

English 320 The Art of Poetry
Fall 2008
MWF 5a 12:50-1:40

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REQUIRED TEXTS: J. Paul Hunter, *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* 9th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Billy Collins, ed. *Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Admission ticket to Dodge Poetry Festival, Friday, September 26 (~\$20)

COURSE OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES: In our day, the ability to "read" a poem--to fully respond to and appreciate it--is by no means a given. It is something many of us must learn, through attention to certain formal and thematic features of the genre, and through practice. Developing the ability and the inclination to read poetry is well worth our while because poetry opens us up to a wealth of human experience. Most poetry is, after all, the artistic expression of human feeling. In this course, our first objective is to improve our ability to read poetry--to understand how a wide variety of poetic texts work by considering such technical problems as tone, speaker, situation and setting, language, structure, sound, and form. We will look at poems in their biographical, historical, cultural, and literary contexts, to learn how poems come into being and the effect they can have on the world around them. Our second objective is to develop the ability to articulate our own experience of the poems we read by writing about them. Although writing poetry is not a requirement of this course, perhaps the expressiveness of the genre will inspire some of us to make our own attempt at invoking the Muses.

COURSE METHOD: The course will consist of some lecturing, a great deal of both class and group discussion, writing assignments, and two exams.

EVALUATION: Midterm (15%), final exam (20%), two essays (15%, 20%), report (10%), homework assignments (10%), class attendance and participation (10%). Grade Scale: 93-100=A; 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D- . It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for any assignments and for the final course grade.

ATTENDANCE: I expect you to attend class regularly and promptly, to have read, reread, and reread the poems, to have completed the writing assignment, and to be ready for discussion. I will read off your name at the beginning of each class, both to learn who you are and to keep track of your attendance. It is your responsibility to consult me with me if you are late or absent.

CLASS DISCUSSION: Because we all bring to our reading of poetry a variety of skills and insights, the success of this course will depend upon our willingness to share these skills and insights with one another. It is not always easy to talk about poetry, often because it evokes feelings that are deeply personal and thus difficult to express (that's one of the reasons why these feelings are so often expressed in poetry, rather than elsewhere). But the effort to do so will be worth it. I will count on everyone to try, regularly, to contribute something to the discussion. Your participation grade will reflect your regular, voluntary engagement in class discussion. Full attendance without such engagement will earn no more than a grade of C for participation.

****Please turn off and put away all cell phones during class.**

**** Your final exam is on Wed., Dec. 17 at 8:30 a.m.; adjust your travel plans to accommodate that schedule.**

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: For assistance in writing about poetry, you will read pages 623-644 of our anthology. Please consult these pages, as well as the attached “Rubric,” which will help you in constructing coherent, persuasive analytical essays – about poetry as well as other kinds of literature. Please come to see me if you have any questions.

Report: You will be required to choose and view one of several videos, on reserve, that focus on the work of individual poets. You will receive a handout detailing this assignment.

NOTE: Due dates for writing assignments are firm. If for some extraordinary reason you must be late, you need to talk to me. Late assignments automatically receive a lower grade.

Also, see “READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS.”

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own. This includes such instances as quoting directly from a published work without giving the author credit (i.e. proper citation), inserting the author's words as your own, using or "borrowing" another student's work, buying a paper from a professional service, etc. It is your responsibility to be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism and, in the event of uncertainty, to ask in a constructive manner about a writing in question before it is due in a final version. You are also required to keep all note cards and rough drafts on papers and assignments until given a final grade for that course. Evidence of plagiarism and cheating will be dealt with in accordance with the college policy on academic honesty found in the Student Handbook. Please read this policy in its entirety. In the event of a suspected infraction – in fairness to your peers and the standards of the college – it is my job to send the materials in question to the Dean's Office at which time you are given the chance to provide your perspective on the matter.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: When I assign a chapter, read carefully the first part, which explains the new terminology and gives examples. When you move on to the specific poems I've assigned from the second part of the chapter, read and reread them carefully in the light of the new terminology. Whenever a poetry term is highlighted in the text, be sure to study its definition, using the chapter and the glossary at the back of the book.

