (ISBN: 978-1-55597-836-5)

Learning Objectives

- **Practice composing** poems for audience greater than oneself
- **Metacognitive thinking** through workshopping and revision
- **Critical Thinking** through reading and discussing contemporary U.S. poetry
- **Community mindedness** through engaging each other and the public
- **Awareness** of breadth of styles available to poets writing in the U.S.

Course Schedule for Poetry Workshop

Week 1, 8/28: Unit 1—The poem as an image and imagination device; First day; *Image* and *Line*

- Read: “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams; “Sapphic Dream” by Mag Gabbert; “Traveling Through the Dark” by William Stafford

Week 2, 9/4: *Place*

- Read: “Thoughts on the Past in Guadalupe County,” “Texas Being” by Jenny Browne; “End-of-Summer Haibun” by Aimee Nezhukumatathil; “A Shifting Sense of Place” by Jeremy Richards (short essay)

Week 3, 9/11: *Metaphor* + Figurative Language

- Read: “The Forgotten Dialect of the Heart” by Jack Gilbert; “Into the Breach” by Ocean Vuong; “How to Triumph Like a Girl” by Ada Limón; 1 craft essay TBD
- Presentations 1 & 2
- **Poem 1 due tonight by midnight**

Week 4, 9/18: *Sound* + *Voice*

- Read: “In Praise of Flattery” by Hailey Leithauser; “The Wild Iris” by Louise Glück; “Human Interest Story” by Sandra Lim
- Presentation 3
- Workshop Group 1; Critiques for group 1 due by class today

Week 5, 9/25: *Love*

- Read: “Sex Alfresco” by Hailey Leithauser; “Quail” by Richie Hofmann; “What Narcissism Means to Me” by Tony Hoagland
- Presentation 4
- Workshop Group 2; Critiques for group 2 due by class today

Week 6, 10/2: Unit 2: The poem as a formal marker/maker/celebrator/changer; Tracy K. Smith

- Read: Part 1 of *Wade in the Water*
- Presentation 5 & 6

Week 7, 10/9: Tracy K. Smith; *Epistles* + *Found poetry*

- Read: Parts 2 & 3 of *Wade in the Water*
- Presentation 7

Week 8, 10/16: Tracy K. Smith; *Found poems* + more

- Read Part 4 of *Wade in the Water*
- Presentations 8 & 9
- **Poem 2 due tonight by midnight**

Week 9, 10/23: *Ekphrasis*

- Read: “At the Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulpe” and “Michelangelo’s Seizure” by Steve Gehrke; “Madonna del Parto” by Forrest Gander

- Presentation 10
- Workshop Group 1; Critiques for group 1 due by class today

Week 10, 10/30: *Ode*

- Read: Selection of odes by Sharon Olds (TBD)
- Presentation 11
- Workshop Group 2; Critiques for group 2 due by class

Week 11, 11/6: Unit 3: The poem as a storyteller (loosely); *Narrative*

- Read: “Song” by Brigit Pegeen Kelly; “The Olive Tree at Vouves” and “Tiresias” by Paisley Rekdal; “On Turning Fifty” by Gailmarie Pahmeier
- Presentations 12 & 13

Week 12, 11/13: *Home + Struggle + Longing; Prose Poems*

- Read: “The Invention of Love” and “Robo-Baby” by Matthea Harvey; “Dear New Mothers of America” by Adrian Blevins; “The Master’s House” by Solmaz Sharif
- Presentation 14
- **Poem 3 due by midnight tonight**

Week 13, 11/20: *Seeing Each Other + Hard Truths*

- Read: “Look” by Solmaz Sharif; “I Wanted to Be There When My Father Died” by Sharon Olds; “In the Future, the Future Will Be the Past” by Bob Hicok
- Presentation 15
- Workshop Group 1; Critiques for group 1 due by class
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Week 14, 11/27: Fall Break

- Thurs, 11/27: No class (enjoy break)

Week 15, 12/4: *Revision*

- Read: Essays on Revision in poetry (TBD)
- Workshop Group 2; Critiques for group 2 due by class
- Revision exercises

