

# Fall 2025- Introduction to Poetry Writing

## English 253

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### Course Description:

This course will help you to dive into one of humanity's oldest forms of expression: poetry. In some cultures, the word for poem and song are the same. Why have we been speaking, writing, and singing poems for as long as it was possible to do so? What did it do for us then, and what does it do for us now? What *is* a poem, anyway?

In this course, you will be reading, critiquing, listening to, and writing poetry in an attempt to answer these questions with your own answers. By the end of the course you'll have a portfolio of poems and an essay that reflects on your own practice as a poet.

### Instructor Statement:

In this course I need you to be brave. You will read things that may make you uncomfortable. You will discuss difficult topics. This will stretch the boundaries of what you may think you are capable of to new levels.

For us all to do this important work, we need to create a community where it is safe to try and safe to fail in front of one another. I will expect you to treat your classmates with kindness, respect, and understanding. I will expect them to treat you in the same way.

Disrespect, dismissiveness, prejudice, and apathy would harm the community that we need to create together. This is not something that I will tolerate in the classroom, and it will have a negative impact on your grade.

If you decide to join this section of English 253, please come knowing that I expect you to be imaginative, curious, passionate, and communicative. I look forward to meeting you in class and journeying on this path of discovery together.

### ACE Outcomes:

This course is also certified as an Achievement Centered General Education (ACE) Outcome 7 course. Therefore ENG 253 will help you meet the following general education outcome: "Use knowledge, theories, or methods appropriate to

the arts to understand their context and significance.”

At the end of the term, your writing may be used to assess the course’s overall effectiveness in helping students to achieve ACE-7 requirements. Please let me know if you have any questions about this.

## Course Policies

### Add/ Drop/Withdrawal Dates:

- September 2 (Tue.) Last day to drop a full semester course and receive 100% refund
- September 19 (Fri.) Last day to drop a class and receive a partial refund
- October 17 (Fri.) Last day to change a course registration to or from "Pass/No Pass"
- November 14 (Fri.) Last day to withdraw from one or more courses

### Grading Policies:

#### Grade Breakdown

Components of Final Grade^		
Assignment Type	Grade Percentage	Frequency
Final Portfolio	20%	1/ semester
Theoretical Essay	10%	1/semester
Poetry Book Presentation	10%	1/semester
Poems and Book Notes	10%	3/semester
Reading Notes	16%	6/semester
Poetry Slam	17%	6/semester
Writing Exercises	17%	6/semester

In order to receive a passing grade for the course you must complete ALL of the major course projects and drafts.

**^Note that English classes, by virtue of low enrollment caps and the interactive/discussion-based nature of the courses share a department-wide attendance policy that may be different from courses in other departments.**

#### Grading Scale

Grading Scale for Course	
Letter Grade/Percent	Ranges/Percent
A+ (4.0)	(97-100%)
A (4.0)	(90-96.9%)
B+ (3.3)	(87-89.9%)
B (3.0)	(80-86.9%)
C+ (2.3)	(77-79.9%)
C (2.0)	(70-76.9%)
D+ (1.3)	(67-69.9%)
D (1.0)	(60-66.9%)
F (0)	(60%< )

#### Grading Contract:

As long as work has been submitted that fulfills all of the requirements of the assignment, work will receive at least a B grade. Work which demonstrates higher quality and/or demonstrates risk-taking in considering or implementing new ideas will be awarded an A.

This is meant to ease the worry over grading for you! As long as you sincerely attempt the assignment you will get at least a B and may likely get an A depending on your work.

#### Late Work and Extensions:

Late work may be accepted with a request for extension which was submitted up to 48 hours before the due date. To request an extension, send me an email at [fjohn3@unl.huskers.edu](mailto:fjohn3@unl.huskers.edu). Include EXTENSION REQUEST in your subject. If you ask before the due date I will almost certainly say yes, so just ask! If the due date has passed, the answer will be no. If your extension is approved, send me an email notifying me when you have submitted your assignment.