Use the questions at the end of the poems to help you as you reread the poems. Some of these questions you must answer in writing, as indicated in brackets on the syllabus. Your answers should be full and thoughtful, and should always be in prose paragraph form unless a list is specifically indicated. Sometimes a minimum required word count is indicated. Ultimately, I'm looking for evidence that you've read the poem repeatedly and carefully, that you have thought long and hard about it, and that you have put a good deal of effort into answering the questions.

Please bring two copies to class. You'll hand in one copy at the start of class and you'll keep the other copy to consult during our class discussion. At the right hand corner of the assignment sheet, record your name, the date the assignment is due, and the poet(s)' name and/or “Suggestion” number. After each individual answer, include a word count. ****Entries submitted apart from class (due to an absence) or at the end of class (unless typed) will receive no more than half credit.

I encourage you to read all of the poems in each section, even if they are not assigned. Although you might not have time to give them the close attention you give the assigned poems, reading them will help you better understand the topic of the chapter.

Special Note: There is no single, perfect interpretation of a poem. On the other hand, the more poetry one reads – with an awareness of and attention to various stylistic components – the better one becomes at coming up with a “good” interpretation and the more one enjoys the experience.

In addition to daily assignments, each student will be responsible for choosing and presenting on one poem from the *Poetry 180* text. Details to be announced in class.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS: Readings must be completed by the day on which they are listed. This schedule may be revised as the course progresses. I will announce changes in class. If you are late or absent, it is your responsibility to become informed of any changes.

- Week 1 Mon. Aug. 25 Introduction
- Wed. Aug. 27 "POETRY: READING, RESPONDING, WRITING," pp. 1-16
 W. H. Auden [Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone]
 William Shakespeare [Let me not to the marriage of true minds] [CD]
 Sharon Olds, "Last Night"
 Stephen Dunn, "After Making Love"
 Denise Levertov, "Wedding-Ring"
 W. B. Yeats, "A Last Confession"
 [Auden, Dunn, Levertov, Yeats, Suggestion #1 (100 words)]
- Fri. Aug. 29 Continue poems
 [Suggestion #3 (100 words)]
- Week 2 Wed. Sept. 3 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT
 "Tone," pp. 27-37
 Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays" [CD]
 Eavan Boland, "The Necessity for Irony"
 [Hayden + Suggestion #3 (250 words), Boland]
- Fri. Sept. 5 Galway Kinnell, "After Making Love We Hear Footsteps"
 Pat Mora, "Elena"
 Kelly Cherry, "Alzheimer's"
 [Kinnell, Mora, Cherry]
- Week 3 Mon. Sept. 8 Seamus Heaney, "Midterm Break" (p. 11) [WEB]
 Alan Dugan, "Elegy"
 Begin reading "Writing About Poetry, 623-644"
 [Dugan]
- Wed. Sept. 10 "Speaker: Whose Voice Do We Hear?" pp. 68-79
 Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool" [CD]
 Audre Lorde, "Hanging Fire" [WEB]
 Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Changeling"
 [Brooks, Lorde, Cofer]
- Fri. Sept. 12 No class; required attendance at Dodge Poetry Festival on Sept. 26
- Week 4 Mon. Sept. 15 Walt Whitman [I celebrate myself, and sing myself] [WEB]
 Henry Reed, "Lessons of the War: Judging Distances"
 [Whitman, Reed]
 Poetry 180
- Wed. Sept. 17 Sylvia Plath, "Mirror"
 Margaret Atwood, "Death of a Young Son by Drowning" (p. 71)
 "Writing About Poetry, pp. 623-644 [reading should be completed by this date]
 [Plath, Suggestion #4 (150 words)]
 Poetry 180

Fri. Sept. 19 "Situation and Setting: What Happens? Where? When?," pp. 93-105
SITUATIONS
Robert Snyder, "A Mongoloid Child Handling Shells on the Beach"
Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (p. 329)
Marilyn Chin, "Summer Love"
Mark Strand, "Black Sea"
[Snyder, Chin, Strand]
Poetry 180

