COURSE OVERVIEW

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Office Hours:  M 1-2; W 4-5 (and by appointment)

Course Description: This course offers students opportunity to further their study of the art of writing poetry. Because learning to read critically is crucial to developing as a writer, much of our class time will be devoted to discussing poems and essays on poetics by various contemporary poets. Students will be expected to produce at least one substantial, analytical essay intended to deepen and clarify their understanding of a specific poet’s work. Additionally, students will be expected to regularly submit their own poems to the class (up to one a week) and to critically engage their peers’ poems both in writing and in class discussion. Students will then be expected to submit revisions of their poems that take into account the suggestions they received by way of the workshop. Attendance is mandatory.

NOTE: Students must get the professor’s approval before being admitted into the class. Please e-mail me at david.vance@utsa.edu and include a brief sentence or two telling me about your previous writing workshop experience. Also include a portfolio of no less than 5 poems (preferably as an attachment).

Texts and Materials


Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus

Access to a computer with internet connection (we will be using Web-CT) and printer.
Lots of paper and printer ink/toner.
Time to Read and Think

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class. Assignments will often be made in class, and it is your responsibility to find out what is expected of you. Being absent in no way excuses being unprepared for the following class. In-class writing assignments can not be "made up."

Missing two classes excludes the possibility of earning an "A" in the course. Missing three classes will result in a failing grade. Only absences documented with a physician's note or from some other worthy source will be "excused." The professor will have the final say as to whether an absence will be excused regardless the reason.

Religious Holiday Policy: Students unable to attend classes on particular days because of sincerely held religious beliefs shall, without penalty, be excused from such classes and be given meaningful opportunity to make up examinations, graded activities or assignments provided the instructor is notified of their needs within the first two weeks of the term.
Late Papers: Late assignments will be marked down one letter grade. If a student is absent the class period an assignment is due, his/her work will be marked down two letter grades. (In other words, DO NOT SKIP CLASS TO FINISH AN ASSIGNMENT.)

Grade Distribution: Semester Grades will be based on performance in the following areas; approximate percentage breakdown will be as follows:

15% Participation
This class is student-centered and student-driven. In other words, you as students are responsible for determining much of its form and content. Your input, your intellectual curiosity, your imagination and enthusiasm shall determine just how “interesting,” “meaningful,” and “useful” it will be for you and your peers. Hence, your participation in class is mandatory. Students are expected to come to class prepared, to turn in assigned drafts and critiques on time, and to contribute positively to workshop discussions. Participation grades will be based upon students’ attentiveness in class, ability to answer questions well, ability to ask intelligent questions, and willingness to interact productively in class discussions.

20% Process Assignments/In-Class Writing
Process Assignments are designed to help students fully engage in specific phases of the writing process and include:
- Writing Exercises
- Reading Response Papers
- Peer-Critiques/Responses
- Self-Assessment Exercises

10% Literary Event Responses (2-3pp each). For this assignment students are required to attend two approved literary events and to write a 2pp response for each describing the event and offering a critical analysis of the works/ideas presented.

10% Discussion Leader Assignments (1p each). Students will be asked to lead discussions on peer’s poems and also to lead discussion on assigned texts. For these assignments, students should come to class prepared with points they want to make and questions they’d like to pose. For purposes of grading, students should turn into the instructor a 1-2pp outline of their points and questions.

15% Mixed-media Project. For this assignment, students are asked to produce a poem that is not page-bound. This means presenting a poem in some way other than as text on an otherwise blank page. Possibilities include sound pieces or videos/animations, art objects, or something that combines text and image. Students will need to get their proposal approved before completing the project and shall be required to turn in a rationale for the piece as well as a description of their process.

20% Analytical Essay (5-8 pp). This paper should offer critical analysis of either a single poet’s work or some general poetic concern/idea. Students will be required to submit an abstract of their argument for approval. They will also be asked to present a draft of their paper for peer critiques.

10% Revised Poems A collection of students' poems revised and collected into a presentation copy (1 for each member of the class). Graded on quality of revision, attention to detail, as well as complexity and quality of finished product.

Grading Criteria: Your grade will be determined by both the timely completion of course requirements and the quality of your responses. Because an “A” requires work above and beyond basic course requirements, additional readings/response papers, poems, or critical work may be turned in at any time. Be aware that your class grade is heavily dependent on class discussion, your contribution to workshops, and other activities which cannot be made up, more than two absences will result in a failing grade.
“A” -- Regular attendance; no more than one absence; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive and constructive way; student’s writing is virtually free of grammatical and spelling errors, is thoughtful, creative, interesting, and above all, original; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework on time and student’s revisions are substantial and polished; student demonstrates enthusiasm in class and concern and dedication to the course itself; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers; student’s comments show both sensitivity and honesty; student has turned in pieces of creative writing or critical work beyond what has been assigned.

“B” -- Regular attendance; no more than two absences; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive and constructive way; student’s writing has few grammatical and spelling errors, is thoughtful, creative, and above all, original; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework and student’s revisions are substantial and polished; student demonstrates enthusiasm in class and concern and dedication to the course itself; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers.

“C” -- Regular attendance; no more than two absences; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a constructive way; student’s writing, has some grammatical errors and/or lacks originality; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework and student’s revisions are adequate; student often demonstrates enthusiasm in class; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers, and has attended one literary event and one response paper.

“D” -- Regular attendance; no more than two absences; student is usually prepared for class, participation is lacking in quality; student’s writing has frequent grammatical errors, lacks originality; and/or is regularly not turned in on time; student may not have turned in all required in-class writing and homework; student’s revisions are adequate; however, student fails to show interest in other’s writing or in the class materials.

“F” -- Any performance less than that of a “D”

Policy Regarding Student Writing And Behavior In Creative Writing Courses:

Writing instructors may, at their sole discretion, refuse to workshop or comment upon any student work they deem patently offensive or outside their professional purview. Instructors should make every effort to communicate their standards so students know what is likely to be considered unacceptable. If the instructor determines that a student’s submission is unacceptable, they should inform the student and give him or her opportunity to submit an alternative work.

If an instructor believes a student's writing or personal manner suggest they are emotionally unstable and may pose a risk to themselves or others, the instructor may insist the student see a professional counselor (through the university counseling center) as a condition for continued participation in the workshop. If the student’s behavior violates the Student Code of Conduct, the instructor may file a referral with Student Judicial Affairs. Faculty may also, at their discretion, report concerns about student behavior to the UTSA police. In all cases, instructors should register their concerns with the Department Chair.

Relevant Web Contacts/Resources:

Counseling Services <http://www.utsa.edu/counsel/index.htm>
Student Judicial Affairs <http://www.utsa.edu/OSJA/index.cfm>
Student Code of Conduct <http://www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.cfm>
UTSA Police Department <http://www.utsa.edu/utsapd/>

Disclaimer: I, Dr. David Ray Vance, reserve the right to amend or revise this syllabus in any manner I deem beneficial for the class.