

Dr. Tina Barr Creative Writing: Advanced Poetry Workshop, Course 300
 Class meets 11:00-12:15 pm T/Th in Clough Hall 300, Office, 307 Palmer Hall, 843-3979.

Office Hours Mondays 1:00 to 2:45 pm, Tuesdays 12:45-1:45 and Thursdays 9:30-10:30.

You have the opportunity to speak with me during the week outside of class during the above office hours, and by appointment. You can also email me at:

TinaBarr@rhodes.edu. I am available on my teaching days, Mondays through Thursdays, to work with you, but set aside time for my own work during weekends.

Course Description: This class will advance students' knowledge of the principles of good poetry, including prosody, through readings in **Required Texts:**

1. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Volume 2, Contemporary Poetry*, ISBN 0-393-97792-7 2. *An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity of Their Art*, edited by Annie Finch and Katherine Varnes, 3. *Writing Without the Muse*, Beth Baruch Joselow, Story Line Press 4. *The Handbook of Poetic Forms*, edited by Ron Padgett. 5. *Everything is Burning*, poetry by Gerald Stern (5 texts)

Students are expected *to analyze and prepare to discuss the poems and essays they read, ahead of time, so that they will make significant contributions to class discussion.* The more each member contributes in different ways to the workshop the more interesting it will be. You are also welcome to bring in 15 copies of poems by outside writers that interest you, or other essays you would like to discuss. This semester, you will begin, if you haven't already, to express your ideas through received or invented forms. *Make use of your Handbook of Poetic Forms as reference. In addition, use the book of exercises, Writing Without the Muse, at your discretion.*

Course Requirements:

- 1.** Students must attend carefully to the **reading requirements by preparing the reading outside of class**, and **contribute significantly to class discussion.** (30%).
- 2.** Students must turn in a **portfolio** (50%) of poems at midterm and at end of term; these should consist of a folder that contains only the **final revisions** of the **best poems you have worked on from the beginning of term through midterm and then from the beginning of term through the end of the semester.** Portfolios should consist of 8-14 poems, but no more than 14. You will **need to select the very best of your poems on your own. Do not ask me which poems are best.** You will already know this based on my comments in your workshop. Excellence is more important than quantity, and usually comes after careful revision. Midterm grades tend to be conservative, so grades *can* go up considerably, but *may also remain the same* for a final grade if you have been unable to improve your work.
- 3.** Students will prepare a **10 minute** presentation (20 %) on topics to be selected. If I feel the class needs to be prodded in terms of careful attention to the assigned reading, I

may surprise the class with spontaneous quizzes, which will be graded as part of class participation.

Grading: Grades are based on talent as demonstrated in the poems, but achievement in poetry is usually the result of the *work* of *editing and revising*. Writers must employ clear grammatical construction, complete sentences, and careful punctuation. They must make use of concrete imagery and careful diction. Poetry is a discipline. The use of abstract terms and generalized imagery will not result in good poetry. Careful reading of fellow students' work, careful reading of assigned texts, class participation, effort and attitude also count. The professor has been known to reduce a final grade based on attitude alone. (This falls under contributions to class discussion 30%.)

Procedures: Students will be responsible for turning in **two copies** of each poem they want discussed in class. I will take one packet; the other will go to the excellent department secretary for duplication. She must have lead time to Xerox. **The poem will not appear in the packet unless the student turns in two copies.** When packets are handed out, students should go over them before the next class period, make written comments and notations, and be prepared to offer feedback. Please note: You should prepare the weekend before, for the coming week. **Thus: "Assignment for next week" is due the following week.**

Weekly Requirements for Poems: Students generally will turn in a poem every week for class discussion. Students should be continually revising their work. ALL students need to complete exercises from *Writing Without the Muse* on a weekly basis as a way to generate poems. Please DO NOT EMAIL POEMS TO ME, either for class or outside of class.

