

## ENGL 3250: Writing Poetry

Instructor: Amy Sailer  
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Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 – 1:00  
Mountain Time and by appointment

### Required Materials

Rio Cortez, *Golden Ax* (ISBN-13: 978-0143137139)

Paisley Rekdal, *West* (ISBN-13: 978-1556596568)

Lindsey Webb, *Plat* (ISBN-13: 9781648230622)

Other readings are available electronically on Canvas.

### Course Description

The purpose of the course is to help you develop a life-long practice in the reading and writing of poetry. I have organized the course around poetic representations of Utah over the last seventy-five years. Even though the poets we read were informed by the same landscapes, they come from different cultural backgrounds, and they work with vastly different rhythms, images, and strategies. I hope their work will inspire you with new ways to view, describe, and internalize the landscapes around you. I also hope these books will introduce you to your local poetry community. This class is built on the belief that, regardless of ability level or professional goals, poetry enriches our lives. Use this course to experiment, play, and take risks, drawing on our readings for inspiration.

### Course Outcomes and Objectives

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn fundamental concepts and terminology to poetry
- Analyze collections of poetry as creative writers
- Experiment with various technical elements of poetry
- Substantially revise two poems for workshop

### Course Expectations

#### Reading Discussions (30%)

**Bottom Line:** Two discussion posts due every Wednesday (250 – 350 words)

In the first half of the week, we'll discuss a poetry selection, usually half of a poetry collection. You should submit **two posts** for every discussion board. It would be great if you could post at least once on Monday and once on Tuesday or Wednesday so that the posts don't bunch up on Wednesday night. That said, if you know you'll be busy, you can post ahead of time. Unfortunately, I can't accept late submissions, since this is serving as attendance.

I'll always begin the discussion with a question about a certain element of craft, but please feel free to open other conversations. The point is to read as poets, observing, even stealing, techniques that you can adapt to your own work. The posts don't have to be hugely formal, but they should be substantial, about 250 – 350 words in length, that make claims, pull in quotations from the texts, and cite those quotations with in-text parentheticals.

### **Writing Exercises (30%)**

**Bottom Line:** One poem and paragraph due every Friday

You'll submit a poem every Friday by midnight. At the bottom of the poem, I'd like you to write a paragraph about a technique or strategy you discovered from our reading and tried in your own poem. These poems are low-stakes opportunities to experiment, with the hopes that you develop a couple of them for workshop. In other words, this isn't the place for "finished" poems; rather it's the time to take risks and write ambitious work!

### **Workshop Drafts (30%)**

**Bottom Line:** Two substantially revised poems, one due for midterm and one due for finals

We will hold workshop twice this semester: once at midterm and once at finals. You will submit one poem for each workshop. These drafts should come from poems you wrote first as exercises, and then either revised or used to prompt new poems. You will submit the drafts on the Friday before workshop weeks. (Because our class schedule hinges on these submissions, you must submit these poems on time.) These drafts will receive a grade based on the extent of revision: the poem should be at least 50% different from the original. We will schedule Zoom meetings with small groups to workshop your drafts. I will post a sign-up sheet so we can find a time to meet in these small groups.

### **Workshops (10%)**

**Bottom Line:** Two 60 – 90 minute workshop sessions

Based on your availability, I will organize us into small workshop groups and schedule times to meet over Zoom. You will receive a completion grade for providing feedback during these meetings. For those of you who absolutely can't find a time to meet, I will provide an option to record yourself giving feedback in short videos.

### **Grading Scale**

<b>A</b> 94-100	<b>B+</b> 87-89	<b>C+</b> 77-79	<b>D+</b> 67-69	<b>E</b> <60
<b>A-</b> 90-94	<b>B</b> 83-86	<b>C</b> 73-76	<b>D</b> 63-66	
	<b>B-</b> 80-82	<b>C-</b> 70-72	<b>D-</b> 60-62	

### **Course Policies**

**Late Policy:** The discussion boards are serving in place of class attendance, so I'm holding firmly to the discussion deadlines. (You have fourteen discussions boards, which altogether comprise 30% of your final grade, so missing a discussion board will have a small effect on your overall grade.) If you can't post twice for every board, you can still earn half credit for posting once. You are also free to post ahead of time, if you anticipate a scheduling conflict.

We have more flexibility for the creative exercises. I'm happy to provide an extension of one or two days on exercises if you don't think you can make a deadline. Please email me ahead of time, so we can work something out to keep you on track.

The workshop drafts and feedback are also on a tight schedule. If you absolutely have to submit a late workshop draft, you might miss out on your peer feedback.

**Artificial Intelligence:** While some writers are collaborating with language models for experimental projects, one of the objectives of this course is to practice fundamental concepts to express yourself in poetry and prose. Even writing a failed poem or story is great practice. Through that practice you can “warm up,” just like musical scales help musicians warm up their muscles. Even if you can only devote an hour or two to your writing for the week, take that hour, and turn in an under-polished draft, rather than use language models. This course is a chance to write about yourself!

## University Policies

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities.

All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access (CDA). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the Instruction & Evaluation regulations.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should never be made publicly available. In addition, recordings must be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

If you will need accommodations in this class, or for more information about what support they provide, contact:

Center for Disability & Access  
801-581-5020  
disability.utah.edu  
65 Student Services Building  
201 S 1460 E  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

**Safety at the U:** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more safety information and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](http://safeu.utah.edu).

To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety  
801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)  
dps.utah.edu  
1735 E. S. Campus Dr.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

**Addressing Sexual Misconduct:** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights

offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to university officials:

Title IX Coordinator & Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

801-581-8365  
oeo.utah.edu  
135 Park Building  
201 Presidents' Cir.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Office of the Dean of Students

801-581-7066  
deanofstudents.utah.edu  
270 Union Building  
200 S. Central Campus Dr.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

To file a police report, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)  
dps.utah.edu  
1735 E. S. Campus Dr.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence.

To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact:

Center for Campus Wellness

801-581-7776  
wellness.utah.edu  
350 Student Services Building  
201 S. 1460 E.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

**Academic Misconduct:** It is expected that students comply with University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the

profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah’s Student Code: Policy 6-410: Student Academic Performance, Academic Conduct, and Professional and Ethical Conduct.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code:

“...Includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.”

For details on plagiarism and other important course conduct issues, see the U's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

### Preliminary Course Schedule

Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1	Larry Levis, selections	
Week 2	Jacqueline Osherow, selections	Influence Poem (due 1/17)
Week 3	Rio Cortez, <i>Golden Ax</i>	Influence Poem (due 1/24)
Week 4	Rio Cortez, <i>Golden Ax</i>	Influence Poem (due 1/31)
Week 5	Leslie Norris, <i>A Sea in the Desert</i>	Influence Poem (due 2/7)
Week 6	Leslie Norris, <i>A Sea in the Desert</i>	Influence Poem (due 2/14)
Week 7	May Swenson, selections	Metaphor Prompt (2/21)
Week 8	May Swenson, selections	Workshop Draft (due 2/28)
Week 9	Poetry Workshop	Workshop Feedback
Week 10	Paisley Rekdal, <i>West: A Translation</i>	Influence Poem (due 3/21)
Week 11	Paisley Rekdal, <i>West: A Translation</i>	Influence Poem (due 3/28)
Week 12	Mark Strand, selections	Influence Poem (due 4/4)
Week 13	Lindsey Webb, <i>Plat</i>	Influence Poem (due 4/11)
Week 14	Lindsey Webb, <i>Plat</i>	Workshop Draft (due 4/18)
Week 15	Poetry Workshop	Workshop Feedback