Dr. Tina Barr
Creative Writing: Introductory Poetry Workshop, Course 200
Office, 307 Palmer Hall, (901) 843-3979, Office Hours 10-12 Wednesday mornings and
by appointment. You can also email me at: TinaBarr@rhodes.edu If you need to reach me,
I am often working at home (725-1443), so please call me at home if you don’t reach
me in the office. I don’t have email at my house.

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to principles of good
poetry, with readings in a manual of prosody, readings of work by outside writers and
several brief essays from Hugo’s The Triggering Town. Students are expected to analyze
and prepare to discuss the poems and essays they read, so that they will make significant
contributions to class discussion. Some assignments will be more difficult and require
more effort than others. If you apply yourself and make a strong effort to work at the
reading and writing, your experience of this course will be richer. Please don’t hesitate
to share your own interests with the class, by bringing in work by writers whose
poems you admire. The more each member contributes in different ways to the
workshop the more interesting it will be.

Required Texts: The Poem’s Heartbeat by Alfred Corn, Story Line Press, 1997;
Coursepack; The Triggering Town by Richard Hugo, Norton, 1979; The Practice of
Coursepack has more material than we can cover. You may want to note the poems by
Donne, Herbert, Herrick and others, that help to supplement the reading you are doing in
the Corn book on prosodic forms.

Course Requirements: 1. Students must attend carefully to the reading requirements
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 the final revisions of all the poems you have worked on thus far. Portfolios
should consist of 10-14 poems. Excellence is more important than quantity, and usually
comes after careful revision, but include all the poems you’ve written, since the professor
will decide on a grade based on the strongest elements in the work. Midterm grades tend
to be conservative, so grades can go up considerably, but may also remain the same for a
final grade. 3. Students will prepare responses to and questions on the work of a
particular poet included in the syllabus; they will open up class discussion on that poet
with reference to the assigned reading in the Alfred Corn manual on prosody and, if
relevant, the Hugo chapters. Consider these oral reports (20%) seriously. You will be
graded on them. 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.

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. It is a discipline. 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. Students must turn in two typed copies. One will go into the packet I prepare for discussion; the other will go to the excellent department secretary for duplication. The poem will be returned to the student unless he or she 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.

Conferences: I am available for conferences on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Students should request a conference or stop by during office hours at least once during the semester. Students should feel free to consult with me if they have difficulty with their writing, would like to share poems with me rather than the class, or have questions.

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.

Please note: You should prepare the weekend before, for the coming week. Sometimes we will discuss the assigned readings on Tuesdays, and the student work on Thursdays; at other times we may begin discussion with student poems on Tuesdays.

Week 1  8/23

Introductions, class requirements, in-class exercises, sign up for conferences next week.

Assignment for next week: Work on revision of drafts done for in-class writing exercises. (self-portrait, aromatherapy) Bring copies of both poems to your conference, as well as any other poems you’d like me to look at. I want to see you all individually at the start of the semester. If you were unable to sign up for a conference, call me and arrange a time.

Assignment for 9/4 & 9/6  Read in Coursepack poems by May Swenson, Ellen Bryan Voigt, and Lucille Clifton. Read in Hugo’s The Triggering Town chapters 1 and 2. Do an exercise from Part 1 of The Practice of Poetry. Turn in two copies of the results of this effort, and the revised drafts of the aromatherapy and self-portrait exercises, Tuesday 9/4 during the class period.

Week 2  8/28 & 8/30  Conference Week. See Dr. Barr in Palmer 307, her office, during the conference time you scheduled on the first day of class. She will post the list on her office door. Bring your typed-up drafts of the in-class exercises, aromatherapy and self-portrait, when you come to conference.

Assignment for 9/4 & 9/6  Read in Coursepack poems by May Swenson, Ellen Bryan Voigt, & Lucille Clifton.  Read in Hugo’s The Triggering Town chapters 1 and 2.  Do an exercise from Part 1 of The Practice of Poetry.  Turn in two copies of the results of this
effort, and the revised drafts of the aromatherapy and self-portrait exercises on Tuesday during the class period.

**Week 3**  
9/4 & 9/6

Discussion of “Movie” poems on Tuesday and excerpts from *The Triggering Town*, and Barr drafts, revision recommendations handout. (In-class exercises if time permits) Students poems will be discussed on Thursday.

*Assignment for next week*  Read in *Coursepack* poems by Knight & Lux, the introduction and chapters 1 and 2 in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* in conjunction with the Frost poems, and another exercise from Part 1 of *The Practice of Poetry*. Turn in **2 copies** of your exercise and/or any other poem(s) on Tuesday at the opening of the class period.

**Week 4**  
9/11 & 9/13

Discussion of Knight, (video) Lux and Frost (stanza, blank verse) and Corn chapters, student poems.

*Assignment for next week* Read in *Coursepack* poems by Robert Hass: “Happiness” and “Forty Something” as well as the Gluck poem “Dedication to Hunger.” Complete an exercise from Part 2 of *The Practice of Poetry*.