Week 5 Mon. Sept. 22 TIMES
William Shakespeare, [Full many a glorious morning have I seen]
John Donne, "The Good-Morrow"
Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song"
Billy Collins, "Morning"
Jonathan Swift, "A Description of Morning"
[Donne, Plath, Collins, Suggestion #4 (200 words)]
Poetry 180

Wed. Sept. 24 PLACES
Mary Oliver, "Singapore"
John Betjeman, "In Westminster Abbey"
Derek Walcott, "Midsummer"
[Betjeman, Walcott]
First Essay Due

Fri. Sept. 26 No class: Dodge Poetry Festival

Week 6 Mon. Sept. 29 Discuss Dodge Poetry Festival
"Language: Precision and Ambiguity," pp. 129-140
Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Pied Beauty"
William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow"
[Hopkins + Suggestion #1 (200 words), Williams]

Wed. Oct. 1 E. E. Cummings, [in Just-]
Mary Oliver, "Morning"
William Carlos Williams, [This is Just to Say] [CD] [WEB]
[Cummings, Williams]
Poetry 180

Fri. Oct. 3 Ogden Nash, "Reflections on Ice-Breaking"
Ogden Nash, "Here Usually Comes the Bride"
Emily Dickinson, [I dwell in Possibility] [CD]
"Picturing: The Languages of Description," pp. 153-155
Nancy Willard, "The Snow Arrives After Long Silence"
[Nash ("Reflections"), Dickinson, Willard]
Poetry 180

Fall Recess

Week 7 Wed. Oct. 8 **Midterm**
Required Attendance at "Shakespeare Behind Bars," Prosser, 7 p.m.

- Fri. Oct. 10 No class; required attendance at “Shakespeare Behind Bars”
- Week 8 Mon. Oct. 13 "Language: Metaphor and Simile, pp. 165-172
Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"
John Donne, [Batter my heart, three-personed God . . .]
David Ferry, “At the Hospital”
[Jarrell, Donne, Ferry]
- Wed. Oct. 15 Anonymous, "The Twenty-Third Psalm"
Amy Lowell, “Aubade”
Greg Delanty, “The Blind Stitch”
[Anon, Lowell, Delanty]
Poetry 180
- Fri. Oct. 17 "Langugae: Symbol," pp. 183-191
D. H. Lawrence, “I Am Like a Rose” (p. 189)
William Blake, “The Sick Rose” (p. 190)
Dorothy Parker, "One Perfect Rose" (p. 189)
[Suggestion #4 (3 paragraphs + “generalizations”)]
Poetry 180
- Week 9 Mon. Oct. 20 Roo Borson, "After a Death"
Howard Nemerov, "The Town Dump"
[Borson, Nemerov]
Poetry 180
- Wed. Oct. 22 "The Sounds of Poetry," pp. 199-212
William Shakespeare, [Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore] [CD]
Donald Justice, "Counting the Mad" (handout)
Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky" (handout)
[Shakespeare]
- Fri. Oct. 24 James Merrill, "Watching the Dance"
Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring and Fall: to a young child" [CD]
Lee Ann Brown, “Foolproof Loofah”
[Merrill, Hopkins, Brown]
Poetry 180
- Week 10 Mon. Oct. 27 “Words and Music,” pp. 219-220
Willie Perdomo, “123rd Street Rap” {CD]
John Lennon and Paul McCartney, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” (handout)
“Hallalujah” from “Shrek” (handout)
[Perdomo]
Report on poet due (see handout)
- Wed. Oct. 29 "Internal Structure," pp. 231-242
Anonymous, "Sir Patrick Spens"
T. S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi" (p. 537)
[Suggestion #1 (identify scenes, summarize story – 200 words)]
Poetry 180

