

Intermediate Poetry Workshop

Hartwick College
ENGL 312-D
(4 Credits; EL; GEO 1, 2, 3, 4, 7)
Fall 2021

Dr. Bradley J. Fest
Associate Professor of English
Office: 226 Clark Hall, ext. 4921
Email: festb@hartwick.edu

TuTh 2:30 – 4:30 pm, Clark Hall 248
Office Hours: MW 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.,
TuTh 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., and by appointment

“If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way.”

—Emily Dickinson, quoted in a letter by Thomas Wentworth Higginson

Required Texts

Diaz, Natalie. *Postcolonial Love Poem*. Graywolf, 2020.
Glück, Louise. *The Wild Iris*. Ecco, 1992.
Lerner, Ben. *The Lichtenberg Figures*. Copper Canyon, 2004.
Russell, Lauren. *Descent*. Tarpaulin Sky, 2020.
Zapruder, Matthew. *Why Poetry*. Ecco, 2017.
Zawacki, Andrew. *Unsun*. Coach House, 2019.

Required Software

Microsoft Office. Students are required to use Microsoft Word for this class. Go to <https://portal.office.com>, log in using your Hartwick credentials (email and password), and install the full version of MS Office. The program is free for Hartwick students.

Recommended Materials

I recommend acquiring a folder dedicated exclusively to this course. Students may also want to set aside roughly ten dollars for printing costs if they go beyond their allotted quota.

Prerequisites

The successful completion of ENGL 213 is a prerequisite for creative writing majors. The successful completion of ENGL 110 College Writing is highly recommended.

Catalog Description

Practice in the writing of poetry; exercises in form. Readings in prosody, poetics, and contemporary poetry. Does not count as a literature course. (EL; GEO 1, 2, 3, 4, 7)

Course Description and Purpose

Welcome to Hartwick’s Intermediate Poetry Workshop. In this course, you will read the work of published poets, compose poems of your own, and study critical writing about poetry. Building upon work you have already done in Introduction to Creative Writing, the primary focus of this class will be honing your *craft* in a workshop setting by engaging with the “nuts and bolts” of

writing, the techniques, choices, and strategies that will allow you to continue to explore your poetic voice. We will cover a wide range of contemporary poetry in order to learn about and explore the formal elements necessary for successful poetic composition. Along with paying careful attention to the effective use of image, metaphor, line break, sound, shape, and voice in poems, we will also be particularly interested in working within both established and invented forms. This focus on *form* will give us a better understanding of the various writers we will be reading and will help workshop participants to explore the power and necessity of *limitation* in their own work.

We will also be reading and discussing a wide range of poets. It is essential for a writer to develop ways of thinking and talking critically about the work of others and to be aware of the literary, cultural, economic, social, and political milieu in which they reside, so you should be prepared to read a substantial amount of poetry concerned with contemporary issues. We will carefully engage with the work of such renowned poets as Natalie Diaz, Louise Glück, Ben Lerner, Lauren Russell, Matthew Zapruder, and Andrew Zawacki. Encountering the work of these poets will prepare you to think about broad issues within twenty-first century poetics, analyze and assess other students' writing, and evaluate your own compositions. These writers will also invite us to think about the role and function of poetry at the present time. It will probably come as no surprise if I suggest to you that to be alive in 2021 is to exist in a time of crisis. Given the epidemiological, political, economic, and social realities of our era, many are questioning the relevance and value of the arts and humanities (to say nothing of poetry!). Against much of the doom and gloom that dominates so much of today's discourse, one of the contentions of this class is that poetry remains an essential human activity for not only *responding* to the various crises of contemporaneity, but for *thinking, imagining, building, and creating* a different, better world. I am eager to see what we can imagine and create together.

How This Course Works

The main concern of this class is *your* writing. We will read a variety of poets whose work will inform your own and you will be asked to bring in a substantial amount of your own work, roughly a poem every week.

The first half of most classes will be devoted to discussing the assigned reading and the second half to writing workshops discussing student work. Workshops will be run in a traditional fashion. Each student will have around 20–25 minutes devoted to their work by the class a number of times during the semester. Within the next two weeks, I will hand out and post to D2L a workshop schedule and assign a primary reader for each student. Primary readers are principally responsible for responding to their assigned writer's work during workshop and in writing. Each student will also be expected to write brief comments on their peers' work and return those comments to the writer after workshop.

