

**Required Textbooks (available in the Paw Prints Bookstore):** Bring all pertinent texts (including handouts) with you to each class.

*Good Heart: Poems* by Deobrah Keenan. Milkweed Editions. ISBN: 9781571314154  
*Babylon in a Jar* by Andrew Hudgins. Mariner Books. ISBN: 9780618126972  
*Red Clay Suite* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers. Southern Illinois University Press. ISBN: 9780809327607  
*Budget Travel through Space and Time: Poems* by Albert Goldbarth. Graywolf Press. ISBN: 9781555974169  
*What Animal* by Oni Buchanan. University of Georgia Press. ISBN: 9780820325675  
*The Poetry Anthology, 1912-2002* edited by Joseph Parisi. Ivan R. Dee, Publisher. ISBN: 9781566636049  
*Schott's Original Miscellany* by Ben Schott. Bloomsbury USA. ISBN: 9781582343495

**Course Objectives:** This course is best seen as a journey. I know that sounds corny, but work with me for a second, and imagine you are setting out on a steamer ship, your suitcases marked for *poetry*. You plan to see the sights and monuments, immerse yourself in local culture and language, dance with beautiful strangers, and savor the cuisine. You want to pick up souvenirs, of course, and somewhere inside you lies the hope that this trip will change your life. You want to take this trip, to *make* this trip, more than anything. You are prepared to spend all your money, lose yourself on foreign streets, and relish even your smallest triumphs (you found the museum all by yourself!). Think of this class in this way. Further, imagine me as your guide for special, off-the-beaten-path tours.

Ideally, you will leave the class not with souvenirs, things which help you remember the experience, but with experience itself. And, of course, with poems. These ought not to sit inside some unopened album or upon some dusty shelf; they should surround you, steal your breath and thought, and live in your hands. Some of your poems will be all grown up and ready to be sent on voyages of their own; others you may need to poke and prod a while until they realize who they are and know enough to know that they want to be more. First, though, we have to understand just what poems are, just where the voyage begins and ends. We'll decide this together, for each of you. I am most concerned with process, how poems come to be grown-up, and this will also be your concern as we work through the semester. Yes, work. This is a *workshop*, after all, not a Carnival Cruise.

*Poems are work.* There is our first definition. If you are not willing to work, you'd best disembark.

Process begins with invention, with inspiration, and much of our class will be devoted to ways we can invite poems onto paper. The workshop itself will focus on revision and editing, steps your poems should go through long before you bring them to your classmates for consideration; workshop is best described, I suppose, as the place to gather new ideas and feedback. More on that in a moment. We will also concern ourselves with formal matters, poetics, and the habit of reading poetry as *poets* rather than English majors. Through all this (and much more), you should end up with rough drafts, revisions, more revisions, workshop commentary (both for your poems and for others) and a much broader and better knowledge of the strange territories where poets seek to dwell. Perhaps you'll want to move there.

**Classroom Conduct:** The workshop should be a bolstering environment in which students feel safe in sharing their work and opinions. You are expected to treat your peers (and me) with respect at all times. This is not to say you may never disagree with your classmates or with me; a safe space has more than enough room for disagreement. Discussions may become quite heated, but they should always retain respect. I will consider interruptions of a technical nature just as serious as disruptions to the safe atmosphere of the workshop. Your safety, here, is paramount. ***Disruptions to the safe and open atmosphere of this workshop will result in an additional conference with me and a reduction of your final grade.***

**Assignments and Grading:** A poem cannot be graded. At least, I cannot grade a poem. However, this course is not a skate. Doing the work does not automatically equal an A or a B. I can and will judge your poetry based on the work you've done with it; the process you've engaged or haven't; whether or not it is, in both our estimations, good poetry; and whether I think you've done work as befits a 4000 level course. That judgment and estimation is difficult to state in terms of letters and numbers. I could work out some insane point system based on images, metrics, and other such things, but that would hurt us all in the worst ways imaginable. It could kill us. Your course grade, then, will be based upon completion of assignments, workshop notes and participation, response papers, explication and literary terms, keeping up with your writer's notebook, readings and recitations, portfolios, and attendance. It will also be based on the judgment I mentioned above. Find descriptions of your assignments below. If you're dying to know percentages RIGHT NOW, I'll work something up, but I'd rather let numbers go for a while and do things as holistically as possible until I know you as individuals and as a group.