- Fri. Oct. 31 Denise Levertov, "What Were They Like?" (handout)
William Carlos Williams, "The Dance"
Gail Mazur, "Desire"
[Williams, Mazur]
Poetry 180
- Week 11 Mon. Nov. 3 Roo Borson, "Save us From"
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind"
[Borson, Suggestion # 3 (first 3 questions – 200 words)]
Poetry 180
- Wed. Nov. 5 "External Form," pp. 255-258
"The Sonnet," pp. 258-261
John Keats, "On the Sonnet"
Christina Rossetti, "In an Artist's Studio"
Edna St. Vincent Millay [What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why]
Gwen Harwood, "In the Park"
Billy Collins, "Sonnet"
[Millay, Collins, Suggestion #1 (chart, mark + 200 words)]
Poetry 180
- Fri. Nov. 7 "Stanza Forms," pp. 274-280
"The Way a Poem Looks," pp. 280-289
Poetry 180
- Week 12 Mon. Nov. 10 "The Whole Text," pp. 290-295
W. H. Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts" [CD] [WEB]
George Herbert, "The Collar"
[Auden + Suggestion #1 (250 words), Herbert]
Poetry 180
- Wed. Nov. 12 Emily Dickinson, [My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun]
Robert Frost, "Design" [WEB]
Virginia Hamilton Adair, "Cutting the Cake"
D. H. Lawrence, "Piano"
[Dickinson + Suggestion #3 (250 words), Adair]
Poetry 180
- Fri. Nov. 14 EXPLORING CONTEXTS: READING POETRY IN CONTEXT," pp. 303-309
"Times, Places and Events"
Miller Williams, "Thinking about Bill, Dead of AIDS"
Dudley Randall, "Ballad of Birmingham"
Robert Hayden, "Frederick Douglass"
AI, "Riot Act, April 29, 1992" (handout)
[Assignment: Explain how the theme/details of each of these poems reflects its
historical context (100 words each)]
Poetry 180

- Week 13 Mon. Nov. 17 "Construction Identity, Exploring Gender" [All of the poems, with particular attention to:
 Marie Howe, "Practicing"
 Paulette Jiles, "Paper Matches"
 Liz Rosenberg, "The Silence of Women"
 Eavan Boland, "Anorexic"
 [Assignment: Explain how the theme/details of each of these poems reflect its cultural context (100 words each)]
- Wed. Nov. 19 "Literary Tradition as Context," pp. 382-383
 "Echo and Allusion," pp. 383-389
 "Poetic Kinds," pp. 389-391
 "Haiku," pp. 391-396
 "Poets on Poets: Imitation, Homage, Doubt," pp. 397-410
 "Cultural Belief and Tradition," pp. 410-421
Second Essay Due
- Fri. Nov. 21 "Cultural and Historical Contexts: The Harlem Renaissance," pp. 423-464
 Arna Bontemps, "A Black Man Talks of Reaping"
 Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel" [WEB]
 "Saturday's Child"
 "From the Dark Tower"
 Angelina Grimke, "The Black Finger"
 "Tenebris"
 Langston Hughes, "The Weary Blues"
 "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
 "I, Too"
 "Cross"
 Helene Johnson, "Sonnet to a Negro in Harlem"
 Claude McKay, "Harlem Shadows"
 "If We Must Die"
 "The Tropics in New York"
 "The Harlem Dancer"
 "The White House"
 Jean Toomer, "Song of the Son"
 James Weldon Johnson, "From the Preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*"
 Alain Locke, "From *The New Negro*"
 [Suggestion #2 (300 words)]
Poetry 180
- Week 14 Mon. Nov. 24 "The Harlem Renaissance," continued
 Alain Locke, "From *The New Negro*"
 Arna Bontemps, "A Black Man Talks of Reaping"
 Angelina Grimke, "The Black Finger"
 Langston Hughes, "I, Too"
 [Suggestion # 3 (300 words)]
Poetry 180

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 15	Mon. Dec. 1	"The Author's Work In Context: Adrienne Rich," pp. 339-341 "Adrienne Rich," pp. 357-380 [Read Suggestions # 8-10. Keeping them in mind, write an answer to #10]
	Wed. Dec. 3	Spoken-word poetry
	Fri. Dec. 5	Spoken-word poetry; students' choice of poems
Week 16	Mon. Dec. 8	Students' choice of poems
	Wed. Dec. 10	Review; evaluations