In workshops, the writer and their primary reader will read the work aloud, followed by a group discussion. During workshop, the writer will remain silent until the end, at which time they will be able to ask questions (note: not provide explanations). Though we will be forthright in our criticism, workshop participants should strive to be respectful, generous, and constructive.

Learning Outcomes

In addition to the basic skills of literary and poetic analysis, students in this course will: 1) identify conventional creative writing techniques; 2) read as writers and use this knowledge to more successfully write and discuss poetry; 3) produce poems that demonstrate an understanding

of literary and formal conventions while also articulating a personal artistic vision (GEO 2); 4) situate poems within their cultural, political, social, historical, and literary context (GEO 4); and 5) explore the ways that poetry can access and illuminate diverse voices (GEO 4).

Other Course Requirements and Assignments

Texts—Becoming a strong, careful reader is essential for developing as a poet, so students will be required to have read and be prepared to discuss the assigned texts for each class meeting, including the writing of your peers. Students must also bring the texts to class: this includes bringing the assigned book, *printouts* of the .pdfs from D2L, and copies of your peers' work. Additional readings for the course (see below) can be found under the "Content" then the "Readings" section of D2L. Please do not let the nature of this class fool you, as students sometimes assume that little reading is involved in a poetry course. On the contrary, this course asks students to read quite a bit and *very* carefully. Our meetings and discussions will depend upon the intelligent and frequent involvement of each member of this class, and this involvement is simply not possible if students do not come to class prepared. All students *must* obtain the edition of the texts specified above. Unless a student makes an individual arrangement with me, electronic versions of the texts are not permitted; please *print out* all readings from D2L and (if necessary) student work, and bring those printouts to class. Students should expect to read between 35 and 100 pages per week.

Portfolio—Submitted during the week of final exams, the portfolio will represent the culmination of your work throughout this semester and will make up the most significant portion of your grade. Your portfolio should include all the original poems you wrote with my comments on them and eight newly revised poems. The writing in the portfolio should consist of what you feel best represents the work you did in this course. The eight revised poems should display an awareness of issues discussed in class, thoughtful revisions based on comments provided during workshop and in written feedback, and the final drafts should be polished, finished writing (ostensibly ready for publication). The writing submitted in your portfolio should also display a firm grasp of the conventions and craft of poetry discussed throughout the semester. More details about the expectations for your portfolio will be provided later in the semester.

Individual Poetry Assignments—Throughout the semester you will be asked to complete individual poetry assignments. These will not be graded, though they will be returned to you with my comments after each of your workshops. For reasons of logistics, poems will not be accepted late. Failure to turn in a poem will cost a student 8% off their final portfolio grade. (So, for example, if a student does not turn in three poems, the highest possible grade they could receive on their portfolio would be a C [76%.]) The due dates for poems are below. The assignments will follow. All poems *must* be handed in as hard copies in class to me *and* to every member of the class; they *must also* be uploaded to D2L as .doc or .docx files (that way, if you have to miss class, you will still receive credit for turning in your assignment on time and they will be available digitally to your peers). There will be a link under "Discussions" to electronically upload your poems.

D2L Uploads—To make it easier to find someone's writing on D2L, save all files in the following format: Last Name, First Name--Poem ##. For example: Fest, Bradley J--Poem 01.

Weekly Reading Responses—Students will compose reading responses that they will post to D2L under “Assignments” (see the calendar below for due dates). I will grade responses (out of 10), post scores to D2L, and drop the two lowest grades. Reading responses will not be accepted late. See “Weekly Reading Response Assignment” for more specific details.

Responding to Your Peers’ Work—All members of the course will be responsible for writing marginal comments on their peers’ work and must write a brief paragraph (minimum three sentences) about 1) what they thought the writing to be workshopped for that day was doing well and 2) their thoughts on how to improve that writing. Make sure to read and comment on your peers’ work prior to coming to class. You will return your comments to the writer immediately after their workshop.

In addition to comments on your peers’ work, each member of this class will be a primary reader for another member of the class. Primary readers should write notes and comments on each piece of writing from their writer, along with writing a 1–2-page reflection on that student’s writing each time they are workshopped. These responses will be collected for credit. Please consult the handout, “Primary Reader Assignment,” to be handed out next week, for further details.