If no request for an extension was submitted, **there is an automatic 3-hour grace period**. After the grace period the following grading policy will be applied to the submitted assignment:

TIME ELAPSED SINCE ASSIGNMENT DUE	GRADE REDUCTION
UP TO 24 HRS	10%
24-48 HRS	20%
48-72 HRS	30%
BEYOND 72 HRS	Not Graded

### Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy:

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

Any writing turned in for this class must be your own original independent work, and any information, language, or ideas drawn from other sources must be cited appropriately in MLA format. Work submitted with false sources or quotes and details which do not occur in the source will receive an automatic zero. We will talk in more detail about the specifics of these principles during the semester, but it is important to understand from the outset that turning in someone else's work or using someone else's language as if it is your own will result in a failing grade and/or additional disciplinary action by the university.

For more information on UNL's plagiarism policies, see this website:

<http://unl.libguides.com/plagiarism>

### Artificial Intelligence

Submitting work which is not your own is not only harmful to your learning, but also an Academic Integrity violation. This includes writing generated using AI, including ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, Prezi, or any other "artificial intelligence" platform or LLM.

**In this course, using AI in ANY capacity is not permitted.** It places too high of a burden on me to investigate and evaluate AI possible AI usage instead of focusing on the important educational aspects of the course.

In the unlikely scenario that AI usage is an integral part of an assignment, its limited usage will be stated in writing within the assignment prompt. If it is not explicitly stated that use of generative AI is permitted, it is not permitted in any fashion.

**Using generative AI for any part of the writing process, including but not limited to:**

- **Summaries of readings**

- To clean up grammar
- To create outlines
- To generate citations
- Paraphrasing or rewording text
- Any other uses

will result in a zero for the assignment. If this is the rough draft of an assignment, the student will receive no feedback but will have the opportunity to submit an entirely new (not simply reworked) text for the final assignment. This includes text which was produced by generative AI and then reworded or paraphrased. The assignment will also be reported to the University as a violation of the student code of conduct, which can result in further consequences, such as suspension or expulsion from the University.

### SO, WHAT YOU SHOULD DO INSTEAD....

Is reach out to me if you're having trouble with assignments. Using AI isn't worth it. I am not expecting perfect work. I get it, you want a good grade, but in my course the best way to achieve that is to submit something that you have written yourself even if you don't feel it's your best. That work will always get a better grade than a zero.

I always want to extend grace to my students, but the one area that is different is the use of generative AI. **I will not extend grace to you if you use generative AI, and I won't debate it with you. If I suspect you've used generative AI, you will receive a zero for the assignment and I will submit it to the board for academic misconduct.** You'll have a chance to argue your case with the conduct board, but I am not going to debate it with you prior to submitting it to the board. If they find that you have not used AI and you want to share their decision with me, I will accept an email from them directly as evidence that I was incorrect and will adjust your grade accordingly.

#### Email Policy:

When sending me an email, be sure to include your topic followed by your name and class number with section in the subject line. Make sure to be specific about your requests. This is to help me respond to you as quickly as I can, since I receive many emails every day.

For example:

**Subject:** [The topic you are writing about YOURNAME ENGL253: SECTION #]

**Body:**

**Instructor John,**

**[What you're writing about. If it is an assignment, include the assignment name. If you are requesting an extension, propose a date for completion. If it is about an absence, include the specific numerical date.]**

**[Best, Sincerely, or another sign off],**

**Your Name**

Emails that do not follow this format might be deleted or sent to the wrong folder. I will generally respond to emails within 48 hours. If you haven't received an email after that timeframe, feel free to send another email. Should the topic be urgent and require a quicker reply, please include the word URGENT in your subject so I can respond to you sooner.

Please note that I do not commonly check email between 6 pm and 8 am and response time will be slowed over the weekends--so keep that in mind when asking about time-sensitive issues.

Many questions can be answered by consulting this syllabus, so please read carefully. I will also communicate with you through CANVAS announcements, so please check CANVAS regularly.

Further resource on emailing in academic spaces:

<https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>

**Inclusivity:**

Every student in this classroom, regardless of personal history or identity categories, is a valued member of this group. Your experiences are valuable and important, and you should feel free to share them as they become relevant to our class. No student in this class is ever expected or believed to speak for all members of a group.

In this class you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by whatever name you wish, and for that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by whatever pronouns you wish. You have the right to adjust those things at any point in your education.

If you find that there are aspects of course instruction, subject matter, or classroom environment that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact me privately without fear of reprisal.

