

**GS/EN 6776 3.0**  
**Seminar-Workshop in Creative Writing: Poetry – Engaging the Current Moment**

Fall 2022  
Thursday 2:30-5:30

**Course Instructor**

Dr. Andy Weaver [aweaver@yorku.ca](mailto:aweaver@yorku.ca)  
Office Hours: TBD (office hours will be held virtually through zoom)

**Expanded Course Description:**

This workshop course will blend a focus on the students' own poetry writing with an attention to thinking about Canadian and American poetry from the contemporary moment. As such, we will read a number of works, most of which will have been published within the last five years. Most weeks, the first half of the class will focus on student presentations and discussions on the required readings; the second half will focus on workshopping the students' own poetry (depending on class size, students should expect to have their poetry workshopped 2-3 times over the length of the course; students will submit two poems—totaling no more than 3 pages, single spaced—each time they are workshopped).

**NOTE:** All students will write both poetry and academic papers (critical, scholarly engagements with elements of contemporary poetry and poetics) and participate in the poetry workshops. Students taking the course as part of the GDIP in Creative Writing will be evaluated primarily on their poetry; other students have the choice to be evaluated primarily on the basis of their creative or academic work. Students must declare to the instructor their preferred stream of evaluation (below).

**Required Course Texts**

Nyla Matuk, ed. *Resisting Canada* [Signal; 978-1550655339]  
Carmen Maria Muchado and Joyelle McSweeney, eds. *BAX 2020: Best American Experimental Writing* [Wesleyan; 978-0819579584]  
Souvankham Thammavongsa, ed. *Best Canadian Poetry 2021* [Biblioasis; 978-1771964395]  
Tommy Pico, *IRL* [Birds Llc; 978-0991429868]  
Liz Howard, *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* [McClelland & Stewart; 978-0771038365]

**Please note:** some (perhaps all) of these texts can be purchased as ebooks, which is perfectly fine so long as you have access to the text during all class discussions.

**Evaluation:**

**Track One: Creative (EN students counting this course towards the CW GDip must choose this track; this option is also available to EN students not pursuing the CW GDip and to non-EN students)**

- Seminar presentation on a specific poetic topic or device from that week's assigned readings (15-20 minutes): 30%
- Critical/scholarly essay on a specific poetry technique or problem as manifested in the course readings (1500-2000 words; 5-7 pages; due on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>): 10%
- Term portfolio (10-15 pages of new poetry, plus revisions and 5-page overview; due on Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>): 45%
- Participation: 15%

**Track Two: Scholarly/critical (EN students not pursuing the CW GDip and non-EN students hoping to be graded primarily on their scholarship; EN students counting this course towards the MA must choose this track)**

- Seminar presentation on a specific poetic topic or device from that week's assigned readings (15-20 minutes): 30%
- Critical/scholarly essay on a specific poetry technique or problem as manifested in the course readings (3500-4000 words; 12-14 pages): 45%
- Term portfolio (5-7 pages of new poetry, plus revisions and 3-page overview): 10%
- Participation: 15%

**Grading:** the regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies designate that course work be graded as follows:

- A+ Exceptional (90-100%). Excellence in writing, research, and reading combined with originality. Publishable.
- A Excellent (85-89%). Work that shows a superior command of the subject, clearly written, competently researched.
- A- High (80-84%). Work that shows a superior command of the material but with flaws in research and/or presentation.
- B+ Highly satisfactory (75-79%). Work that shows a sound command of research, writing, and reading skills but that may be flawed in some visible and correctable way.
- B Satisfactory 70-74%. Work that meets minimum expectations of a graduate student in research, writing, and reading skills.
- C Conditional (60-69%). Unsatisfactory work; flawed in methodology or critical assumptions; incoherently organized, poorly written, or superficially researched.
- F Failure (0-59%).

**Presentation**

As for the presentation itself, the presenter should read a focused, analytical, scholarly paper on a specific aspect of the poetry assigned for that week. You may focus your analysis around any aspect of the week's readings that you find interesting, so long as it focuses on arguing a point about one or more of the aesthetic techniques you find in the readings. For example, if you focus on rhyme in your presentation, you should do some research on the use of rhyme in poetry to get a sense of the stakes,

tradition, arguments, etc., surrounding rhyme in English-language poetry; you shouldn't go over the history of rhyme in your presentation, but you should be able to provide some relevant context for the points you make about the use of rhyme in the week's readings.

Students should focus their presentations around three specific parts:

1. historical and theoretical definition/context of the chosen aesthetic technique;
2. specific examples and analysis of the aesthetic technique in the week's readings;
3. argument/discussion on the efficacies of using the aesthetic technique in our own poetry.

These three parts do not need to be equally long, but each (especially the last) should receive adequate attention in the presentation. Given that ours is a creative writing course, presenters should consider "efficacies" as an umbrella term for the strengths, weaknesses, ethics, appropriateness, effectiveness, etc., of the aesthetic technique; in other words, presenters should try to answer this question: how can we best use the aesthetic technique in our own poetry?

**Critical/scholarly Essay:** unlike the in-class presentation, the essay is a purely academic exercise and must follow MLA guidelines for essays. Students must develop their own essay topics. Students should discuss their topic idea with the instructor as early as reasonably possible, in order to ensure that the topic is appropriate. The essay must be distinct from the class presentation, but it is possible to include the text(s) you present on in your essay.

**Term Portfolio:** the portfolio is a collection of the poems you have been working on during the course: they can be poems that were workshopped, or they can be new poems written during the span of the course that were not workshopped; it is expected that the term portfolio will be a mixture of workshopped and non-workshopped poems. For each poem in the portfolio, include a brief (one paragraph) introductory overview of the revisions you've made to the poem, as well as sections you would like to improve, parts you're particularly pleased with, etc.; a clearly marked "final" version; clearly marked and ordered revision versions. The portfolio as a whole must begin with an overview of your work throughout the term: discuss what you found changed most about your work in general and why, what stayed the same and why, what you were most pleased about your writing and why, what elements in your writing are you least pleased with and why, etc. (note, this overview is not a discussion of specific poems, but rather is an overview of your poetry writing in general).