Conferences: Conference time is built into the syllabus as part of the opportunity offered by this course. **Conferences that are missed cannot be rescheduled.** Students should use this time to consult about 1. difficulty with generating poems, 2. if they would like to share poems they'd rather the class did not see, or have questions about 3. revising, expanding or developing a specific poem. (In general, **do not** use this time to discuss poems we have covered in workshop. If I have already given you comments, you need to engage with them, and not ask me to look at the poem. Always bring your poetry folder to conference. **I will not read poems that have not been typed up. You are limited to seeing me twice** in conference unless you have 1. poems you are truly afraid to share in class, 2. a problem you need to discuss. My time is under severe constraint with two writing workshops AND a 3rd course. I appreciate your understanding.

Attendance: Students should miss no more than 2 classes a semester, based on a medical absence or family emergency. If you need to miss a class based on an absence of this sort, please call or email the professor. More than 2 absences may result in a reduction in the final grade for the course.

Course Structure: We will be reading short essays each week from *An Exaltation of Forms*. Class will be based on these discussions in conjunction with examples of poems in the above text AND outside reading in *The Norton Anthology*. Thus you will broaden your focused reading in poetry in general. You will also turn in about a poem a week, based on our discussion OR by selecting on your own a Poetic “form” from the *Handbook of Poetic Forms*, and using *Writing Without the Muse*. The poem should be marked near your name with the identification of the form. You have a choice then, of looser or more disciplined forms, but you’ll need to turn in some more disciplined forms, regardless of your predilections. They will be assigned. Note: If you have difficulty with a form, that’s part of the process. Work at the use of the form, even if you end up with something that works as a 12 line poem, rather than a 14 line sonnet, or a lopsided villanelle. The point is to engage with the discipline of form. Nothing need be perfect, and all the “forms” were invented at one point anyway. Ideally all writers reinvent or invent their own signatures, their own forms.

Student Reports: You will give one oral report during the semester. You may work on a report on a received form, that is part of our syllabus, such as sonnet, villanelle, ghazal, and introduce a discussion of this received form with reference to a particular poem by a particular poet, usually included in your assigned reading, or from the Norton. You may illuminate for the class other forms, such as Haiku, Sestina, Hip-Hop, or Performance Poetry, etc. with reference to specific poems. Be brief with background. You **don’t** need to give a history of forms we’ve already read the essay on. If we **have not** read on this form as a class, describe it briefly. The **third option is to focus on a poet from the Norton**, whose work we have not discussed in class. You should take **NO MORE than 15-20 minutes of class time**. **Focus on specific poems. Ask questions rather than necessarily lecturing. Do what is comfortable, but allow for discussion and class participation. Engage your class.**

Responsibilities: My job as your professor is to instruct you in techniques of poetic analysis and model for you the terms and approaches to that analysis. My job is also to assist you in learning to improve your writing of poems, primarily during the workshop. Your job is **to assimilate my suggestions and revise your work** as you see fit. **In an advanced workshop you are already familiar with basic tenets: writing in concrete terms, including specific detail, trying to generate DEPTH of meaning in your poems. During this semester, you will work to IMPROVE YOUR REVISING STRATEGIES ON YOUR OWN, with far less input from me. I cannot micromanage your editing process. This is a practice that is up to you, with input from the workshop.**

Week 1 8/25

Distribute syllabus prior to class contract, to be signed on Tuesday.

Assignment for next week: Work on 3 pieces of work generated by doing your choice of 3 exercises from *Writing Without the Muse*. Submit **two** copies of each of the three poems on Tuesday, after working to revise them over the weekend. Read the **entire syllabus over word by word prior to signing class contract on Tuesday**. You will then

understand how the course is structured and where I am taking you. I will hold you responsible for assimilating the contents of the syllabus, **because some of my policies will have changed** from your earlier experience in an Intro or other Advanced workshop.

Week 2 8/30 & 9/1

Field questions on syllabus, class contract, collect poems. Discussion of poems on handouts by Alice Friman, W.S. Merwin, Louise Gluck. Class discussion of poems on Thursday.

