

ENCW 2300: Intro to Poetry

Holly Zhou

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Office Hours: (By appointment) W 11am-12pm

Office: Bryan 423

Class Hours: T/Th 5-6:15pm

Classroom: New Cabell Hall 287

"I believe the poet should investigate. Investigation is important to me because our world, as every world before ours, needs thinkers to illuminate the human condition: why are we here and what does it mean for us to be here? "

–Paul Tran

Course Description

In this course, we will use language to investigate what it means to be human. We will approach language with curiosity, probing at the craft behind poetry to reveal how a piece of writing can make us laugh, cry, and question who we want to be. Our weekly reading and writing exercises will be themed around specific craft points to help us in our investigation. We will examine the poetic line, sound, image, metaphor, meter, form, and diction. We will think about silence—how does it begin, how does it use space, what necessitates a break out of silence, and how does it return to stillness?

Over the course of the semester, you will write and revise at least 6 poems, including a list poem, an ode, an elegy, and other formal experiments. For each prompt, we will workshop several students' poems. We will practice how to give and receive feedback from our peers with compassion, generosity, and sophistication. In addition to poems, you will write one essay on a published poetry collection, which you will workshop and revise with fellow students.

I will be borrowing teaching and writing concepts from educators and poets who have come before me, including but not limited to, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, Audre Lorde, Danielle Chapman, Jay Deshpande, Mary Szybist, my peers in the MFA program, and all of the writers we will read and discuss together this semester.

Required Materials

- Course packet (Packets should be purchased online at the website for [UVA Readers](#). When the purchase is complete an initial email is sent to confirm the order. When the order is ready to be picked up at [The Gray](#) a second email will be sent. Orders may be picked up between 12:00 pm and 5:00 pm. If for some reason the first email is not received, contact UVA Readers at uvareaders@gmail.com.)
- Notebook (for writing journal, in-class writing exercises, etc.)
- **One** of the following poetry collections (available at the UVA bookstore):
 - *Don't Call Us Dead* by Danez Smith
 - *Deaf Republic: Poems* by Ilya Kaminsky
 - *I Do Everything I'm Told* by Megan Fernandes
 - *Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz
 - *All the Flowers Kneeling* by Paul Tran

Assignments

1. **Six** poems written as assigned. Each of these poems should display your significant and thoughtful engagement with the craft of poetry.
2. **One** critical essay (4-5 pages) on how your chosen poetry collection uses poetic craft to embody your perceptions of the collection's intentions.
3. A final portfolio, containing: 1) six revised poems, 2) the critical essay, and 3) a 1-2 page reflection on your writing process, your goals, and how you are using craft.
4. Exercises and drafts from which you will devise the final poems you turn in. Everything we do in this class is intended to prepare you to write and revise the poems for your portfolio.
5. **Vigorous class participation.** Inspired class engagement is always mandatory including lively discussion during workshop and considerations of class reading. Preparedness means consistently arriving with copious notes on both the readings and student poems. Poems should be read multiple times, sometimes aloud and **always with a pen/pencil**. Not every poem assigned will be discussed, but the breadth of the syllabus will deepen your ability to discuss poems knowledgeably. As we won't be able to workshop every single poem (though everyone will be up for workshop an equal number of times), your written responses and in-class feedback are of great value to your peers. In addition to written notes, you should write a (typed) 150-200 word response for each poem being workshopped. You will be each other's best readers; give everyone's work the same care and attention you would like to receive.
6. **Writer's notebook.** This is a space for you to try out poem ideas, work on revisions, make observations about the world around you, and complete class exercises. Every week, you should also **copy out, word for word, one of the poems that we read** that week. I will flip through these notebooks at midterm and at the end of the semester to check that you are using them, but I will not read their contents.

