Stephen F. Austin State University  
ENGLISH 4365: Topics in Creative Writing: First Books of Poetry  
(Fall 2020)

Course number/section: ENGL 4365-001  
Meeting place: Ferguson 177  
Meeting time: 11-11:50 a.m. MWF  
Professor: Dr. Sara Henning  
Office: LAN 263  
Office hours: TR 2:00-4:30 p.m. (Zoom)  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does one construct a first book, much less a first book of poetry? In this part-workshop, part-seminar, students will study an assortment of debut collections of poems, published between 1976 and 2019. Students will be expected to synthesize their readings via analytic methods, to propose and complete their own chapbook-length creative projects, and to engage attentively in class discussions. Together, we will hypothesize how, over time, various writers established themselves (and their reputations) at the beginning of their poet careers.

Credit Hour Justification
ENGL 4365 “Special Topics in Creative Writing” (3 credits) typically meets twice each week in 75-minute segments, three times a week in 50-minute segments, or one night a week in 150-minute segments, for 15-weeks, and includes a 2-hour final examination or Final Portfolio of revised original fiction. The topic varies by genre and style; it may focus on prose or poetry. It may be limited to form (for example, flash fiction) or by tone and tradition (for instance, ghost stories). Students are assigned readings, both critical and creative. They are required to complete three original stories (two must be 2000-4000 words long, one must be under 1000 words) or a selection of poems with justification, for workshop review, one short craft analysis essay (roughly 5 pages) or analysis assignments (totally 5 pages); participate in workshop by having read and responded to others’ work and submitted editorial comments to their peers (roughly 30 pages of editorial suggestions); to create a self-reflective final portfolio that includes at least two drafts (original and revised) of their creative work. These activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

COVID-19 Mask Policy
Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in this class and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be asked to leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary actions.


REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED PRACTICES

Carolyn Forché. *Gathering the Tribes.*
Olga Broumas. *Beginning with O.*
Jon Pineda. *Birthmark.*
Geffrey Davis. *Revising the Storm.*
Tarfia Faizullah. *Seam.*
Ocean Vuong. *Night Sky with Exit Wounds.*
Edgar Kunz. *Tap Out.*

Professionalism

Regular access to a laptop or tablet for in-class work

Familiarity with Brightspace/D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Question/Observation Craft Analyses (8)

Our study of first books will hinge on analysis and synthesis: which strategic choices does a writer employ to thematically, narratively, and/or architecturally construct the book? In these short assignments (1 typed page), you will pose a question, and then answer it, citing a collection’s craft-level strategies. Due Date: TBA.

Chapbook Project Proposal (1-2 pages)

Early in the semester, you will submit a project proposal for a chapbook of poetry (10-12 pages of original work). The following are some typical guidelines for submitting a book project.

1. **A cover letter** that includes a synopsis or concise description of your project, the manuscript's length, the primary audience and any secondary audience(s) for the book, and your ideas of similar books that your manuscript may compete with or complement. You will include 3-5 poems (previously written) that you believe to be representative of the manuscript’s thematical, narrative, or architectural goals.
2. A brief biographical note.

Modeling Poems (8)

We will read eight debut collections of poems, one collection per week. For each book, you will create one poem addressing a thematic, narrative, or architectural technique utilized by the poet we are reading. Make sure that this poem conforms to the goals for your chapbook proposal.
Poems for Workshop (2)

This assignment will consist of two poems written to address/fulfill a thematic narrative, or architectural technique serving the needs of your chapbook project. Please include a short author's note detailing the following: (1) the goals of your chapbook project, (2) how these poems fit it, and (3) your intended craft goals.

Workshops

Each student will have a large group workshop over their poems. During these writing group workshops, students will read each other’s work, giving instructive, holistic feedback guided by an author’s note, which could include reactions, broad-stroke comments, and noting places that are particularly strong/need additional development.

As a peer, prior to Workshop, you will provide constructive feedback for each workshop member’s work. This constructive feedback must be undertaken by using the following strategies: (a) line-by-line marginalia/edits and (b) a short, summative assessment (one paragraph), close-reading the draft for its stylistic choices. On each day of Workshop, you will submit your critiques in the appropriately labelled Dropbox.