Assignment for next week: Read in an *Exaltation of Forms* essay by Dana Gioia, beginning on page 15, as well as poems he includes in his essay. Read poems in *Norton Anthology*: read sections in the *Norton* by Richard Wilber with a focus on “Boy at the Window,” and “The Writer.” Keep Gioia’s discussion in mind. Discover how Wilber uses stress in these poems. Write a poem based on **accentual verse**, or **another form** in the *Handbook of Poetic Forms* on Tuesday

Week 3 9/6 & 9/8

Turn in your two copies of the poem you wrote. If you do not turn in TWO copies YOUR poems will not be included in the packet. Discussion of Gioia essay, accompanying poems and poems by Wilber. Class workshop on Thursday.

Assignment for next week: Read in *Exaltation of Forms* essay by Margaret Holley on Syllabics, page 24, the poems she includes and section on Dylan Thomas’s poetry in the *Norton*, page 101 and on. Note “Fern Hill” and other poems Holley mentions. Write a poem in syllabics, **remembering to mark the assignment** as **syllabics**.

Week 4 9/13 & 9/15

Discussion of Holley’s essay on syllabics, with focus on poems you read in conjunction with essay. Turn in your poem on syllabics, two copies of course!

Assignment for 9/20 & 9/22 : Read essay on Blank Verse by Anthony Hecht in *E of F*; read his poetry in your *Norton*, page 228 and on, with a focus on page 231/232 “The Deodand.” Note how Hecht is able to enlarge his subject. Write a poem, in **blank verse**, (and don’t forget to consult your *Handbook of Poetic Forms*, on this or another form) and mark the poem’s form on the top of the page when you turn in your **two copies on 9/20**.

Week 5 9/20 & 9/22

Discussion of Hecht’s essay and poem, etc. Turn in your own poem, either blank verse or another form.

Assignment for next week: Read poems by Gerald Stern in *Everything is Burning*. Read the essay on “Free Verse,” by Michelle Boisseau, page 73 in *An Exaltation of Form*, and

the accompanying poems. Bring in **two copies** of a **free verse** poem you write based on some **subject or technique** connected to Stern's poems with you to class on Tuesday. Identify at the top of the page **how** your poem is related to Stern's.

Week 6 9/27 & 9/29 National Book Award winner Gerald Stern to read his poetry at 7:30 pm on 9/29 in Blount Auditorium, Buckman Hall, attendance required.

Discuss Stern's work and group work on student poems. Sign up for Conference next week.

Assignment for next week: There will be no class next week, since it is conference week.
Revise poems for Midterm Portfolio, due on 10/6. Your portfolio should consist of a folder that contains only the **final revisions** of **all** the *poems you have worked on from the beginning of term through midterm*. Portfolios **at midterm** should consist of a minimum of 4 and up to 8 **BUT NO MORE THAN 8**, of your best poems. Midterm grades tend to be conservative, so grades *can* go up considerably, but *may also remain the same* for a final grade.

Week 7 10/4 & 10/6 No Classes, See Dr. Barr in Conference. Portfolio due 10/6 (no later) by noon, outside my office door.

Conference Week. See Dr. Barr in Palmer 307, her office, during the conference time you scheduled. She will post the list on her office door. Conferences that are missed cannot be rescheduled. Students should use this time to consult about 1. difficulty with generating poems, 2. or if they would like to share a poem they'd rather the class did not see, or have questions about 3. **revising, expanding or developing a specific poem.** Plan to ask for a consultation on **no more than 2 poems**. Always bring **your poetry folder to conference. I will not read poems that have not been typed up.**

*Assignment for next week: Read "The Blues," an essay by Raymond Patterson, in *E of Forms*, as well as the section by Robert Hayden, page 54 and on in the *Norton*. Write a **blues** poem. See *Handbook of Poetic Forms* Two Students to report. (If you are reporting on the blues, other poets whose work could be considered in this context, and who have work in the *Norton*: Gwen Brooks, page 140 and on, Kamau Braithwaite, 542, and on; Audre Lord, page 615 and on, Lucille Clifton, page 658, June Jordan, page 664, Amiri Baraka, page 632, Michael Harper, page 698, and Yusef Komunyakaa, page 858 and on in your *Norton*.) You could pick one or two poems to illustrate the blues tradition, etc.*

Week 8 10/11 & 10/13

Turn in blues poem, **Three Student reports**; discussion of blues poems.