**Week 5**  
9/18 & 9/20

Discussion of Hass and Gluck poems, as well as student poems. Discussion of poems and grading, including examples of poems.

*Assignment for next week* Read in *Coursepack* Sterling Brown poems, and David Dabydeen poems. Read chapter 3 on “Metrical Variation” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat*.

**Week 6**  
9/25 & 9/27

Discussion of Brown and Dabydeen poems, and chapter 3 of Corn, student poems.

*Please make a point of attending Fred Leebron’s Fiction Reading on October 3rd at 7:30 pm in Blount. I expect to see you there!!!!*

Midterm portfolios due on 10/4, no exceptions.

**Week 7**  
10/2 Conferences; 10/4 class--portfolios due at beginning of class.
On either 10/2 or 10/3, see Professor Barr in Conference. Discussion of Olds poems and chapters 4 & 5 of Corn on 10/4.

Assignment for next week: Yeats’s “When You Are Old,” Auden’s “Lullabye,” & Roethke’s “The Waking.” Read in Richard Hugo’s *The Triggering Town*, chapters 4 and 5. Read in Alfred Corn’s *The Poem’s Heartbeat* chapters 6 and 7. (You have now completed all required reading on prosody and in the Hugo text!!) Complete exercise from Part 4 of *The Practice of Poetry.*

**Week 8 10/9 & 10/11**

Discussion of poems by Yeats, Auden, Roethke, Hugo and Corn’s essays, student poems, handout of writing assignments due on October 23rd. We will not meet on 10/18, instead you will be expected to use that time to begin the writing exercises.

**Fall Break:** You will have writing exercises, which I will hand out before the break, but you are not required to do them until you return from Fall Break. You’ll be expected to work on them during class period on 10/18 and hand in at least 3 drafts of each assignment, plus a final draft on 10/23.

**Week 9 10/18** do writing assignment, 3 drafts of each exercise plus a final draft.

**Week 10 10/23 & 10/25**

In-class exercises. Discussion of student poems turned in on 10/23 and written over the break.

Assignment for next week: Type up in-class exercises and hand in 2 copies of each next Tuesday. I’d like you to read Larkin’s “High Windows,” Bishop’s “The Fish,” & Lowell’s “Skunk Hour.”

**Week 11 10/30 & 11/1**

Discussion of poems by Larkin, Bishop and Lowell. Discussion of student poems.

Assignment for next week: Read in coursepack poems by Yusef Komunyakaa (end of coursepack) “Salt,” “Work,” “We Never Know,” “Tu Do Street.” Complete a writing exercise from Part 5 of *The Practice of Poetry* and another exercise from Part 6 of *The Practice of Poetry.*

**Week 12 11/6 & 11/8**

Discussion of work by Komunyakaa on Tuesday (video?) and student poems.
Assignment for next week Rich (“Diving into the Wreck”) and Bogan, (“Women” and “Evening in the Sanitarium”) Complete a writing exercise from Part 7 of The Practice of Poetry.

Week 13  11/13 & 11/15

Discussion of work by Rich and Bogan, student work.

Assignment for next week Read poems by James Wright, “Hook,” and “To a Blossoming Pear Tree.”

Week 14  11/20

Discussion of poems by Wright. No assignment over Thanksgiving.

Work on revisions of poems in preparation for turning in your portfolio on December 4th

Week 15  11/27 & 11/29

Discussion of student poems. Attention: Read Sylvia Plath’s poems, “Mystic,” “Among the Narcissi,” “Winter Trees,” and “Ariel” (video) for this Thursday’s discussion.

Work on revisions of poems in preparation for turning in your portfolio on December 4th

Week 16  12/4

Turn in final portfolio on Tuesday. Complete evaluations. Class party.
Poets Under Discussion for student oral reports  
You should prepare your report for Tuesday, but may be asked to give it on Thursday.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>traditional and narrative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lux</td>
<td>comic and quirky</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knight</td>
<td>African American poet, oral focus</td>
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<td>9/18</td>
<td>Hass</td>
<td>intelligent, incisive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gluck</td>
<td>strong woman poet</td>
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<td>9/25</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>African-American, ballad-type forms</td>
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<td>Dabydeen</td>
<td>Caribbean, patois</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/4</td>
<td>Olds</td>
<td>strong imagery, sexuality, woman poet</td>
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<td>10/9</td>
<td>Yeats</td>
<td>20th c master</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Auden</td>
<td>20th c master</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Roethke</td>
<td>writes in lyrical and formal lang</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Larkin</td>
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<td>11/6</td>
<td>Komunyakaa</td>
<td>contemporary master, Black poet</td>
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<td>11/13</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>strong woman poet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bogan</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Wright</td>
<td>direct images, emotionally resonant</td>
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<td><em>This report is right before Thanksgiving.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>Plath</td>
<td>imagery central, compelling, dark</td>
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<td>(Report due week before final portfolio is due)</td>
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