ENG 382A: Beginning Poetry  
Instructor: John McCarthy  
Class Time: Faner 2635: T, TR 9:35am-10:50am

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Office: Faner 2236  
Semester: Spring 2016  
Office Hours:  
T, R: 11:00am-12:00;  
W: 1:00pm-4:00pm

ENGLISH 382A: Introduction to Poetry

“Great literature is language charged to the utmost possible degree.” –Ezra Pound

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

“Every last word is contagious.” –Jericho Brown

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This Introduction to Poetry course is designed to build on the fundamentals of creative writing that you acquired in English 119: Introduction to Creative Writing. In this class, we will use generative exercises, craft discussions, examination and deconstruction of texts, and contemporary workshop models to polish your creative and critical skills.

Students need to know that this is just as much of a reading course as it is a writing course, and completion of the assigned readings is just as essential as completion of the writing exercises and individual poems. There will be one formal text we will use as a general guide to generate writing, as well as expand upon our poetic fundamentals, including form, context, narrative, music, quidditas, etc.

Although some of this course will be devoted to the close reading of poetry, much this course’s primary emphasis is on the development of your own craft, and that means writing, both in and out of class.

Ideally, this course should prepare you to:

1) Recognize, understand, and be able to articulate specific craft terminology in poetry.  
2) Develop your creative work with attention to narrative, form, music, and imagination.  
3) Comment on others’ work skillfully, constructively, and respectfully and receive feedback with grace.  
4) Improve your own work through thoughtful and intensive revision.

Please note: I will lecture about 25% of the time. The other 75% of class not spent in workshop will be based on formal and informal discussion of the required texts. When you read these books, you should not be reading them just to finish or complete the assignment, but to be open to their emotional registers, their deeper, personal meanings, and societal import.
REQUIRED TEXTS (All four books will be used in this class.)

Trigger Warnings: Some of the material discussed in this class will cover issues that some may find sensitive or offensive, possibly including Race, Class, issues within the LGBTQ community, Religion, and Death. This class is a safe space, but do not be afraid to ask questions. Please see the disruptive behavior policy for more information.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You will be doing two main actions in this class: reading and writing. These are the two most important ways you can develop yourself as a writer, and we will be doing a lot of each, as well as engaging in a detailed class discussion about what we’ve read. As such, it is absolutely necessary and required that you complete your reading for every class period.

This class is based on reading, writing, and discussion. Therefore, it is essential the homework assignments – both read and written – are completed in a timely and thorough manner. Although some class time will be devoted to completing writing exercises, the majority of your development as writers will take place through practice outside of the classroom. Repeated failure to complete readings and homework assignments will result in lowered grade or failure of the course.

- **Participation (in Class and Workshop) 30%** – Because this class is largely discussion-based, it’s important that all students are engaged in our discussions of class readings. Class participation, therefore, is a big part of your overall course grade. In addition, there will be three workshop sessions throughout the course of the semester. Attendance is mandatory for workshop sessions. Your workshop grade will depend upon your attendance, engagement, and the quality of the written feedback you give your fellow writers. Failure to give written feedback, to attend class on a workshop day, or offer verbal feedback during a workshop session will result in a lowered grade. Your participation grade may also include an occasional reading or craft quiz.

- **Writing Journal 10%** - Much of the in-class writing you complete will not be formally collected or graded, however, I expect you to keep a writing journal throughout the semester to contain your in-class and out-of-class writings. I will collect this journal at the end of the semester to be graded, but fear not: it’ll be returned to you at the final.

- **Craft Analysis Essay 20%** - Throughout the semester we’ll discuss the elements of craft and how they work in the various pieces we read and workshop. Near the end of the semester you will write a 3-5 page craft essay in which you analyze the work of another writer. The material
you choose as your subject can be any of the books or poems we read in class or something you find on your own and approved by me.