Participation—As we will read texts critically and discuss each other’s work in this class, student participation is crucial to our work. Though I will occasionally lecture, the class is a collective inquiry into the subject matter and class time will primarily consist of discussions that privilege students’ thinking, reading, and writing. As such, the course requires the input of all its participants and your attendance is a necessity. *More than three absences will negatively affect your grade, in which case you may want to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances. Students who are marked absent for more than six total classes will automatically fail the course.*

That said, I understand that it is possible that a student may miss significant class time due to illness, a positive COVID-19 test, or other unforeseen circumstances. In such cases, as with cases of serious illness or other unforeseen events prior to the appearance of COVID-19, it is each individual student’s responsibility to communicate with me regarding any issues they might have attending or doing the work of the course. If students communicate with me about legitimate issues that may cause them to miss class time, I will do my best to work with them to make sure that they are given the opportunity to succeed.

Flexibility and Course Modality

As there is again a large amount of uncertainty heading into this semester, and I can foresee any number of challenging circumstances that you or I might face, I reserve the right to be flexible in my policies concerning late work, attendance (as immediately above), and other policies (though students should not expect such flexibility without communicating with me). This course will be delivered exclusively via in-person, face-to-face instruction, and there is currently no option to attend class remotely. If the College’s policies change or circumstances necessitate a shift in the modality of the course (to online, hybrid, etc.), changes in the course and its policies may be necessary. Let me assure you of two things. First, I will be sure to notify you of any changes to the class or the syllabus in a timely fashion. Second, I am willing to work with you and to be understanding regarding whatever may come up in your life as long as you are in communication with me regarding your attendance and your work in the course.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Weekly Reading Responses: 25%

Primary Reader Responses: 5%

Portfolio: 50%

Classroom Etiquette

There continue to be many complex issues facing our community this semester. To make life a little easier for everyone and to create a solid logistical foundation that will ensure a positive learning environment for each participant, students should adhere to the following guidelines for classroom etiquette. Failure to do so may result in being marked absent or in penalties applied to a student's participation grade.

Texts—Students who do not have their text in class, including their peers' writing for workshop, will be marked absent (whether I draw attention to it or not).

Lateness—I give crucial information and reminders about the course at the beginning of class, so being late is not only disruptive but means that students may miss information that is important to their success. Students who are frequently more than five minutes late will be marked absent.

Notes—Students should take notes during class meetings and should have the materials to do so. During my sixteen years of teaching in higher education, I have found that, unsurprisingly, students who take notes in class perform better than students who do not.

Laptops, Phones, Tablets—Anyone observed using their mobile phone or another digital device during class, whether I draw attention to it or not, will be marked absent for the day. Phones will not be tolerated in this class, and the use of laptops or tablets in this course will not be permitted unless individual arrangements are made with the instructor.

Leaving Class—Ideally, students will not have to leave class. But students should feel free to get up without my permission as long as they do so unobtrusively. If an individual student makes a habit of leaving, however, I will have a conversation with them about disrupting class. If they continue leaving frequently after this conversation, they will be marked absent each time they leave regardless of circumstance. If a student has any issue that would cause them to need to get up frequently, please talk with me in the first weeks of class or at any time during the semester.

Preparation—A key part of this class will involve reading the work of your peers. If it is clear that a student is not prepared, has not done the assigned reading, or has not read their peers' work, they will be marked absent.

Participation—Students should be prepared to participate throughout the class. I will frequently call on students even if they have not raised their hand.

Respect—Sharing your work with others can be a bit intimidating, so I urge all class members to be generous, respectful, constructive, and kind to your peers when critiquing their work.

FlightPath

The Hartwick Flightpath is a student-centered program that is flexible and adaptable to support your pathway to graduation and to prepare you for what lies ahead. By the time you graduate from Hartwick, you will have a suite of skills and experiences that tie together the breadth of your Hartwick education and highlights your accomplishments. This course supports the development of student educational outcomes in the following way(s): it fulfills FlightPath General Education Outcomes 2 and 4, fulfills a requirement for the Creative Writing Major, and is a possible elective in the English Major (this course also fulfills the Liberal Arts in Practice requirement for Experiential Learning for junior and senior students). (Note: this course does *not* fulfill either the WD or WL3 requirements.)

College COVID-19 Policy

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, circumstances may necessitate adjustments to instruction, such as shifts in mode of instruction (to remote or hybrid), classroom capacity limits, or indoor mask requirements. Updates will be provided on the College website (<https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/covid-19-updates/>). Instructors will communicate with students about any specific adjustments that are being made to their courses, such as modality of instruction, expectations for participation, and any changes to assigned work; students should check their Hartwick email accounts frequently for information from their instructors.

