



SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

SYLLABUS for ENG 252b

Creative Writing II: Poetry

Class meeting: Tuesdays, 6:30 PM, Franks 121

Instructor: Dr. Shannon McKeehen aka “Prof. Mac”

Email: McKeehenSR@tiffin.edu

Office location: #78, Reichard House, second floor, Office C

Office phone: x3509

M/Th - Virtual office hours; 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM; Bb Collaborate, Moodle

F - Virtual office hours; 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM; Bb Collaborate, Moodle

Course Description: This workshop course is designed for students to engage in the composition of poetry employing both lyric and narrative styles. While the primary focus will be on the examination of contemporary poetry, students will also develop an understanding of traditional poetic forms, including the sonnet, villanelle, sestina, ode, and elegy. In addition to curating a portfolio of original poems, students will participate in the reading and discussion of both their peers’ works and those of established authors.

Required Materials:

Bring the following to class *every* week, no exceptions: Laptop or tablet; notes about reading(s).

Expected Student Behavior in Class

All students are expected to behave in a professional and courteous manner to both the professor and other students in class, and to follow the procedures as outlined in this syllabus for this course. If the professor deems that a student has failed to adhere to this standard, the professor shall make a report to both the Dean of the School in which the course is taught, and the Dean of Students. Please follow all policies as written in the current Student Handbook.

Preparation and Active Class Participation

Students are required to read all works for the course. Assignments must be read prior to the class in which the particular work(s) will be discussed. Papers must be written in APA format, using and citing quotations from primary and/or secondary sources. Written work is due at the beginning of class on the due date specified on the schedule below. All work will be printed and handed in on the due date except for the final term paper. Use white paper and 12 point, Sans Serif class font with one-inch margins. All papers must be stapled.

Note that Student Performance counts for 50 points of your grade. This is defined as how a student conducts themselves in the class, and refers specifically to attendance, lateness, manners, and respect towards the instructor and fellow students. A student can expect to receive a full 100% in this category if they attend all classes on time, hand-in all assignments on time, consistently contribute to class discussions, complete in-class exercises, and show respect towards the instructor and fellow students throughout the semester. Bad manners are not tolerated, and will result in a reduced Student Performance grade. Examples of bad manners are forgetting to silence cell phones, dozing or not paying attention, leaving class early, speaking out of turn, or speaking rudely to the instructor or to fellow students.

Attendance by Athletes

Athletes may not miss a class for practice in any sport. If an athlete misses a class due to a game, it is completely understood that the athlete is responsible for all the work covered in that class (to include lecture notes, readings and any additional information distributed in class). The appropriate information from the Athletic Director or coach must be submitted to the professor prior to missing class due to an athletic event. Failure to do so is against athletic policy. Please follow all policies as written in the current Student Handbook. All attendance will be recorded in Moodle.

Academic Honesty Statement

Academic honesty is expected at all times. Cheating and/or plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, using the work of someone else and claiming it as your own without acknowledgment of the original source, using unauthorized assistance on in-class or take-home examinations, projects, papers, tests, quizzes, etc., and/or submitting the identical academic work on more than one occasion for credit without consent. If you have questions about how to cite a source from a reference or other data, you can contact me for any assistance. Any violation of academic honesty will instantly result in a zero for the assignment as well as other possible sanctions by me and/or TU. Please refer to the current Student Handbook and/or Academic Bulletin for more detailed information.

Veterans

For veteran services, please contact Denise Burkin (burkindi@tiffin.edu) at 419-448-3340 or Professor John Schupp (schuppjd@tiffin.edu) at 440-488-6416.

From the Office of Equity, Access, and Opportunity: Nondiscrimination Policy

Tiffin University is committed to a policy of non-discrimination and equal opportunity for all students, applicants for admission, and is committed in policy and practice to ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for all regardless of the person's race, religion, personal appearance, color, sex, pregnancy, political affiliation, social-economic class, place of business, residence, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin (including ancestry), citizenship status, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, veteran or military status (including special disabled veteran, Vietnam-era veteran, or recently separated veteran), predisposing genetic characteristics, domestic violence victim status] or any other protected category under applicable local, state or federal law. <https://www.tiffin.edu/academics/calcat>. All complaints of sexual harassment/misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, bullying, cyber-bullying, stalking, or discrimination should be reported to Dr. Perry-Fantini, Vice Provost for Equity, Access, & Opportunity/Title IX Coordinator, perryfantinis@tiffin.edu or 419-448- 3504. You can report incidents or

complaints at http://www.tiffin.edu/institutionaldiversity/titleix/Incident_Reporting.pdf. The Office of Disability Services supports the institutional commitment to diversity by providing educational opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities through accessible programs and services in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you need reasonable accommodations due to a documented disability, you are required to contact the Juliene Huston, Coordinator for Disability Services at hustonjr@tiffin.edu or 419-448-3021 or Kenneth Santos, Assistant Coordinator for Disability Services at santosken@tiffin.edu or 419-448-3028.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects student information. Other than directory information, such as name, address, phone number, etc., students must give consent for individuals to gain access to a student's educational record, including grades, transcripts, and behavior reports (unless the student is under the age of 18). Students also have the right to review their educational records. For a more detailed explanation, please see the Student Handbook.