Course Structure

Grades

Category	Percentage
Writer's notebook, poems, exercises, presentations, & peer responses	50
Final portfolio	20
Active participation during reading discussion & workshop	15
Critical essay (draft & final)	15

Essay and poem drafts (the poems you turn in throughout the semester, before the final portfolio) will not receive letter grades. I will return these with marks of ✓, ✓-, or ✓+. Poems that do not fulfill all aspects of the assignment will receive a mark of ✓-. In order for poems to earn a ✓, they must be convincing as thoughtful and serious efforts of original work. (This doesn't mean they can't be outrageous, funny, or irreverent.) Poems that go beyond expectations will receive a mark of ✓+.

Assuming good in-class participation, students who earn a score of ✓ or ✓+ on at least 80% of their drafts will be eligible for a grade of A- or above. Final revisions of the essay and the final portfolio will receive letter grades.

Extra Credit

For extra credit, you may attend one of the student, faculty, or visiting writer readings, either on- or off-campus and write a typed, double-spaced, two-page reflection. You may check the schedule of events at uvacwp.org/calendar.html or creativewriting.virginia.edu/events. The responses must be turned in no later than **one week** after the reading. The extra credit will be worth 3%. By default, I will only accept **one** extra credit essay, but I am happy to work with you individually with regard to extra accommodations.

Course Policies

During Class

Outside of group presentations, **electronic devices will be prohibited** in this course. The course packet containing most of the readings for this semester is available for purchase online at UVA Readers. If there are any obstacles, financial or otherwise, with obtaining the packet, please reach out to me directly. If I assign readings outside of the course packet, I will be sure to bring enough copies for the class.

Attendance

This class makes no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Unless you have a Student Disability Access Center (SDAC) accommodation, you may miss up to two class sessions without penalty. After that, every missed class may result in your final grade being lowered by **1/3 of a letter grade** (an A- drops to a B+, B+ to a B). **7 absences or more** will result in automatic failure. Student athletes must present their official travel schedule at the beginning of the term and come to an agreement with the instructor as to whether missed classes will affect their grade. Students may ask their association dean to write the instructor for exceptions to this policy due to extended illness or family emergencies. Whenever you miss a class, you remain responsible for all work done or assigned in class.

Please do your best to show up to class **on time**. Latecomers will receive partial absences.

Policies on Late Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted for no penalty if a valid excuse is communicated to the instructor at least 24 hours before the deadline. After the deadline, assignments will receive a 10% penalty for each additional day late.

Content Warnings

In order to create a safe reading environment, I will be **requiring trigger warnings on all work that might be sensitive in material to your peers**. This means a brief note along with your poem which includes a content warning if your content is sensitive in nature. Typically those are formatted with the shorthand "CW/:" and followed by a list of the sensitive content the poem contains. Common trigger warnings include but are not limited to: addiction, violence, abuse, suicide, illness, eating disorders, self-harm. If you have any questions about a piece you have written and are submitting for workshop, please let me know ahead of time.

I will be reading poems to be workshopped beforehand. If the work does not seem appropriate for the workshop space I reserve the right to ask you to submit something else. In which case you can always bring the piece to me in office hours for further discussion outside of class. I assume that this will be a very rare occasion, but I want to note it here in case this situation arises.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

As a student enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to abide by the Honor Code at UVA. Plagiarism is an Honor Code violation. From the UVA Honor Committee documentation: "Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas or work as your own original ideas or work. Plagiarism encompasses many things and is by far the most common manifestation of academic fraud. For example, copying a passage straight from a book, a website, or any other source into a paper without using quotation marks and explicitly citing the source is plagiarism. Additionally, paraphrasing without citing your original source is considered plagiarism. It is very important that students properly acknowledge all ideas, work, and even distinctive words or phrases that are not their own. Students unsure of how to properly acknowledge a source are encouraged to consult an RA, TA, professor, or manual of style."