Content Warnings

Every piece that we read in this class will be concerned, in one way or another, with what it means to be human. This can mean joy, humor, healing, and hope. This can also mean conflict, pain, isolation, and loss. If you have serious concerns about encountering a particular type of content or are struggling with assigned material for any reason, please let me know. If you are concerned that one of your own poems or stories tackles material that will be potentially distressing to your classmates, consider placing a content warning (CW) on the top of your draft, like so: “CW: violence.” Such warnings are not intended to spoil your poem or to offer readers an excuse not to engage, but rather to ensure your audience is in the right mindset to fully invest themselves in the world of your writing.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It will result in a zero for the assignment and a formal charge will be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs. Plagiarism could also result in more serious action, including a student failing the class and being suspended from the College. *Plagiarism includes: lack of proper citations when quoting from someone else's work, representing someone else's work as your own, and knowingly allowing one's work to be submitted by someone else.* Violations of Hartwick's Academic Honesty policy are not limited to plagiarism, so students should familiarize themselves with it at: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/academic-policies/>.

Academic Adjustments and/or Modifications

Students must present me with an updated Academic Plan Letter for the Fall 2021 semester in order to be eligible for academic adjustments. Hartwick College is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic adjustments, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services, at sanfordl@hartwick.edu or AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu. AccessAbility Services is located on the fifth floor of Yager Library in the Center for Student Success. Any information regarding a student's disability will remain confidential. Requests for academic adjustments should be made as early as possible. Please reach out to the instructor with any other concerns you might have about the course, including accessing course texts.

The Writing Center

Located in Clark Hall 230, the Writing Center offers events, courses, and one-on-one tutorials for students. Tutors can help you with your writing for classes or any writing project, and can teach you strategies for organizing, editing, and revising your writing. You can meet with a tutor once or regularly over the course of the semester; the Writing Center will also respond to queries via email. In some cases, I may send you to the Writing Center for help on a particular problem; otherwise, you can seek assistance on your own. Their services are free. You can browse the services at <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/writing-center/>, or make an appointment by emailing wcenter@hartwick.edu or calling (607) 431-4910.

E-mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a college email address (username@hartwick.edu) upon admittance. This email address may be used by the college for official communication with students. I will also communicate with students via their hartwick.edu address. Students are expected to regularly read email sent to this account. Failure to read and react to communications from either the College or from me in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to communications sent to their Hartwick email address.

Health and Success

Success in this course depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your other instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in this course as soon as it occurs and before it becomes unmanageable. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. Hartwick offers free counseling for students who are experiencing personal or emotional difficulties. The Counseling Center is located in the Perrella Health Center and offers psychological services and sexual assault services. Appointments can be made Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@hartwick.edu.

Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Reporting

Hartwick College is committed to equal opportunity and providing a safe community free from all forms of sexual misconduct including sexual-/gender-based harassment, discrimination, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault. If you wish to make an official report to the College or have questions about the College policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Michael Arno, at titleix@hartwick.edu or (607) 431-4293. Online reporting and policy information is available at <http://www.hartwick.edu/titleix>. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact one of the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health or Counseling: (607) 431-4120; or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program: (607) 432-4855. All other employees of the College are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator so that support and resources can be provided for all parties.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion, or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Calendar¹

- 8.31 Syllabus
Introductions
Lynn Emanuel, “The Politics of Narrative: Why I Am a Poet”¹
Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro”²
- 9.2 **Poem 1 Due**
Matthew Zapruder, *Why Poetry* (pp. xi–40)
- 9.7 **Reading Response 1 Due**
Matthew Zapruder, *Why Poetry* (pp. 41–99)
William Carlos Williams, “This Is Just to Say”³
Kenneth Koch, “Variations on a Theme by William Carlos Williams”⁴
- 9.9 **Reading Response 2 Due**
Matthew Zapruder, *Why Poetry* (pp. 100–59)
- 9.14 **Poem 2 Due**
Matthew Zapruder, *Why Poetry* (pp. 161–226)
Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris* (pp. 1–11)
- 9.16 **Reading Response 3 Due**
Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris* (pp. 12–29)
Workshop
- 9.21 **Poem 3 Due**
Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris* (pp. 30–44)
Workshop
- 9.23 **Reading Response 4 Due**
Louise Glück, *The Wild Iris* (pp. 45–63)
Workshop
- 9.28 **Poem 4 Due**
Ben Lerner, *The Lichtenberg Figures* (pp. 1–13)
Workshop
- 9.30 **Reading Response 5 Due**
Ben Lerner, *The Lichtenberg Figures* (pp. 14–26)
Workshop
- 10.5 **Poem 5 Due**
Ben Lerner, *The Lichtenberg Figures* (pp. 27–39)
Workshop
- 10.7 **Reading Response 6 Due**
Ben Lerner, *The Lichtenberg Figures* (pp. 40–52)
Workshop

