

# ENGL 3382: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY

3 CREDIT HOURS, SPRING 2018, MW 3-4:20P, EVANS 358

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## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Ching-In Chen; Savannah Burns (TA)

Office Location: Evans Complex 116

Office Hours: M, W 12-2p CST on campus; also by appointment

*(Please let me know if you want to schedule an office hour appointment with me.)*

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*(Please type ENGL3382 as the subject line of your e-mail and address your communications to Dr. Chen. Allow 24 hours for a response, M-F.)*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Create dangerously, for people who read dangerously .... Writing, knowing in part that no matter how trivial your words may seem, someday, somewhere, someone may risk his or her life to read them.*

- Edwidge Danticat, from "Create Dangerously"

*Whose turn is it to open-throated sing? / And what world's turn is it / to be sung of, a thing made noticed / that isn't, its beauty insisted.*

- Ari Banias, from "No More Birds"

Welcome to Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry! In this introductory course, we will explore the skills and tools needed to "create dangerously" and "to open-throated sing." We will read and write poems with an eye towards learning how these creative texts are built. This class is a process and community-centered workshop. There will be much experimental work in and out of class, with assignments that will get you to try new things in your writing. In addition, we will engage the larger world through an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) project which aims to apply the skills and techniques we learn in this class in a real world context. This semester, you will design and implement a lesson based on a poem from *Surveillance* for a specific community of your choice (except English majors or Creative Writing minors!), which helps non-poetry readers make sense of the poem and guides them in writing their own poems based on historical documents or media coverage, making use of other kinds of everyday material.

## LEARNING GOALS

In our class, I invite you to build a community where we:

**1) learn key terminology, craft elements and creative strategies from reading contemporary poetry.** We will read and analyze a variety of published writings in contemporary poetry with an eye to how these creative texts were built, using craft elements such as concrete detail, image, voice, setting and the poetic line. We will learn the *craft* of writing through studying various strategies and approaches other writers have chosen, and consider how to apply these strategies to our own creative work.

**2) learn and implement basic craft elements and techniques for writing poetry and prose.** Through a series of in-class and take-home writing exercises, we will experiment with various strategies and approaches. You will choose a subset of these writing experiments to revise into more polished pieces and submit them for workshop feedback. Over the course of the semester, you will create a final chapbook portfolio. In addition, we will apply the skills and techniques we have learned this quarter by designing and implementing a lesson for a community-based workshop.

## TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

### Required:

1) Addonizio, Kim and Dorianne Laux. *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. ISBN 0-393-31654-8

2) Smith, Danez. *Don't Call Us Dead*. Graywolf Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781555977856

3) Jackson, Ashaki. *Surveillance*. Writ Large Press, 2016\*

(\* Because Jackson's chapbook has limited distribution, you must purchase this text directly from the author by using this link: <https://squareup.com/store/writ-large-press/item/surveillance> Please place your order early in the semester so that you can receive the chapbook in time.)

4) Online readings as indicated on the course calendar. Please bring the readings (printed out and/or in e-format) to class unless otherwise indicated.

5) A three-ring binder with loose leaf paper or an actual writing notebook/journal.

6) Chapbook-making materials for your final portfolio project

### Optional:

7) Layli Long Soldier, *WHEREAS*, Graywolf Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1555977672

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

1) Daily Practice (via participation, in-class writing/activities, class discussion, conversation entries as recorded in your conversation notebook; each activity = 1 point & everything is averaged together at the end of the semester): 10%

2) Take-Home Creative Experiments: 10%

3) Revised Poem Drafts for Workshop: 15%

4) Individual Conference: 5%

5) Post-Workshop Revisions: 15%

6) Peer Workshop Feedback: 15%

7) Attending a Literary Reading + Reading Response: 5%

8) Academic Community Engagement project + reflection: 10%

9) Final Chapbook Portfolio & Reading: 15%

a) Written: Chapbook (five revised poems + process letter): 75% of final portfolio total

b) Oral: 3-Minute Reading or Showing of Audio/Video: 25% of final portfolio total

= Total: 15% of course total

Course Total: 100%

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

### 1) IN-CLASS DAILY PRACTICE, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION, IN-CLASS WRITING, AND CLASS

#### DISCUSSION (10%):

a) This class will not work without active participation for each class period. This includes being prepared for class by completing all reading assignments and bringing assigned texts to class. In addition, you will complete in-class writing exercises, and contribute to small group and full class discussions and activities.