Email Communication

As a student at Tiffin University, you are expected to use your Tiffin email account for all communication with your professor. If you fail to check your Tiffin email account, you may be missing information regarding this course, and you will be held responsible for this. Course Requirements/Evaluation: Please note that students should email or speak with the instructor if facing any extraordinary circumstances or needs in meeting any of the course requirements/evaluation criteria.

Grading Criteria, Late Work, Gradebook

Students are expected to read all assigned material and to contribute to all class discussions. Avoid turning in work late. Instructions and grading criteria for individual assignments will be developed and discussed in detail in class. Do not ask for extra credit projects to be created; that decision is up to the instructor alone. The online gradebook for this course will be kept in Moodle.

Grades:

Workshop Preparedness and Participation, **50 pts**

Reading Discussions, **50 pts**

Rough Drafts of Practice Poems, **50 pts**

Midsemester Meeting to go over work, **50 pts**

Report on Literary Journal, 1 single-spaced page min due 10/20 via email, **50 pts**

Participation in Poetry Reading at Bailiwicks on 11/17, **100 pts**

Final Drafts of Practice Poems Collection, due 12/1 via email, **150 pts**

Grading Scale (500 points possible):

A+: 485-500

A: 465-484

A-: 450-464

B+: 435-449

B: 415-434

B-: 400-414

C+: 385-399

C: 365-384

C-: 350-364 (lowest passing grade)

D+: 335-349

D: 315-334

D-: 300-314

F: 0-299

Etiquette for Student Writing Groups and Class Workshop Discussions

- When you comment on peers' work, focus on what you find to be the strengths as well as offering constructive criticism of the work.

- When your poem(s) are being discussed in the class workshop, listen politely or ask permission to ask a question to clarify what a class member is explaining. Do not interrupt to defend your poem. You will have the opportunity to clarify or explain your intentions in the poem following the critical discussion. Remember, if your poem is published online or printed in a journal, you will not be present to explain the poem.

- TU respects students' diversity and privacy. A poetry workshop should be a safe space. What happens in the workshop is not to be discussed outside the workshop without other participants' explicit permission. Do not submit work or make (or write) comments that will intentionally cause offense or hurt to another student (or instructor). Remember, the criticism in a workshop is not personal. It is about the work, not the author.

- If such purposely offensive or hurtful work or comments are found, the instructor will first discuss it with you, then remove the poem or comment from the Canvas Workshop Discussion. If you persist in posting knowingly and purposely offensive material that is intended to disrupt the Workshop, you will receive 0 credit for work. Poets often address sensitive issues or challenge readers' sensibilities and mores in their poems. If you have written something that you think might possibly offend someone else in the class, check with the instructor before you post it. This does not mean you should refrain from exploring sensitive or controversial subjects or that these are off limits. It does mean, though, that we want this workshop to be a safe space for everyone.

- If you do not abide by these etiquette guidelines, you will receive one warning from the instructor. If you do not follow the etiquette guidelines after you have received one Warning, you risk being administratively withdrawn.

Important Guidelines on Creating A Rigorous and Supportive Writing Workshop

Workshop participants learn to articulate issues of craft and process, becoming more skillful

writers, editors, workshop leaders, teachers, and reviewers. When you attentively participate in the discussion of another's writing, you often learn more about craft than you do from the hour of critique focused on your own work. Without the attachment and personal concerns that arise when your work is addressed, you may identify similar issues in your own writing and gain new ideas for dealing with them.

Confidentiality. You agree not to share anything anyone writes with people outside the group (unless you explicitly ask that person's permission).

Be conscious of sharing time. If you are a naturally talkative person, stay aware of how much you are talking so that there's room for quieter people to speak as well. If you're a naturally quiet person, give yourself a little push to speak up.

There's no critique about the subject of the poem, i.e. whether it's a suitable subject or the attitude taken in the poem meets your criteria. The only exception would be for writing that falls into the category of hate speech.

You're not a committee rewriting the poem. You are readers dedicated to deep listening, to trying to hear the poem on its own terms, and offering whatever feedback you can. But you're not trying to come to consensus. The poet, at home and after due consideration, will make their own decisions.

Prior to the discussion of your work, do not apologize, issue disclaimers, or tell the story behind it. When your work is under discussion, listen quietly and wait until you've heard the feedback before asking questions or making comments. Take detailed notes on what is said by all contributors to the discussion; reserve judgment on the usefulness of each comment until you are back working with the piece in private. Once you are no longer on the spot, you may be able to more objectively process the feedback. As you take notes, try not to filter the comments too much. When invited to respond at the end of the discussion, spend the bulk of your time asking questions rather than defending.