NOTE: A detailed model with instructions, etiquette, and expectations for workshop will be provided prior to the first workshop. Due dates for submitting drafts and submitting feedback will also be provided.

Chapbook Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will hand in a collection composed of revised, final versions of 10-12 poems. The collection will have a brief introduction summarizing, synthesizing and reflecting on your intent and execution. The arrangement of these poems should be informed by strategies gleaned from the study of other debut collections. The portfolio must include all of the following:

1) ‘Table of Contents’ page listing all pieces in portfolio, including page numbers

2) Introductory Statement

3) Final (and rough) drafts

All work must be compiled in an electronic document, formatted using MLA standards, and submitted via D2L during your final exam period.

Notes on Grading Criteria:

This Chapbook Portfolio assignment is worth a total of 200 points (roughly 30% of final grade). The portfolio will be scored by completeness of assembled work, attention to detail and description in analyses
for each piece submitted, obvious attempts at development and revision in creative work, and obvious ability to utilize subject specific terms discussed in class throughout the semester.

**Grading**

Question/Observation Craft Analyses (8): 200 points (20%)
Chapbook Project Proposal: 100 points (10%)
Modeling Poems: 200 points (20%)
Poems for Workshop (2): 100 points (10%)
Workshop Critiques: 100 points (10%)
Chapbook Portfolio: 200 points (20%)
Attendance/Professionalism: 100 points (10%)

Total: 1000 points

**Note:** Because this is a critical class/workshop hybrid, I expect each student to participate fully in class discussion and attend class. Lack of attendance and participation will negatively impact your grade.

**Grading Standard:**

A (excellent performance): 90-100.
B (above average performance): 80-89.
C (average performance): 70-79.
F (failure): 0-59.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Technology Requirements**

Desire2Learn (D2L)

D2L will be used to facilitate some aspects of the course. In D2L, you will be able to:

- Access additional required materials not found in your textbook (additional assigned readings on elements of craft and additional poems or stories which illustrate those elements).
- Access your course grades.
- Access supplemental resources/activities which are not required but may be useful.

Email
Course news and updates will be sent to you via email, so you will be responsible for checking your SFA email account regularly. Emails sent to the instructor on weekdays (Monday-Friday) will receive a response within 24-48 hours.

Absences

Because this is a hands-on, activity-oriented critical/studio hybrid course, attendance is a significant factor for success. You will be allowed three absences during the course of the semester. For each absence beyond this, there will be a half-grade deduction in your final grade (a final grade of 95 would be reduced to a 90). It is up to the student to arrange to meet with the instructor to discuss missed course material. Make-up work will not be arranged or accepted.

Students who miss three or more class meetings, regardless of circumstance, will receive a course grade of “F.”

Valid excuses are limited to health, religious observation, family emergencies, and participation in certain SFASU-sponsored events. Students must provide written documentation from which a decision will be made regarding the absence’s excusability. Without written documentation, the absence will automatically be considered unexcused. Students with acceptable excuses may be permitted to make up work when the nature of the work missed permits. However, no absences beyond the allotted number will be permitted, whether unexcused or excused. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused, students are still responsible for all course content and assignments. Note also that you must turn in all major assignments to pass the course.

I take attendance at the beginning of class; arriving more than five minutes after class begins will result in your being marked absent.

Please note that I DO NOT make distinctions between excused and unexcused absences, and an absence always counts as an absence. I will expect you each to manage your own attendance accordingly. Please let me know ASAP if you have specific concerns or questions.

COVID-19 update: if you have been exposed to COVID-19 or have tested positive for the virus (and you are symptomatic or asymptomatic), refrain from attending class for the appropriate quarantine period (10 days-14 days), until you are well. Please reach out to let me know that you are ill, and you will join our class using Zoom during that time. You will not be penalized for missing class due to COVID-19.

Late Work

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Late work will be accepted for all major assignments, but a 10% late penalty will be applied for each day past the deadline. For example, if an assignment is due at the beginning of class on Monday, there will be a penalty of 10% if turned in by Tuesday, and 20% if turned in by Wednesday, and so on. You should save your work in multiple places; I highly recommend using online storage options such as OneDrive, which is included as a free service in the university’s downloadable subscription of Microsoft Office 365, to prevent lost work.