b) **In-class written assignments and exercises must be completed by the end of each class period to receive credit. These assignments are graded on completion and cannot be made up if you are absent from class.** Work will be evaluated using an Excellent (Check-Plus), Satisfactory (Check), Needs Improvement (Check-Minus) or Not Completed (0) evaluation. *Note:* These are not letter grades, but a way for me to keep track of whether you have met or exceeded the parameters of the assignment in a holistic way.

c) Because student ideas are vital in a creative writing class, a large part of the daily practice grade includes active participation in class. If you anticipate that this may be a challenge, I encourage you to visit me during office hours so we can strategize about how to increase your class participation.

d) **Please keep copies of your in-class work (including graded work) in a binder or folder, to be turned in at the end of the semester as a working portfolio, along with your final chapbook portfolio.**

### 2) TAKE-HOME CREATIVE EXPERIMENTS (10%):

a) I believe that the best way to learn how to write well is to write and read often. I have designed this class to encourage you to develop an ongoing writing practice where you try various strategies and techniques. There is not a right or wrong answer in terms of how to complete the experiments, other than following the instructions which can be downloaded from Blackboard. Most experiments can be completed in less than one hour, but the more time and energy you invest, the more you will learn.

b) Unless otherwise specified, **please upload your experiment to Blackboard by the start of class and bring a hard copy to class.** We will work with some experiments as part of in-class daily practice, which may include physical processes such as tearing, cutting and gluing of actual paper. **If you do not have a hard copy, you will not be able to participate and get credit for this in-class work.**

c) It is important to complete experiments in a timely fashion, because the experiments build on one another. Experiments are graded upon completion. Missing one individual experiment is allowed, and **late work is not accepted.**

d) I do not usually provide feedback on experiments because I view them as early drafts and notes towards possible pieces. If you'd like to get more in-depth feedback, I encourage you to visit me in office hours.

### **3) Individual Workshop Drafts (15%):**

a) Since writing is a process (and not, as many people think, one that is solely personal), we will be sharing two drafts for full class workshop feedback and one draft for small group workshop.

b) Workshop drafts should be uploaded in one Word document on Blackboard. If your creative piece depends upon experimental visual arrangement or formatting, please also submit a PDF so that we can be sure of your creative intention when responding. Drafts should be typed in 12-point Times, Garamond or Palatino Linotype unless an alternate format is necessary for the reading of your piece. Please make sure you add your full name, page number and title in the top right-hand header of your draft so that it shows up on each page. If you choose consciously not to title your pieces, please refer to the first line in parentheses as your placeholder title for the sake of workshop discussion. *Please note:* learning the ropes of the writing profession means learning how to professionally submit our work to journals, contests and other opportunities. Because of this, **workshop drafts which do not follow the guidelines provided will receive a grade penalty for lack of professionalism.**

c) **On the day of your workshop, please bring a copy of your workshop draft so that you can take notes on the workshop feedback provided. You will include your workshop notes as part of your working portfolio.**

d) *Late Workshop Drafts:* It is considered professionally rude to upload your drafts for workshop late. Because of this, **late submissions will lose one letter grade for each day they are late. I reserve the right to cancel a workshop if it is deemed that the writer has not given his/her/their peers reasonable time to provide good feedback.**

e) *Grading:* Your work will be evaluated based on how thoughtfully you have engaged elements of craft discussed in class as well as timeliness of submission.

**If you are absent or late on your workshop day, your final grade will automatically be lowered by one letter (meaning if you have an A in the course, your grade will be lowered to a B). If you foresee problems with the proposed schedule, make an appointment to talk to me ASAP. The workshop cannot be made up, unless there is an unexpected emergency, such as unexpected hospitalization or death in your immediate family.**

### **4) INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE (5%):**

I will meet with each student at least once during the semester to discuss individual progress in writing and the class. Part of the conference grade will consist of an individual midterm evaluation which you will

download from Blackboard, fill out and bring to the conference. Your conference grade is a pass/fail grade determined by your completion of the evaluation and conference. This is an opportunity to talk to me more in-depth about your own work as well as address any challenges you may be having in the class. Students who need to reschedule their conference must give me at least 24 hours advance notice unless there is an unexpected emergency such as hospitalization or death in the immediate family.