**Some Notes on Class Participation:** I know it's slightly out of order, but this has to come first in the whole "descriptions of your assignments" section of our contract. Though class participation does not count for a specific percentage of your final grade, I highly recommend that you be an active member of the class. Otherwise, why take the course? Participation is a babyish principle, at least in its definition and enforcement; I expect you to know what is good and what isn't. Attend class and involve yourself in the reading and discussion of assignments. Involve yourself in writing, too. Reading assignments and workshop notes should be completed before class discussion, and you should be prepared to share perceptive, insightful, and original observations about the poems which you have read. This course will not be based on lectures, ever; rather, we will work together to understand the texts we read and their relevance to poetry as a whole and to our life and work as poets. I will evaluate you on your input for class, and failure to read and discuss may hurt your grade, **but you are ultimately responsible for your own experience and education**; I will not beg you to

participate or to learn. Neither will I beg you to become a poet. If you choose to prepare and speak, you'll receive praise and knowledge. If you choose otherwise, your grade will show it. Don't be afraid to speak; as long as you can support your opinions and your criticism is constructive, there are no wrong answers. If you are painfully shy or somehow afraid of poetry, feel free to set up an additional conference with me to discuss options and strategies for better notes and participation.

**Completion of Assignments:** All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the due date specified. If assignments are late, points will be deducted. *No late work will be accepted without advance permission*, which I will grant for *legitimate* reasons only. Absence is not an excuse. If you are going to be absent, please make sure any work you may have due is turned in *prior to your absence*. (If you are violently ill, held hostage in a foreign country, or otherwise unavoidably detained, contact me as soon as possible.) If you miss a workshop, you *must* give notes to the poets whose workshops you missed. We may often have in-class assignments; make-up assignments will, generally, not be given. Exceptions will be based on whether or not missing the work was clearly beyond the student's control. Papers must be typed in 12pt. Times New Roman, doubled-spaced, and conformed to MLA documentation guidelines (unless otherwise specified). Poems should be left-justified (unless some other justification is absolutely necessary to the form) and in a font which is easy to read. (I prefer Garamond, but you are free to use whatever font you like so long as I can read it). Written work must be backed up either by photocopy or on disk. No backup is no excuse, and neither are printer problems, hungry dogs, faulty spell-check quills, etc. An AWOL Muse is not really a good excuse, either.

**Invention and Exercises:** When I ask you to do an in-class invention or an out-of-class exercise, I expect you to do it. *Punto final*. You may not like every exercise or prompt, but I swear, I have reasons for assigning them, and I'll expect to see them in your final portfolio. For exercises on your own, you are always welcome to use *Schott's Original Miscellany*. That's what it's for!

**Workshops and Workshop Notes:** You've been in at least two workshops before, and I will trust that you know the process and how to make workshop notes. Poems to be workshopped are due no later than 5PM on the previous Friday. You should e-mail these to the class. (We'll talk about how to manage all of that.) When your poems are workshopped, try to remain quiet and objective and gear all your functions toward listening actively; you will be given a chance to speak, but don't sway your readers before they can speak, okay? And keep a copy of all your workshop notes (to be consulted as you revise and handed in with your final portfolio). When you are workshopping the poems of others, there are just a few general rules to keep in mind. First, bring both written (upon the poem) and typed comments to class for the poet(s). Second, try hard, both in these prepared comments and in what you say once spoken workshop begins, to approach these poems on their own terms; don't try to make everyone write to your tastes. (I swear I will try to do the same.) Third, apply the Golden Rule to your workshop etiquette: do and want for others as you would do and want for yourself. We will do a couple of mock workshops during the first weeks of class, but if you'd like extra help and strategies, let me know. Finally, be warned: if I catch you marking up poems in the fifteen minutes before class begins...just don't let me catch you, okay? It won't be pretty.

**Response Papers:** These four papers, between two and three pages in length, serve several purposes. First, they should help you to demonstrate a deep engagement in and understanding of the poetry you read. They will also help you to engage on a deeper level with the poetry you *write*. We cannot write in a vacuum, after all. These response papers should also help to facilitate your classroom discussion of the books and authors we read and keep you from saying things like "I don't have anything to say," "I forgot we were supposed to read that, man," and "Um...I don't know?" which are answers I loathe and answers poets should never have when it comes to poetry. Finally, these response papers will help me to familiarize myself with you and your understanding of poetry...and they'll give me something besides poems to grade. So. Excellent. Your responses to the books and poems we read should not be explications (you'll do that later!) or summaries. You are a writer writing to another writer (me, one of your classmates) about a third writer's work. If you have questions about writing these, please see me. *Notice: You only have to write four response papers. You may choose which response you omit.*

**Explication and Literary Terms:** On the first night of class you will be given a list of poetic terms which you should define by some means and exemplify, either through your own work or by letting other writers do that bit of business for you. The due date for these terms is listed on the course schedule. I expect you to learn these terms quickly (yes, there will be an exam, sorry, I know) and employ them throughout the workshop. As a final application of these terms, you will explicate one poem from *The Poetry Anthology* and one poem *prior to 1900*. These explications are due whenever you like, no later than the penultimate week of class, and should be between three and four pages in length—no longer, and involving no outside sources unless absolutely necessary. I advise you to complete them early so that you may receive feedback from me, have the opportunity for revision, and use what you've learned in your own notes and poetry.