Generative AI

I expect that all students will be turning in their own work. In instances of group projects, I expect students to credit all group members who participated and cite all sources consulted. You may use ChatGPT as a search engine, but not as a generative tool for writing. For example, you may use it to research facts about historical events or definitions of words, but you may not ask it to write your assignments. **Violations of this policy will be considered academic**

misconduct. Different classes at UVA have different policies regarding AI, and it is the student's responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

Bear in mind that I can ask ChatGPT if it wrote something. If you are having trouble and can't get something in on time please come to me, we'll try to work something out. DO NOT rely on AI to turn in your work on time.

Reporting Requirements

As a graduate student employed by UVA I have mandatory reporting requirements. This means that I cannot be considered a confidential resource under certain conditions. These conditions include:

- Sexual harassment disclosures. The university policy is as follows: "The University prohibits Sexual Harassment as defined by Title IX, which includes Quid Pro Quo Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, and Stalking on the basis of sex in an education program or activity ("Title IX Prohibited Conduct") and other forms of sexual and gender-based misconduct, including Non-Consensual Sexual Contact, Non-Consensual Sexual Intercourse, Sexual Exploitation, Intimate Partner Violence, Stalking, Quid Pro Quo Harassment, Hostile Environment Harassment, Complicity in the commission of any act prohibited by this policy, and Retaliation against a person for the good faith reporting of any of these forms of conduct or participation in any investigation or proceeding under this policy ("Sexual or Gender-Based Prohibited Conduct") (collectively, "Prohibited Conduct"). These forms of Prohibited Conduct undermine the values and purpose of the University, and such conduct will not be tolerated."
- Disclosures of suicidal thoughts, attempts, or self harm.
- Disclosures regarding discrimination and harassment.

I am required to report all of these disclosures if they occur **outside** of an "academic context." According to the university, an "academic context" means: "When the disclosure is made in the course of academic coursework, including classroom discussion, papers, or other assignments, unless the disclosure was made to obtain help related to the issue, academic accommodations, extensions, etc." The exception to this distinction regarding the context of the disclosure is self harm. Independent of where this disclosure occurs, I am required to report it.

Mental Health

Below are a few resources that are available to you as a UVA student should you feel that you need them.

- The Student Health and Wellness Center: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for its students. Phone number: 434-243-5150.
- HELP Line: An anonymous service you can call to speak with someone. Please note these are not professionals but they can help you with immediate concerns and also can point you towards other more long term solutions. Phone number: 434-295-TALK.
- Women's Center Counseling: A confidential, individual counseling resource with professional counselors that is open to all gender identities. They can help you with: academic concerns, anxiety and depression, grief, or sexual assault, among many other things. They do not, however, handle crisis counseling. Phone number: 434-982-2252.

Accommodations for Disabilities

I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter barriers, please let me know immediately so we can determine if there is a design adjustment that can be made. I am happy to consider creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity.

If you are a student with a disability or think you may have a disability, you are also welcome to initiate this conversation with the SDAC. SDAC works with students with disabilities and faculty members/TAs to identify reasonable accommodations. Please visit their website for information and to start the application process. If you have already been approved for accommodations through SDAC, please send me your accommodation letter and meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

LGBTQIA2S+

I'm committed to acknowledging and affirming both diverse gender identities and gender fluidity. Chosen names and preferred pronouns will be honored in all official and unofficial communications and in all classroom activities.

Schedule: Readings and Assignments

The below schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Week 01, 01/15 - 01/19: Introduction

- **Poems:**
 - Ada Limón: "The End of Poetry"
 - Reginald Dwayne Betts: "For you: anthophilous, lover of flowers"
 - Gustav Parker Hibbett: "Diversity Statement"

Week 02, 01/22 - 01/26: Sound

Tuesday

- **Due:** List of words
- **Essay:** "Standards of Engagement," "Tips for Thoughtfully & Curiously Engaging in Class Sessions," Excerpt from Seamus Heaney's "Feeling into Words" (stop at "an idea, something intended, incomplete")
- **Poems:**
 - Seamus Heaney: "Digging"
 - Lorine Niedecker: from "Paean to Place"
 - Erica Hunt: "Fr**dom"
 - Eric Yip: "Fricatives"
 - Cathy Park Hong: "All the Aphrodisiacs"
 - Danez Smith: "acknowledgments"