#### University-wide Policies:

Students are responsible for knowing the university policies and resources found on this page (<https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>).

#### Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments for this course must be written and submitted directly in Google Docs. Students should not write their assignments in another program (e.g., Microsoft Word) and then copy and paste the content into Google Docs. Should you require the use of voice to text/dictation technology, this must be documented with an accommodations form in order to be accepted for the course.

Students must grant the instructor **Editor** permissions on each Google Doc they submit. This allows the instructor to provide detailed feedback, make suggestions, and track revisions effectively.

This format must be followed for the entire duration of the course. Failure to comply with this requirement, including granting Editor access, may result in point deductions or the need to resubmit the assignment in the correct format.

Please ensure you are comfortable with using Google Docs for all your written assignments. If you have any questions or technical difficulties, reach out to me as soon as possible.

## Course Requirements

#### Required Materials:

All course readings will be available on Canvas. There is no required textbook.



Please come to the course prepared to learn in the way that best suits you. This could mean using your laptop, a tablet, or printing out your materials and carrying a notebook every day. Whatever tools you need to best engage with our reading and writing.

If you do not have a laptop and you would like to use one during class, you can check one out **for free** from Huskertech. Seven-day and semester-long rentals are available.

<https://services.unl.edu/service/huskertech-laptop-checkout>

### Assignment Submission Formatting

All work turned in must adhere to the following format. Work submitted that does not adhere to this formatting will not receive credit.

- Computer typed and submitted on Canvas as a Google Docs link
  - The assignment must be entirely created in Google Docs, not started somewhere else.
  - It must be shared with editing permissions enabled. [Here is a tutorial showing how to do this.](#)
- Single-spaced 12-point font, Time New Roman unless otherwise necessary for poem
- 1" margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, right)
- Header that numbers your pages on the upper right-hand corner
- All assignments should have a title that corresponds to the assignment
- Each poem should begin on a new page.
- Your paper heading should be on the first page of your assignment. Below is an example of how all your assignments should be submitted:

*Last Name Pg. #*

*Student Name*

*Instructor John*

*English 253, Section XXX*

*Date Submitted*

***(Unique Poem Title which is not the assignment name)***

*This is an amazing poem.*

*This is the next line of my amazing poem.*

*Behold, a new stanza begins!*

*What could happen next?*

# Course Assignments (Tentative)

Note that I may use homework as an example assignment in class. Write a note at the top of your assignment if there is a particular reason you would like an assignment not to be shared.

These are just broad outlines. More information will be given in class and posted to CANVAS.

Assignment Type	Brief Description
<b>Final Portfolio</b>	A collection of 10-12 poems and a reflection on your writing process. At least 5 must be new poems.
<b>Theoretical Essay</b>	5–7-page theoretical essay about poetry, both your own and others.
<b>Poetry Book Presentation</b>	This is meant to get you accustomed to speaking to others about poetry. A presentation to the class about one of the poetry books that you chose to read. These are not group projects. Peers will respond and ask questions.
<b>Poems and Book Notes</b>	A packet including 2 poems and book notes on one of the poetry books that you chose to read.
<b>Reading Notes</b>	Reading notes about the assigned reading. These are informal and meant to show your thinking process about the text.
<b>Poetry Slam</b>	This is meant to be a low stakes way for you to become comfortable sharing your poetry. You will post a video reading one of your original poems along with the text. Peers will rate poems on a scale of 1-10. This rating will not impact the grade.
<b>Writing Exercises</b>	Short exercises meant to put the concepts explored in the lecture into use.

# Course Schedule (Tentative)

*Note: This is tentative and there will be changes. I will notify you of the changes in class and via CANVAS announcements. If there is a discrepancy between this schedule and CANVAS, the most up-to-date schedule is likely on CANVAS.*

Preparation for the week will be expected to be completed to be able to discuss the readings/videos during class that week.