- **Online Literary Journal Research Project 10%** – Near the end of the semester, we will be completing a project in which you will choose a current, contemporary online literary journal to investigate. You'll write a brief reflective paper about your findings.
- **Final Portfolio 30%** – At the end of the semester, you will be selecting your strongest work of the semester to put together in a final portfolio. You will write a brief introduction reflecting on what you learned as a writer, and your grade will be based not only on the quality of your pieces, but on the quality of the revision that you've made to each based on workshop comments and instructor feedback.

**Assignment Breakdown Chart:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Total Points (of 1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Participation</td>
<td>Active and engaged verbal and written participation in class and in workshop</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Journal</td>
<td>Journal to hold in class writing exercises and homework, collected and returned at the end of the semester</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Analysis Essay</td>
<td>3-5 page paper analyzing the creative work of another poet</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Literary Journal Research Project</td>
<td>3-5 page paper written in reaction to the study of a contemporary online literary journal</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>A folder containing six completed and revised poems written throughout the semester and a two page reflective essay</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**ATTENDENCE AND TARDINESS POLICIES**

I am aware that you are all very busy and that your schedules demand a lot from you. However, participation in class discussion, attention to the class lectures, and especially participation in workshop are all integral parts of this course. Being a writer and successful student means showing up, and that starts with coming to class on time. I will therefore strictly enforce the following attendance, tardiness and late work policies:

1) If you are 10 minutes late to class (or leave 10 minutes early) this constitutes an unexcused absence and you will not receive credit for attending, nor for any work you completed that day.
2) You may accumulate three unexcused absences (or tardies) for free. Nothing bad will happen. However, at the fourth unexcused absence, your overall grade will drop a half a letter grade. On the fifth, you'll lose a full letter grade. If you accumulate six or more unexcused absences and tardies, you'll automatically fail the class.

3) If you miss one of your workshop days, your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade. There is no way to make up a workshop, so this point is non-negotiable.

4) You must keep track of your own absences. I will not notify you if you’re on the brink of failure because of tardiness/unexcused absences, however you may ask me about this at any time. For student privacy reasons, I am not allowed to email you your current number of absences, but we can talk after class or in my office hours.

5) If miss class and cannot provide a valid excuse, you will not earn points for what you miss. Again, this point is non-negotiable.

HOWEVER, if you get sick, or you have a very good reason for missing class, such as a university sporting event, wedding, funeral, job interview etc., you can absolutely get the absences excused, although I need to see documentation for this. If you are suffering from a legitimate illness, stay home. If, during the course of the semester, some recurring illness or family issue presents itself, please talk to me after class or during my office hours and we'll discuss options.

WORKSHOP POLICY

You will be generating at least six full drafts of poems throughout the semester and at least three of these poems will be presented to workshop for critique and feedback. Students will be divided into three workshop groups and workshops will take place every Thursday, beginning the fourth week of class (see the schedule for more information). The due date to turn in workshop poems will always be due at midnight the Monday before your workshop, so be prepared ahead of time. I will email the week’s workshop poems to everyone. You will then be expected to print out all these poems (including your own) and comment on them for workshop. Be aware that workshop poems will not be accepted late. If you fail to turn in your workshop poem on time, you forfeit your workshop time and will receive an automatically lowered final grade.

In workshop, you are expected to remain professional and courteous to your peers while offering suggestions and critique to better their writing. In order to earn full credit for workshop participation students should arrive with written comments on their peer’s work as well as a willingness and ability to discuss the work being reviewed. This commentary should be completed in advance of workshop. We will discuss workshop policies more specifically in the second week of class.

Here is a metaphor: Have you ever typed out a really long text to a friend or someone you liked—I mean really long, like almost creepy long—explaining your heart or situation, only to have that person respond with not even one word, but one letter, k? How did that make you feel? How hurt were you?

Keep that feeling in mind when you are commenting on someone else’s poems. The writer has put a lot of time and effort into their poem. Sometimes they have risked deeply personal parts of themselves on the page, so you should be commenting with that much effort and respect.
PRINTING POLICY

Although informal exercises will be handwritten in class, you will be expected to print out all of the workshop poems for each workshop, in advance. You will need access to a home printer, or you will need money on your Debit Dawg account. Claiming that you don’t have money on your Debit Dawg for printing is not an acceptable excuse for not printing the workshop poems. Your grade will be lowered.