Thursday

- **Essay:** Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process
- **Poems:**
 - Theodore Roethke: "Dolor"
 - Donald Hall: "Summer Kitchen"
 - Craig Arnold: "Meditation on a Grapefruit"
 - Averill Curdy: "Sparrow Trapped in the Airport"
 - Wo Chan: "Wonder Wheel"

Week 03, 01/29 - 02/02: Image

Tuesday

- **Essay:** Rachel Richardson: "Learning Image and Description"
- **Poems:**
 - Ezra Pound: "In a Station of the Metro"
 - William Carlos Williams: "The Red Wheelbarrow," "This is Just to Say"
 - Elizabeth Bishop: "The Fish"
 - Gregory Orr, "Love Poem"
 - Ross Gay: "Ode to Buttoning and Unbuttoning My Shirt"

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #1 (list poem); sound exercise
- **Essay:** "Tips on Reading a Poem," "Giving and Receiving Feedback"
- **Poems:**
 - Sarah Lindsay: "Small Moth"
 - Frank O'Hara: "Animals"
 - Danez Smith: "i'm going back to Minnesota where sadness makes sense"
 - Pablo Neruda: "Ode to my Socks," "Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market"

Week 04, 02/05 - 02/09: Metaphor**Tuesday**

- **Note:** Normally we will have workshops on Thursdays (feedback also due on Thursday), but this week will be an exception.
- **Due:** Handwritten line comments for the workshoppees
- Workshop

Thursday

- **Due:** Typed 150-200 word workshop response (Canvas)
- **Essay:** Ocean Vuong: "Personal Theory on Metaphor"
- **Poems:**
 - T.S. Eliot: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
 - Sylvia Plath: "Blackberrying"
 - A.R. Ammons: "Pet Panther"
 - James Merrill: "The Mad Scene"
 - Katherine Larson: "Love at Thirty-Two Degrees"
 - Chen Chen: "Self-Portrait as So Much Potential"

Week 05, 02/12 - 02/16: Line (Short vs Long)**Tuesday**

- **Poems:**
 - Walt Whitman: From "Song of Myself" (sections 1, 5, 6)
 - Emily Dickinson: "I Like a Look of Agony," "Wild Nights"
 - dawn lonsinger: "Incidental Love Poem"
 - Langston Hughes: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Harlem"
 - Timothy Liu: "The Lovers"

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #2 (ode)
- **Poems:**
 - Gwendolyn Brooks: "The Bean Eaters," "We Real Cool"
 - Terrance Hayes: "The Golden Shovel"
 - William Carlos Williams: "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"
 - W.H. Auden: "Musee des Beaux Arts"
 - Mary Jo Bang: "You Were You Are Elegy"
 - Frank O'Hara: "The Day Lady Died"

Week 06, 02/19 - 02/23: Line (Meter)**Tuesday**

- **Essay:** Denise Levertov: "On the Function of the Line"
- **Poems:**
 - Wallace Stevens: "A Postcard from the Volcano"
 - Robert Frost: "Mending Wall," "Birches"
 - Larkin: "Church Going"

Thursday

- **Due:** Workshop feedback
- Workshop

Week 07, 02/26 - 03/01: Line (Free Verse); Stanza & RefrainTuesday

- **Poems:**
 - Robert Creeley: "I Know a Man," "The Rain"
 - James Wright: "A Blessing"
 - Lorine Niedecker: [I Rose from Marsh Mud]
 - Audre Lorde: "A Litany for Survival"