### **5) INDIVIDUAL REVISIONS (15%):**

a) Inexperienced writers often gloss over the practice of revision, but learning how to revise our own work is a crucial skill for writers. You will revise the pieces you have submitted for workshop, using the feedback you have received in workshop and additional revision exercises provided in class.

b) For each revision, you must complete a revision plan for each piece, choosing and naming at least three strategies (from workshop or revision exercises). **When revising, please mark changes you make so that it's clear where you have revised** (i.e. italicize, highlight or bold your revisions in your revised draft).

c) *Grading:* Your work will be evaluated based on how thoughtfully you have engaged peer and instructor feedback, elements of craft discussed in class and timeliness of submission. *Note:* I do not expect you to make every change suggested in workshop. Part of the workshop experience is sifting through often conflicting feedback and making intentional choices about how to re-vision the creative piece on its own terms. I do expect to see substantial consideration of how to approach re-visioning your creative pieces, which include major structural considerations and alterations (for instance, taking the spine of the house and deciding to put in a new roof versus simply moving the chairs around in the room). For this reason, **please include your revision drafts as part of your working portfolio and discuss your revision strategies in your process letter.** If you have questions about revision and feedback, I encourage you to discuss this with me during your conference or during office hours.

### **6) PEER WORKSHOP FEEDBACK (15%):**

a) Similar to your investment in your own reading and writing practices, investing in giving excellent feedback to your peers pays off in learning about the craft of writing. Because of this, your workshop feedback will be evaluated based upon the effort you have made in providing helpful feedback and upon whether or not you followed the parameters of the assignment. An excellent critique is a thorough, constructive critique that follows the format I provide. A poorly written response does not follow that format or is cursory or vague or disrespectful to the writer. Late responses will not be accepted for credit.

b) For each workshop draft, you will give feedback by downloading and following the guidelines provided for each cycle of workshop on Blackboard. **You will begin by writing a neutral description of the structure and content of the creative piece before providing three specific annotations of what works well and three specific annotations for revision suggestions.**

c) There may be a rare occasion in which you think the creative piece is “perfect as is” and needs no revision. I will give one pass per quarter in which you can offer no suggestions for revision. Instead, you should use all six of your annotations to explain what’s working well in the piece. However, if you often come to the conclusion that the draft is “perfect as is,” I encourage you to look closer at the draft to

consider other possibilities for the draft (versus what is wrong with the draft). This work is challenging and gets easier with practice.

d) Please upload your peer workshop feedback to Blackboard by the beginning of class. In addition, please make sure you are able to access your feedback, including the annotated draft being workshopped, during our class discussion.

### **7) ATTENDING A POETRY READING + READING RESPONSE:**

a) During the course of the quarter, you will attend at least one public poetry reading organized by the creative writing department and write a reflective response, following the guidelines on Blackboard. I will accept up to two additional reading responses for extra credit (to the tune of a missed experiment per additional reading response).

b) In the spring, SHSU partners with the National Book Foundation to bring National Book Award finalists to the Huntsville campus for a series of readings and events. Poet Danez Smith is one of the authors coming to campus. I expect you to attend this event unless your schedule conflicts. If so, you can either attend an alternate reading organized by the department and/or propose an alternate poetry reading to attend, but you must send your proposal to me before approval. Local libraries, other universities and academic institutions, bookstores, coffee shops, and other art organizations often host readings. If you're unsure whether or not an event counts as a public poetry reading, please check in with me.

### **8) ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT + REFLECTION: 15%**

You will design a lesson for a one-time creative writing workshop based on a poem from *Surveillance* (or *WHEREAS*, if you want an alternative), which helps non-poetry readers make sense of the poem and guides them in writing their own poems based on historical documents or media coverage, making use of other kinds of everyday material. You will have the option to choose a specific community (except English majors or Creative Writing minors) to implement the lesson in person or to produce an audio (podcast) or video of the lesson for dissemination on the web. If needed, there is a lab with recording equipment in the Evans which we could access. In addition, students will write a short written reflection as part of their process letter.

c) If I participate in a reading, my part of the reading should not be included in your response. Also, please do not use any event that you help organize for this assignment.

d) If you anticipate that attending public literary readings may be a challenge for you, I will accept as a substitute a reading response of Layli Long Soldier's *WHEREAS*.