**Writer's Notebook:** I assume most of you already keep a journal of some kind, but if not, you must begin keeping such a thing immediately. I suggest a small notebook, something pocket-sized which you can carry at all times, but you do not have to buy a special little Moleskine just for this class. Use this journal for rough drafts, jotting down the things you see (poetry is all about *seeing*, you know: the slick gray bricks with ashes on them just outside A&S; the fuzz at the ends of Traci Burns' green, ribbed scarf...write down everything you see, and begin to appreciate the unique ways in which you see) and lines that won't leave your head (but which *will* leave it if you don't write them down). Pen down the thoughts you have as you read through your books and anthologies. Write about your frustrations. Go on a word-hunt, seek out strange etymology, and use your notebook to record language as a birdwatcher would record birds. Use the notebook for whatever you like. Just *use it*. And bring it with you to classes and conferences. I'll want

to see it every once in a while.

**Readings and Recitations:** Time and time again, no doubt, you've heard some permutation of the maxim: *the best readers make the best writers*. Perhaps you've come to believe it already, but I am compelled to reinforce that notion in as many ways as I know how. One of the ways is to begin all of our meetings with reading, usually from *The Poetry Anthology*. Read through it all the time (you should *want* to do this, if you're serious about poetry) and come to class each week with a poem you'd like to read. You should also bring this anthology and poems you'd like to read from it to your conferences with me. Poetry is not meant to live upon a page alone, but in mouths and ears, and inside you; accordingly, we will work both on the page and outside it. Your workshops will begin with you reading your poem(s) aloud. Later in the semester (again the due date is your choice, but it should be no later than the penultimate week of class) you will begin to recite poetry: one poem from the books we read together, and one poem of your choice. One of these recitations may be done in conference, but one, at least, must be done in class. No recitations of haiku, please.

**Portfolios:** I will take up preliminary portfolios on the second week of class. This portfolio will not really be counted in your final grade, unless you don't turn it in. I say it "will not really be counted" because it will be counted, in a way; I will use this portfolio to get to know you and your writing as quickly and as well as possible, and I will judge your progress through the semester...not so much *against* it as *alongside* it. I'll also use them as a point of departure for our first conferences. I'd like to see as much poetry as possible in these preliminary portfolios, but I am not opposed to seeing a very short prose piece (no more than three pages, in addition to some poetry) from those of you who are taking poetry as a second genre. I want to see the ways you wield language and image, and I will be able to see that in whatever writing you submit. My hope is that these preliminary portfolios will enable me to guide you on a more individual basis. The fact that they'll also take care of the temptation to recycle old poems all semester doesn't hurt my feelings, though.

Your final portfolio will consist of between five and eight "finished" poems, workshop notes, all the drafts and exercises you've produced for this class, other class work, and a letter to me. More on this as we get there.

You'll need plain manila folders for your portfolios. You'll also need a large envelope with sufficient postage for me to mail your final portfolio back to you, with comments and a letter of my own, once the semester is over. I suggest sticking a few blank pages into the envelope, taking it to the post office, and having it weighed so that we'll both know the postage is correct.

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend class. You should *want* to attend class. You wouldn't go on a trip and sleep in the hotel all day, would you? We only meet once a week, and there is much to be done! **You are allowed one free class absence. Subsequent class absences may cause your final grade to drop substantially.** You will also be meeting with me **every third week** for personal conferences, and **you may only miss one conference. Subsequent conference absences will also cause your final grade to drop.** You will also be expected to attend readings throughout the semester. There are no "excused" absences in this class. You will not be penalized for participation on school-sponsored events or for disasters/emergencies beyond your control; however, students who use the absences allotted for school-sponsored co-curricula and/or disasters/emergencies do not get any additional "free" absences. If you know you'll miss class, please notify me in advance. Talk to me *before* you develop attendance problems if you have concerns or questions; we will work together to resolve those issues and work out a policy which suits us both.