¹ Please note that additional readings may be assigned when appropriate and that the schedule is subject to change. For ease with citation, bibliographic endnotes to the readings available in the “Content” section of D2L (anything with an endnote rather than page numbers) have been provided below in MLA style.

- 10.12 **Poem 6 Due**
Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (pp. 1–24)
Workshop
- 10.14 **Reading Response 7 Due**
Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (pp. 25–45)
Workshop
- 10.19 No Class, October Break
- 10.21 **Reading Response 8 Due**
Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (pp. 46–72)
Workshop
- 10.26 **Poem 7 Due**
Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (pp. 73–94)
Workshop
- 10.28 **Reading Response 9 Due**
Lauren Russell, *Descent* (pp. 1–30)
Workshop
- 11.2 **Poem 8 Due**
Lauren Russell, *Descent* (pp. 31–56)
Workshop
- 11.4 **Reading Response 10 Due**
Lauren Russell, *Descent* (pp. 57–86)
Workshop
- 11.9 **Poem 9 Due**
Lauren Russell, *Descent* (pp. 87–119)
Workshop
- 11.11 **Reading Response 11 Due**
Andrew Zawacki, *Unsun* (pp. 1–28)
Workshop
- 11.16 **Poem 10 Due**
Andrew Zawacki, *Unsun* (pp. 29–56)
Workshop
- 11.18 **Reading Response 12 Due**
Andrew Zawacki, *Unsun* (pp. 57–99)
Workshop
- 11.23 Andrew Zawacki, *Unsun* (pp. 100–34)
Workshop
- 11.25 No Class, Thanksgiving Recess
- 11.30 Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art”⁵

- bluedragonfly, “One Art: The Writing of Loss in Elizabeth Bishop’s Poetry”⁶
Workshop (if necessary)
- 12.2 Mark Edmundson, “Poetry Slam”⁷
Ben Lerner, “The Hatred of Poetry”⁸
Workshop (if necessary)
- 12.8 **12:00 – 3:00 p.m.**
Final Portfolio Due
Class Wrap-Up: Group Reading

Endnotes

Epigraph: Dickinson, Emily. Qtd. in Higginson, Thomas Wentworth. “342a.” Letter to Mary Potter Higginson, 16 Aug. 1870. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 3 vols., edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1958, vol. 2, p. 474.

¹ Emanuel, Lynn. “The Politics of Narrative: Why I Am a Poet.” *Then, Suddenly*, U of Pittsburgh P, 1999, pp. 16–19.

² Pound, Ezra. “In a Station of the Metro.” 1913. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, W. W. Norton, 2005, p. 1297.

³ Williams, William Carlos. “This is Just to Say.” 1934. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, W. W. Norton, 2005, p. 1274.

⁴ Koch, Kenneth. “Variations on a Theme by William Carlos Williams.” 1962. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, W. W. Norton, 2005, p. 1693.

⁵ Bishop, Elizabeth. “One Art.” 1976. *The Complete Poems, 1927–1979*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983.

⁶ bluedragonfly. “One Art: The Writing of Loss in Elizabeth Bishop’s Poetry.” *Buledragonfly10*, 12 June 2009, <https://bluedragonfly10.wordpress.com/2009/06/12/one-art-the-writing-of-loss-in-elizabeth-bishop%E2%80%99s-poetry/>.

⁷ Edmundson, Mark. “Poetry Slam: Or, The Decline of American Verse.” *Harper’s*, vol. 327, no. 1958, July 2013, pp. 61–68.

⁸ Lerner, Ben. “The Hatred of Poetry.” Manuscript. Originally published as: Lerner, Ben. *The Hatred of Poetry*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jake Wolff for language used in the “Learning Outcomes” section of this syllabus, to Tessa Yang for language used in the “Content Warnings” section, and to the Rochester Institute of Technology for their statement on health and success (<https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/syllabus-design/rit-policies>).