### **9) FINAL CHAPBOOK PORTFOLIO + READING (15%):**

a) At the end of the quarter, you will compile a revised sample of your writing from this semester into a final portfolio chapbook. Please include at least five substantially revised creative poems and a two-page process letter on your writing process. The final chapbook will count for 75% of your final portfolio grade.

b) Our class will host an open mic during the time allotted for our final exam for the class during finals week. You will either read or perform live or record an audio or video reading of an excerpt from your chapbook which is less than three minutes to share. **This reading will count as 25% of your final portfolio grade.**

## **COURSE PRACTICES**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Check your university e-mail daily M-F. You are responsible for information and updates sent out about class via e-mail and to ensure that we are in e-mail contact.

### **ACCESSIBILITY + ACCOMMODATIONS**

a) It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination.

b) If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical) that might affect your academic performance, please let me know as soon as possible. I am dedicated to cultivating a classroom environment that is as accessible as possible to all students. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities will work with you to make arrangements for accommodations. It is located in the Counseling Center, Lee Drain Annex (tel. 936.294.1720).

### **ALTERNATE NAMES + GENDER PRONOUNS**

I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun than what is listed on the class roster if you let me know.

### **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

a) In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, I expect everyone in the classroom to treat each other with respect and practice common courtesy. Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated in the class or by the University. Please use language that is professional, measured, and kind at all times. Differences in perspective and disagreement on discussion topics will arise—these are healthy aspects of any intellectual exchange. I ask that you take every precaution to ensure that your classmates know that any disagreements are with ideas only, not with individuals *as* individuals. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality.

b) Also, keep in mind that each time you communicate—with your instructor, your peers, the class, or anyone else—whether it is in writing, conversationally, email, or online chatting, you are making a distinct



impression on those with whom you communicate. Any email correspondence for the class should be as well written and thoughtfully considered as anything else you submit for the class.

d) Writing is an emotional process that can provoke intense feelings in anyone who takes it seriously. If you are having difficulty during the class, I encourage you to check in with me.

## COMPUTER PROBLEMS

Please direct your questions about technology-related issues to SHSU Online. We all have problems with computers and saving work at some point. These problems do not excuse late work. There are multiple solutions to this: a flash drive, using your iPod, saving your work to your personal account on the server. If you have an assignment due on Blackboard and are having problems submitting your work, please contact Blackboard support at (936) 294-2780 or [blackboard@shsu.edu](mailto:blackboard@shsu.edu). If all else fails, please e-mail me with your completed work **before** the deadline to avoid being marked late.

## LEARNING PARTNERSHIP/OFFICE HOUR POLICY

It is important to me that you have a positive learning experience in my class. I view learning as a partnership between professor and students that requires mutual respect, regular preparation, and attentive communication. My office is open, and I welcome student visits. While I can't customize the course to meet each student's individual desires, if there's something I can do to improve your experience in my class, please let me know. Please feel free to discuss any class-related matter with me and especially to address significant issues when they occur. I encourage you to make an appointment ahead of time to ensure that I'm not meeting with another student during the time you want to talk to me. If my office hours don't work for your schedule, please e-mail me or talk to me after class.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

a) All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

b) English Department policy states that a paper or assignment, which evidence can support as plagiarized or in any manner not the result of a student's own intellectual endeavors, will receive zero points. The second offense will result in failure of the course and possible university disciplinary action. Submitting your own previously written work for a current assignment or submitting an assignment in

more than one class without the prior permission of the instructors is also considered academically dishonest.

c) A definition of academic dishonesty can be found at the following link:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>. Students are expected to review this information and will be held accountable for it on all formal assignments.

d) Throughout the quarter, you will be asked to draw on and respond to the thoughts and ideas of published authors and other students. Many writers borrow from and are influenced by other writers, and use found text from the world in their work. In this class, I encourage you to do all of the above, but to cite and recognize what you use. You should be using sources to do something fresh and original in your work, not merely copying (which would be plagiarism). If you are borrowing an idea, either express it in your own words, thus thinking it through and making it your own, and acknowledge the borrowing in a note, or use the exact words of the source in quotation marks and acknowledge with a note. To this end, the work you turn in must be your own, and all your sources cited properly, and it should be written during this quarter only. Please talk to me about this in office hours if you are confused or unsure about this.

## **RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

## **CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline can be found at the following link:

<https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>. Students are expected to comply with the Code at all times.

## **INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS**

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

## ENGL 3382 SPRING 18 INTRO TO POETRY COURSE SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due by 11:59p on the due date. See Modules in Blackboard for specific instructions for each assignment.