CELL PHONES AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

I understand that, in today’s world of screens, it’s hard to pay attention for whole hour and fifteen minutes. However, in my classroom I expect you to show your respect to me and to your fellow classmates by arriving to class on time and staying off of your cell phone, iPod, laptop, tablet etc. for the duration of class. Use of electronic devices will result in an absence. You are further expected to treat your fellow writer (and myself) with dignity and courtesy at all times, which means not interrupting, teasing, intimidating, or invalidating your classmates in any way. Disagreeing with and debating each other in a reasonable and open-minded way is invited and encouraged, but only if respect and courtesy are present at all times. If you repeatedly or egregiously violate any of these expectations, you will be asked to leave my classroom and required to meet with the Writing Studies Office before you’re allowed to return.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of other people’s words and claiming that they’re your own. Although we will talk about allusions (i.e. how to reference someone else’s work without actually stealing it), intentional plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. You will fail the assignment, and repeated plagiarism will result in failure of the class.

Tentative Class Timeline (Subject to change)

Week One—Readings will be provided
Tuesday, January 19 – Introductions, Syllabus, Class Expectations, Writing Exercises
Thursday, January 21 – Writing Exercises, Craft Talk

Week Two—Selections from Poet’s Companion
Tuesday, January 26 – Writing Exercises, Craft Talk
Thursday, January 28 – Writing Exercises, Workshop Expectations

Week Three—Selections from Hive, Selections from Poet’s Companion
Tuesday, February 2 – Craft Talk, Group 1 pass out poems
Thursday, February 4 – Workshop 1, Group 1

Week Four—Selections from Hive, Selections from Poet’s Companion
Tuesday, February 9 – Craft Talk, Group 2 pass out poems
Thursday, February 11 – Workshop 1, Group 2

**Week Five**— Selections from *Hive*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, February 16 – Craft Talk, Group 3 pass out poems
Thursday, February 18 – Workshop 1, Group 3

**Week Six**— Selections from *Hive*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, February 23 – Craft Talk, Group 4 pass out poems
Thursday, February 25 – Workshop 1, Group 4

**Week Seven**— Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, March 1 – Craft Talk, Group 5 pass out poems
Thursday, March 3 – Workshop 1, Group 5

**Week Eight**— Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, March 8 – Craft Talk, Group 1 pass out poems
Thursday, March 10 – Workshop 2, Group 1.

**Week Nine**
Spring Break! Write and read all the poetry.

**Week Ten**— Selections from *Paradise Indiana*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, March 22 – Craft Talk, Group 2 pass out poems
Thursday, March 24 – Workshop 2, Group 2

**Week Eleven**— Selections from *Paradise Indiana*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, March 29 – Craft Talk, Group 3 pass out poems
Thursday, March 31 – Workshop 2, Group 3

**Week Twelve**— Selections from *Paradise Indiana*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, April 5 – Craft Talk, Group 4 pass out poems
Thursday, April 7 – Workshop 2, Group 4. Journal reading assignment due.

**Week Thirteen**—Selections of poems by Little Grassy Literary Festival authors: Poems by these authors will be provided
Tuesday, April 12 - Craft Talk, Group 5 and Group 1 pass out poems
Thursday, April 14 – Workshop 2, Group 5

**Week Fourteen**—Selections of poems by Little Grassy Literary Festival authors, continued.
Tuesday, April 19 – Workshop 3, Group 1. Group 2 pass out poems.
Thursday, April 21 Little Grassy Literary Festival Events

**Week Fifteen**— Selections from *[insert] boy*, Selections from *Poet’s Companion*
Tuesday, April 26 – Workshop 3, Group 2. Group 3 pass out poems.
Week Sixteen—Selections from [insert] boy, Selections from Poet’s Companion

Week Seventeen—Portfolio Due
Final Exam, TBD

* Portions of this syllabus have been borrowed from past syllabi used by Emily Rose Cole and Staci Schoenfeld