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Preparation for the week</b>	<b>Assignments Due This Week</b>
<b>W1</b>	Read the Syllabus Think about what poetry books you would like to read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Post: Meet your Class</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W2</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Sign-Up</li> <li>• List of 4 Poetry Books You Choose to Read</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W3</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W4</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Poems and Book Notes</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W5</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 1</li> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> </ul>
<b>W6</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 2</li> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> </ul>
<b>W7</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 3</li> <li>• 2 Poems and Book Notes</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W8</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	
<b>W9</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 4</li> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W10</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 5</li> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> </ul>
<b>W11</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation Group 6</li> <li>• Writing Exercise</li> <li>• Poetry Slam</li> </ul>
<b>W12</b>	Lecture Assigned Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Poems and Book Notes</li> <li>• Reading Notes</li> </ul>
<b>W13</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical Essay Rough Draft</li> </ul>
<b>W14</b>	<b>HARVEST BREAK</b>	

	Work on your Essay	
W15		• Theoretical Essay Final Draft
W16		• Final Portfolio

## Resources and Support

### The Writing Center:

The Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as every course in which you enroll. Trained undergraduate and graduate peer consultants are available to talk with you about all forms of communication. You are welcome to bring in everything from lab reports, presentations, and research papers to cover letters, application essays, and graduate theses and dissertations. Writing Center Consultants can work with you at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming and organizing your ideas through polishing a final draft.

There are **three** ways you can connect with a Consultant: **Online** (a real-time, video conversation), **eTutoring** (email feedback), and **in person**. To learn more about online options and view video tutorials, visit <https://www.unl.edu/writing/online-writing-center-services>. **In Fall 2023, in-person Writing Center appointments will take place in the Love Library Link, on the second floor.**

Sign up for an appointment any time by visiting [unl.mywconline.com](http://unl.mywconline.com). For other information about the Writing Center, please visit [unl.edu/writing](http://unl.edu/writing).

### Accommodation statement:

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (e.g. physical disability, learning disability, ADHD, chronic health issue, mental health condition, complications with a pregnancy, long Covid, temporary injury, or other condition), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options

privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall.; 402-472-3787

### **Mental Health Resources:**

UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively to help you explore your feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve your mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached at 402-472-7450.

Big Red Resilience & Well-Being provides one-on-one coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached at 402-472-8770

On the UNO campus, the Counseling and Psychological Services Links to an external site.

(CAPS) office can be reached at 402-554-2409. The UNO Wellness Center Links to an external site.

provides a variety of wellness resources and can be reached by calling 402-554-2539.

### **Writing Lincoln Initiative:**

The Writing Lincoln Initiative (WLI) is a collaboration between UNL students and community volunteers who partner with writers of all ages and backgrounds to provide a friendly and supportive space for writing in Lincoln. If you're interested in helping sponsor literacy learning in the community by joining WLI, please contact them via email at [writinglincoln360@gmail.com](mailto:writinglincoln360@gmail.com) or visit their website at [wirtinglincoln.org](http://wirtinglincoln.org). They're always looking for new volunteers to help in whatever way they can.

### **Basic Needs Security:**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect your academic progress, is urged to contact the Office of Student Affairs by emailing [studentaffairs@unl.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@unl.edu), calling 402-472-3755, or stopping by their office in person.

Furthermore, please notify your instructor if you are comfortable in doing so. An online guide of resources here at UNL can be found at <http://pantry.unl.edu/welcome#donate>. Students (and others) not in need of such support should also visit this webpage to learn opportunities for donating goods, materials, or time.

### **Counseling & Psychological Services :**

402-472-5000 | <https://health.unl.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services-caps>

### **The Women's Center :**

| 402-472-2597 | [womens-center.unl.edu/welcome](https://womens-center.unl.edu/welcome)

### **The University Health Center :**

402-472-5000 | <https://health.unl.edu/>

### **The LGBTQA+ Resource Center:**

402-472-1652 | <https://lgbtqa.unl.edu/welcome>

### **English as a Second Language Support:**

402-472-1884 | <https://www.unl.edu/piesl/esl-support-lab>

### **Student Money Management Center:**

402-472-9093 | <https://www.unl.edu/smmc/>

### **Suicide Prevention Hotline:**

1-800-273-TALK | <https://health.unl.edu/caps/prevention>

### **Victim Advocates:**

402-472-2598 | <https://womens-center.unl.edu/victim-resources>

**Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Services:**

The Gaughan Multicultural Center continues the tradition of past UNL Culture Centers, providing a home away from home for underrepresented students, while welcoming all UNL students, faculty, staff, alumni and guests. Contact them at 402-471-5500 or the center at 1505 S.St.