Week 16: *Final Portfolios + Reading!*

- No class, but we will have our class reading sometime this week!
- **Final portfolios due by midnight on December 11th**

Grading Scale and Assignment Breakdown

A+ 97-100% A 93-96.9% A- 90-92.9%
B+ 87-89.9% B 83-86.9% B- 80-82.9%
C+ 77-79.9% C 73-76.9% C- 70-72.9%
D+ 67-69.9% D 63-69.9% D- 60-62.9%
F 59.9% and below

1. Poem 1: 10%
2. Poem 2: 10%
3. Poem 3: 10%
4. Critiques: 15%
5. Presentation: 10%
6. Final portfolio: 30%
6. Participation and Final Reading—15%

Brief Overview of Assignments

Poem 1: In this poem, you'll write about a place that's important to you. In class, we'll discuss poets who focus on place and then generally how place appears in poems even if the poems don't focus on place as their subjects. Poems should be a minimum of 15 lines.

Poem 2: In this poem, you'll use a form or hybrid forms of poetry to compose a poem about anything that you want. The goal of this assignment is to help you recognize the value of structures and constraints while composing rather than thinking of them as barriers.

Poem 3: This poem will be composed with elements of narrative. In other words, you will tell a story through your poem. The goal of this exercise is to help you think about telling stories with an emphasis on the sound and organization of language.

Ongoing Writing Critiques: You will give written feedback to your peers on each of their poems throughout the semester. These will be turned in on the day we workshop people's poems.

Presentation: You will lead one discussion of a poem assigned for class. The presentation will consist of a reading of the poem, a brief summary of the piece, discussion questions for us to consider, and then a writing prompt based on the poem that you will share with the class.

Final Portfolio: In this assignment, you'll radically revise two of your three poems and then write a note about that revision process.

Participation and Final Reading: Because poetry is something we share with each other, I want the final meeting of our class to be a reading of at least one poem you have revised throughout the semester. Each student will read for five minutes or less in a public setting we will book on campus.

Course Policies

Late work: Late work shouldn't be an issue in this course, but as a standard, any work turned in up to 24 hours late automatically receives a 10% deduction. Work turned in after 24 hours and up to 48 hours late will receive a 20% deduction. Anything beyond 48 hours will receive a score of zero unless you discuss extenuating circumstances with me.

Attendance: This class functions through our willingness to show up, discuss the work and issues the work brings up, and write thoughtfully in response to prompts. If you are tardy or leave early, your grade will begin to suffer. If you miss more than 2 class periods, your grade will begin to drop by a half letter grade each class missed. If you know you will be absent because of a school-related matter, please provide me proper documentation in an email.

University Policies and Resources

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: My hope is that you will not be able to plagiarize in this course. However, plagiarism of any kind will be frowned upon. Use of AI to prepare writing assignments is also frowned upon and considered academic dishonesty.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the [AccessAbility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by [email](#), calling 972-883-2098, or at their [website](#). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.

The [Student Counseling Center](#) offers confidential services to students either for individual appointments or as part of groups. Initial appointments must be made in person in the Student Counseling Center, which is located in SSB 4.600, on the fourth floor of the Student Services Building. Their main number is 972-883-2575 and the 24/7 Crisis Hotline is 972-883-8255 (972-UTD-TALK).

The [Student Health Center \(SHC\)](#) provides primary and preventative medical care to currently enrolled students who have paid medical fees and are attending classes. Currently enrolled students can obtain a wide variety of services, such as physicals, diagnosis and treatment of acute illnesses and injuries, general medical problems, gynecological problems, treatment of stabilized chronic illnesses, allergy injections, limited immunizations, x-rays, and ultrasound. SHC staff of licensed medical providers is committed to keeping the UT Dallas community healthy and believes that health and wellness information complement the academic success of students. SHC is located on the fourth floor of the Student Services Building, SSB 4.700 and they can be reached by telephone, 972-883-2747, fax, 877-769-7514, or by [email](#).