In giving feedback, if there is an "I" in the poem, talk about the speaker, not "you." For example, don't say things like, "In the second stanza, when you first see your daughter..." Instead say, "In the second stanza, when the speaker first sees her daughter..." Or you could say "In the second stanza, when the mother first sees her daughter..." And never ask questions like, did this really happen? how are you feeling about it now? what did your father do after that? Respecting the distance between the poet and the speaker or "I" in the poem is essential.

Also, because you can write anything you want in a poem, the poet may not even have had that experience they're writing about. They may have created it from their imagination. So it would be awkward if the poem is about a speaker whose husband left her and a group member says, I'm so sorry your husband left you, and the poet's husband didn't leave her. I always think of this passage from the Afterword of Lucy Grealy's memoir, *Autobiography of a Face*. Lucy Grealy writes about a woman who comes up to her after a reading and says: "It's amazing how you

remember everything so clearly ... ‘All those conversations, details. Were you ever worried that you might get something wrong?’ And Grealley replies, “I didn’t remember it. I wrote it. I’m a writer.”

Don't try to address a problem in the poem until you've identified the problem. Sometimes people start giving suggestions before they recognize what the problem is, so the suggestions have a random quality and are not likely to be helpful. So slow down and try to identify the problem first.

It's often more helpful to talk about why you think something is a problem, rather than just saying it's a problem. Why do you think a line or metaphor is strong or not as strong? This way you are also learning, pushing yourself to identify and articulate what you think is really going on in the poem.

Also, problems are often opportunities. Maybe instead of taking that stanza out, the poem needs three more stanzas. Only the poet can know that. Only they have access to the deep well that the poem came from. Anyone else can only see what's already on the page so any solutions from the outside are limited by that.

Of all the possible true things you might say about someone’s work, try to choose the thing that will help them move the work forward. Useful criticism leaves the writer feeling encouraged about their abilities to improve the work and gives them a sense of how to focus their efforts.

Critical feedback is a gift. Someone is taking their time and devoting their attention to your poem. Adopt an attitude of appreciation. Even if you're disappointed that your poem isn't as far along as you'd hoped, say thank you.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Introductions, questions, concerns. Before class, read [“For You.”](#) and be ready to discuss its themes. Plus: In-class brainstorming and Independent Writing Time.

Week 2: Before class, read [“Ode to Black Skin”](#) and [“Ode on a Grecian Urn.”](#) Plus: In-class discussion of genre writing and odes; compare modern and “traditional” odes; Independent Writing Time. Continue to work on your pieces from class as homework in preparation for next week.

Week 3: Lesson on sonnets. Before class, read [“Death, Be Not Proud”](#) and [“I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed”](#), consider the form. Bring rough draft from Independent Writing Times to class for In-class Workshop #1. Homework due Week 4 -- Use feedback from Workshop #1 to revise and add to your piece.

Week 4: Bring rough draft from independent writing times/homework to class for In-class Workshop #2. Plus: In-class lesson and discussion on provocative poetry and what makes it succeed or flop. **Turn in what you brought to class for further feedback.**

Week 5: Before class, read [“The Undressing”](#). Connect our discussion from last week about provocative works and take notes on voice and line break choices. In-class discussion about your notes and lessons you learned from how the poetry is crafted.

Week 6: Lesson on villanelles. Before class, read [“The House on the Hill”](#) and [“One Art”](#). Take notes and reflect on form before practicing your own in class. **Plus: Introduce Report on Literary Journal assignment. Research short story journals during class time. Choose a topic for your report.**

Week 7: Midsemester conferences instead of class this week. See email. Bring other drafts of poems to your appointment.

Week 8: Before class, please read [“The Witch of Atlas.”](#) Reflect on the use of fantasy and magic in the poem. Plus: How to submit to contests and creative writing scholarships and In-class Workshop #3.

Week 9: Before class, please read [“Beetle Orgy”](#) and [Safia Elhillo](#). Reflect on how gender and sexuality issues and the "inner voice" are treated. Plus: In-class Workshop #4.

Week 10: Lesson on sestina. Before class, please read ["Psychiatrist's Sestina"](#). Practice sestinas in class. **Report on Literary Journal due via email by 11:59 PM on 10/20.**

Week 11: Before class, please read ["My Last Duchess."](#) ["The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,"](#) and [“Talking to His Reflection...”](#) and prepare to discuss writing from different points of view. We will go over poetry reading requirements; brainstorm during class about choices. Plus: Independent Writing Time.

Week 12: Lesson on writing an elegy. Before class, please read [“Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep”](#) and [“The Boy Died in My Alley.”](#) Plus: Independent Writing Time and In-class Workshop #5.

Week 13: Poetry Reading at Bailiwicks! Invite your friends and family! 6:30pm sharp until ??

No class during Thanksgiving and Finals Week: Please submit the final drafts of your collections via email by 11:59 PM on 12/1. I'm happy to read over drafts between now and the due date.