Course Citizenship
Sleeping or reading other materials during class are not acceptable. All cell phones must be turned off prior to coming to class, and no text messaging or web surfing will be tolerated. Laptops and cell phones should not be used unless I indicate that you may use them for a particular activity.

Although students with disciplinary problems tend to be few and far between at the college level, if behavioral disruptions persist within a single class meeting (or, for that matter, across multiple meetings), the student in question will be asked to leave the class with a lowered participation grade and an absence for the day.

Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance available to help SFA students succeed.

Assignment Submission

You must submit all written work to the assigned D2L/Brightspace Dropbox. All work submitted for Group Workshops must be submitted on the appropriate course Discussion Board. Assignments are due by class time on their due date.

Academic Integrity

Adhering to academic integrity standards at all times by producing your own work and successfully attributing others’ ideas to them is a necessary aspect of university communication. Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.

Any appeals on academic integrity cases must be made within thirty days after the first class day of the next long semester. Students should appeal to the instructor first then to the chair if the situation is not resolved. Further appeals can be made to the dean and provost if necessary.


Course Evaluations
Course evaluations will be available online near the end of the semester. I highly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to give feedback about how effective this class and my teaching was, particularly because I read evaluations to help make decisions about future classes. In other words, your feedback can help my future students have a good class experience.

**Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary non-fiction).
3. The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4. The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5. The student will compose and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.

**Title IX Statement**

Stephen F. Austin State University strives to provide an educational and work environment that affirms the rights and dignity of each individual. It is the policy of the university, in accordance with federal and state law, to prohibit unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, citizenship and veteran status. Additionally, Stephen F. Austin State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Unlawful discrimination based on sex includes discrimination defined as sexual harassment.

The [Discrimination Complaints policy (2.11)](https://example.com/discrimination-policy) and the [Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Violence, Harassment, and Misconduct policy (2.13)](https://example.com/sexual-harassment-policy) outline the university's commitment and detail the procedures used to prevent, respond, and investigate complaints. It is the responsibility of the university president to ensure that SFA and all its constituencies comply with the provisions of this policy and with all federal and state laws, executive orders and regulations regarding non-discrimination.

The university prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct because such behavior violates the university's institutional values, adversely impacts the university's community interest, and interferes with the university's mission. The university also prohibits retaliation against any person who, in good faith, reports or discloses a violation of this policy, files a complaint, and/or otherwise participates in an investigation, proceeding, complaint or remediation under this policy. Once the university becomes aware of an incident of sexual misconduct, the university will promptly and effectively respond in a manner designed to eliminate the misconduct, prevent its recurrence and address its effects.

Stephen F. Austin State University is dedicated to providing an environment of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in its programs and employment opportunities. The Title IX office supports the University’s commitment by offering training, programs and processes that promote an inclusive, diverse and supportive environment consistent with the SFA Way.

To fulfill its mission, the Title IX office:

- Coordinates the delivery of detailed educational programs and training concerning discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, interpersonal violence, and stalking;
- Recommends, develops, interprets and implements policies and procedures in support of non-discrimination;
Oversees investigations into complaints of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence by promptly organizing an impartial administrative review and addressing any patterns or systemic problems that might be identified during the review of such complaints;

Serves as the university's designated office responsible for coordinating the University's compliance with state and federal law, including, but not limited to:

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972,
- Violence Against Women Act,
- Campus SAVE Act.

Works with the Office of the General Counsel to investigate and respond to external complaints (e.g. EEOC, OCR).

The many terms and definitions that surround sexual misconduct issues can be confusing and may create unintended barrier to reporting incidents of sexual misconduct.

It is important to remember, only those options clearly identified as confidential assistance can keep your information private. Generally, any person not identified as a confidential reporter is required to report an incident that is reported to them. This requirement is intended to protect members of the campus community, visitors and guests from criminal and discriminatory behavior.

Accommodations

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify your instructors and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations, and no accommodations can be made except through the ODS. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.