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #3 (elegy)
- **Poems:**
 - Emily Dickinson: "The Heart Asks Pleasure First,"
 - Agha Shahid Ali: "Tonight"
 - Sylvia Plath: "Mad Girl's Love Song"
 - Gertrude Stein: "Susie Asado"
 - Paul Celan: "Death Fugue"
 - Federico García Lorca: "Sonambulist Ballad"

Week 08, 03/04 - 03/08: No Class: Spring Recess**Week 09, 03/11 - 03/15:** Voice & AudienceTuesday

- **Poems:**
 - John Berryman: Dream Song #14
 - E. E. Cummings: [love is more thicker than forget]
 - Lucille Clifton: "homage to my hips," "jasper texas 1998"
 - Richard Siken: "Scheherazade"
 - Matthew Zapruder: "Bad Bear"
 - Gabrielle Calvocoressi: "I Had a Mane Once"

Thursday

- **Due:** Workshop feedback
- Workshop

Week 10, 03/18 - 03/22: Form: SonnetsTuesday

- **Poems:**
 - William Shakespeare: Sonnet 130
 - John Keats: "When I have Fears That I May Cease to Be"
 - Edna, St. Vincent Millay: [I, Being born a Woman and Distressed] (Sonnet XLI)
 - Robert Hayden: "Those Winter Sundays"
 - Marilyn Nelson: "Balance"

Thursday

- **Due:** Essay draft
- **Poems:**

- Albert Goldbarth: "Shawl"
- Vidyan Ravinthiran: "As a child"
- Terrance Hayes: "Stick Elegy"
- Kiki Petrosino: "Happiness"
- Dorothy Chan: "Triple Sonnet for Liberace's White Pianos and Dream Houses"

Week 11, 03/25 - 03/29: No Class: Conferences

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #4 (sonnet)

Week 12, 04/01 - 04/05: Form: Sestina & Pantoum

Tuesday

- Group presentations on form
- **Reference Poems:**
 - Elizabeth Bishop: "Sestina"
 - Ciara Shuttleworth: "Sestina"
 - Natalie Diaz: "My Brother at 3 A.M."
 - Marilyn Hacker: "Iva's Pantoum"
 - Aireal D. Matthews: "Descent of the Composer"

Thursday

- **Due:** Workshop feedback
- Workshop

Week 13, 04/08 - 04/12: Haibun, Bop, & Ekphrasis

Tuesday

- Group presentations on form: Haibun and Bop
- **Essay:** Aimee Nezhukumatathil: "More than the Birds, Bees, and Trees: A Closer Look at Writing Haibun"
- **Reference Poems:**
 - Aimee Nezhukumatathil: "Summer Haibun"
 - francis guffan: "balding haibun"
 - Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon: "Bop: Haunting"
 - Afaa Michael Weaver: "Rambling"

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #5
- **Essay:** Ayesha Raees: "Grief Became an Artifact: An Interview with Diana Khoi Nguyen"
- **Poems:**
 - Diana Khoi Nguyen: "Beside"
 - Yusef Komunyakaa: "Facing It"
 - Hanif Abdurraqib: "EMOTION"
 - Diane Seuss: "Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl (after Rembrandt)"

Week 14, 04/15 - 04/19: Erasure, Prose Poetry, & Visual Poetry

Tuesday

- **Essay:** Solmaz Sharif: "The Near Transitive Properties of the Political and Poetical: Erasure"
- **Poems:**
 - Solmaz Sharif: from "Reaching Guantánamo"
 - Keith S. Wilson: "line dance for an american textbook"
 - Shira Erlichman: "Ode to Lithium #600"
 - Danez Smith: "dear white america"

Thursday

- **Due:** Workshop feedback
- Workshop

Week 15, 04/22 - 04/26: Poetry Collection Presentations

Thursday

- **Due:** Poem #6

Week 16, 04/29 - 05/03: Class Reading & Celebration

Week 17, 05/06 - 05/10: PORTFOLIOS AND FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5PM ON MAY 10TH