~ like life, this syllabus is a roadmap, but the journey may change ~

Abbreviations:

*PC* = *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*

*DCUD* = *Don't Call Us Dead*

*S* = *Surveillance*

Date	Reading(s)	Assignments & Due Dates (Module Activities)
<b>Week 1</b> <b>Jan 22-26</b>	1) <i>PC</i> : "Writing and Knowing" (19-29); "Images" (85-91)  2) Module 1 Content (BB)	<u>By Wed:</u>  1) Experiment 1
<b>Week 2</b> <b>Jan 29-Feb 2</b>  <i>Feb 1: 12<sup>th</sup> class day.            Last day to drop            without a "Q" and            receive 100% refund            and to submit            degree applications</i>	1) <i>PC</i> : "Poetry of Place" (74-79); "Simile and Metaphor" (94-101)  2) Module 2 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Conversation Entry 1  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Experiment 2

<b>Week 3</b> <b>Feb 5-9</b>	1) PC: "Music of the Line" (104-111); "The Energy of Revision" (186-192)  2) Module 3 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Experiment 3  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Post Revised Poem Draft for Workshop 1
<b>Week 4</b> <b>Feb 12-16</b>	1) PC: "Voice and Style" (115-127)  2) Module 4 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 1A  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 1B
<b>Week 5</b> <b>Feb 19-23</b>	1) Module 5 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 1C  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 1D
<b>Week 6</b> <b>Feb 26-Mar 2</b>	1) S: All  2) Module 6 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 1E  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Post-Workshop Revision Plan + Revision

<b>Week 7</b>  <b>Mar 5-9</b>	1) Module 7 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Conversation Entry 2 on Sequencing  <u>By the time of individual conference:</u>  2) Midterm Evaluation
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>  <b>Mar 12-16</b>		
<b>Week 8</b>  <b>Mar 19-23</b>	1) PC: "Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments" (129-134)  2) Module 8 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Post 2 Revised Poem Sequence for Workshop 2  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) ACE Lesson Plan Draft
<b>Week 9</b>  <b>Mar 26-29</b>  <i>SHSU closed Mar 30 for Good Friday</i>	1) Module 9 content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Annotations & End Notes for Workshop 2A  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) ACE Project Small Group: Feedback on Lesson Plan

<p><b>Week 11</b> <b>Apr 2-6</b></p> <p><i>April 6: Last day to "Q" drop.</i></p> <p><i>Students cannot drop after this date.</i></p>	<p>1) DCUD (1-22)</p> <p>2) Module 10 Content (BB)</p>	<p><u>By Mon:</u></p> <p>1) Annotations &amp; End Notes for Workshop 2B</p> <p><u>By Wed:</u></p> <p>2) Conversation Entry 3</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b> <b>Apr 9-13</b></p>	<p>1) DCUD (25-52)</p> <p>2) Module 11 Content (BB)</p>	<p><u>By Mon:</u></p> <p>1) Annotations &amp; End Notes for Workshop 2C</p> <p><u>By Wed:</u></p> <p>2) Experiment 4: Process Note</p>
<p><b>Week 13</b> <b>Apr 16-20</b></p> <p><i>Apr 16: National Book Awards Reading</i></p>	<p>1) DCUD (55-85)</p> <p>2) Module 12 Content (BB)</p>	<p><u>By Mon:</u></p> <p>1) Annotations &amp; End Notes for Workshop 2D</p> <p><u>By Wed:</u></p> <p>2) ACE Lesson Plan Implementation &amp; Report-back</p>
<p><b>Week 14</b> <b>Apr 23-27</b></p>	<p>1) Module 13 Content (BB)</p>	<p><u>By Mon:</u></p> <p>1) Annotations &amp; End Notes for Workshop 2E</p> <p><u>By Wed:</u></p> <p>2) Upload Attending a Reading Response</p>

<b>Week 15 Apr 30-May 4</b>  <i>May 4: Last class day. Last day to resign by 5:00 p.m. in Registrar's Office.</i>	2) Module 14 Content (BB)	<u>By Mon:</u>  1) Post Chapbook Draft  <u>By Wed:</u>  2) Annotations & End Notes for Small Group Portfolio Workshop
<b>FINALS WEEK May 7-10</b>		<u>On Wed, 5-7p (location to be determined by class):</u>  1) Open Mic (3 min in-person performance/reading or showing of audio or video recording)  2) Turn In Final Chapbook

Grades will be posted by Monday, May 14, 12:00 p.m.