No assignment over Fall break: but revise your poems

Week 9 10/20

Food Poems by Natasha Saje & exercise (Lemon, Tofu, Chocolate---sour, bland, sweet)

Assignment for next week: Read essay by Agha Shahid Ali on “Ghazal: To Be Teased Into Disunity.” Page 210 of *Exaltation of Forms*. Write a **Ghazal**, or an attempt at one, (See *Handbook of Poetic Forms*) and revise or invent another “food” poem. Anyone who received less than a B- for the midterm grade needs to arrange a conference during my office hours. Please do not sign up request one if you received a B- or more.

Week 10 10/25 & 10/27

Student Report on Ghazal, Student report on poet from Norton class discussion of student poems

Assignment for next week: Read essay on The Sonnet by Marilyn Hacker in *E of F*, as well as sonnets in handouts that will be brought in to class by Dr. Barr. Attend to the Gwen Brooks sonnet in *E of F*. See “Twelfth Floor West,” page 814, and 2 “almost sonnets” on page 817 of the *Norton*. These are by Marilyn Hacker and Dave Smith. Write a **sonnet**. See *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. Two students to report on sonnets.

Week 11 11/1 & 11/3

Two student reports & discussion of sonnets Thursday, **one student report & discuss** student sonnets

Assignment for next week: Read Maxine Kumin’s essay on “Gymnastics: The Villanelle,” page 314 in *Exaltation of Forms*. Revise sonnet. Write a **villanelle**. See *Handbook of Poetic Forms*.

Week 12 11/8 & 11/10 (Conferences on 11/10) so no class

11/8 Student report on villanelle; bring in 15 copies of either your villanelle OR your revision of your sonnet. What we don’t workshop I can look at in conference.

Bring in ONE poem, written in any of the received forms you have worked in, to conference on the date you have scheduled.

Assignment for next week: revise your poems, Complete an exercise, if you like, from *Writing Without the Muse* or by consulting your *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. I would suggest **an epistle**. Next week we will have 3 **student reports** on various poets.

Week 13 11/15 & 11/17 (Conferences on 11/17) so no class

Three Student reports on various poets

Assignment for next week: Revise your poems.

Week 14 11/22 (Conferences today, so no class) Have a great Thanksgiving! No assignment. But bring in 15 copies of poems (no more than 3 poems) you would like discussed in workshop the week after Thanksgiving. Both days will be devoted to an open workshop. No packets will be Xeroxed. You are responsible for bringing your own copies for each class member.

Your final portfolios are due on December 6th. Students must turn in a **portfolio** (50%) of poems at end of term; these should consist of a folder that contains only the **final revisions** of the best *poems you have worked on from the beginning of term through the end of the semester*. Portfolios should consist of a minimum of 8 and up to 14, **BUT NO MORE THAN 14**, of your best poems. **It is up to you to select them.** Excellence is more important than quantity, and usually comes after careful revision. Midterm grades tend to be conservative, so grades *can* go up considerably, but may also remain the same for a final grade if you have been unable to improve your work.

Week 15 11/29 & 12/1

Workshop Week

Work on revisions for **Final Portfolio due on December 6th. Please bring in contributions, food & drink, for next Tuesday's final class and party Bring in an extra copy of your "Best" poem to read and share with the class.**

Week 16 December 6th

Please bring in contributions, food & drink, for Today's party. **Turn in portfolio.**