**Academic Honesty:** I shouldn't even have to say this to a class full of writers, but I will, because I suppose one can never be too careful, and this is the last you'll hear of it from me. You all swore, long ago when you were freshmen, to uphold the standards of GCSU's Honor Code ([http://www.gcsu.edu/student\\_affairs/Student\\_Handbook/honor/honor.html](http://www.gcsu.edu/student_affairs/Student_Handbook/honor/honor.html)). Cheaters on tests are bad enough, but *poetry cheaters*?! All of the work you submit in this workshop should be your own. Poets are often inspired by other writers—or even by television commercials—and I do not mean to say that you cannot play upon or imitate the writers you adore. Inspiration, though, is a different sort of creature than is malevolent thievery. If you thief and cheat, and I catch you, you'll fail my class and be reported to through the channels listed in the GC&SU Undergraduate Catalog. It's as simple as that. If I *don't* catch you, know that the dark mark upon your writer's soul will never wash away; you'll be plagued with the guilt of kidnapping someone else's muse until the day you write your last. And keep in mind the fact that, once you've written your last, you'll be facing eternity in the eighth circle of Hell with all the other thieves, trapped in a snake pit with your hands bound. (If you don't believe me, believe Dante.)

**ADA Requests for Modification:** Any student requiring instructional modifications due to a documented disability should make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible. *An official letter from Georgia College documenting the disability* will be expected in order to receive accommodations. However, if you have *any* special needs or concerns that will bear on your ability to perform in this class, even if they are undocumented, please speak with me. I probably won't be able to make modifications for students without documentation, but my knowing your situation will benefit us both. Your notification will be kept confidential.

**In the event of a fire alarm signal,** students will exit the building in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of this building. Do not use elevators. Crawl on the floor if you encounter heavy smoke. Assist others without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus.

**Tentative Class Schedule:** Read all materials and have assignments ready to turn in by the dates they are listed. ***This schedule may be modified; assignments may be added or taken away, etc., as best benefits our class.*** "TBD" doesn't mean we won't have anything to do! Many things can happen to throw a class off schedule, and I've built these days into the syllabus to help us out in case that happens. If nothing happens, we'll fill them in together. (This course schedule is *extremely* rough and also *flexible*. I've never taught

or been in a workshop of fifteen people before! If we need to change things, we should and will.)

Week	Date	Class Activities, Etc.	Readings and Assignments Due
1	1/9	Introductions, Scheduling, Etc. Artist's Statement: What do we want? What do <i>you</i> want? Poetic Terms Readings and Invention	
2	1/16	Discussion: <i>Good Heart</i> Workshop Practice Confirm Conference Times Some Formal Poetry (if we have time) <i>Come to your conferences, please.</i>	Preliminary Portfolio Read Keenan's book and write a response.  <i>Bring at least one Schott's exercise with you.</i>
3	1/23	Discussion: Formal Poetry and Terms Invention Workshop (5 people, one poem each)	Poetic Terms Due
4	1/30	Discussion: <i>Babylon in a Jar</i> Workshop (5 people, one poem each)	Read Hudgins' book and write a response.
5	2/6	Continue Discussion of <i>Babylon in a Jar</i> , if needed. Invention Workshop (5 people, one poem each)	
6	2/13	Discussion: <i>Red Clay Suite</i> Formal Poetry Invention	Read Jeffers' book and write a response.
7	2/20	Invention Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	
8	2/27	Invention Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	
9	3/5	Discussion: <i>Budget Travel through Space and Time</i> Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	Read Goldbarth's book and write a response.
10	3/12	Some Activity or Another. Maybe Formal Poetry. Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	
11	3/19	Some Activity or Another. See Above. Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	
12	3/26	<i>Spring Break—No Class.</i>	
13	4/2	Discussion: <i>What Animal</i> Invention What's left? What do we still need? Want?	Read Buchanan's book and write a response.
			Sean Hill reads as part of the Flannery O'Connor Conference on April 4 at 4:30. Location TBA. <b>Oni Buchanan</b> visits this weekend! You are expected to attend her piano recital (4/6, MNR) AND her poetry reading (4/7, A&SA). Times TBA, but they're both at night.
14	4/9	Invention Workshop (4 people, two poems each)	
15	4/16	Invention Workshop (4 people, two poems each)	

16	4/23	Invention Workshop (4 people, two poems each)	
17	4/30	Yeah, I know, <i>Reading Day</i> and all, but the Registrar says that Reading Day officially ends at 5PM, so we're having class. We need it! You <i>love</i> it. Workshop (3 people, two poems each)	
	5/6	Final Portfolios Due no later than 5PM	

This space left blank for your convenience. Write your conference dates here! Or a rough draft! Something.