

English 201: Principles of Literary Study

Professor Ryan James Kernan rjkernan@english.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: 024 Murray Hall, Wednesdays 11:00am-12:00pm and by appointment

TA Mary Alcaro, mary.m.alcaro@rutgers.edu

TA Yumi Shiroma yumi.shiroma@rutgers.edu

Lectures

Tuesday 3 CAC AB-1180

Sections

Thursday

Section 1 Th4 Murray- 114

Section 2 Th5 SC- 101

Section 3 Th5 FH-B4

Section 4 Th6 HH-A4

Course Description

This course is designed to teach the basic skills and critical vocabulary necessary to the analysis of poetry. The course will teach you how to read poetry closely: we will focus on how to read slowly, how to read “dreamily,” how to read with purpose and intensity. But the course will also teach you how to think about, write about, and talk about poetry, not just read it. We will do our work by studying a wide range of poems written in English, and we will take our examples from all periods of English literature, from the Renaissance periods to the 18th and 19th centuries to the 20th century to today. We will read individual poems carefully in order to understand what they say, how they say it, and what their place is in a larger history of forms and genres. And of course we’ll discuss the ideas that the poems present to us, and we’ll ask ourselves how to define “poetry” and where else it might be found (besides in books).

The course will have two sessions each week. The first session will be a large lecture, and the second session will be a small section with a TA. In addition to the regular reading for each week, there will be brief reading quizzes in lecture or section, one writing exercise, two 5-page papers, and a take-home final exam. The course also has strict attendance requirements for both lecture and section. The lecture will provide definitions of key concepts that will be helpful in reading and interpreting poetry; each lecture will use the poems assigned for that week as examples of these concepts and also as guides to practice the art of reading poetry. In section, you will examine the poems in greater detail and continue to explore the themes of the course. You will also discuss effective writing strategies and how to make arguments about poems. The two paper assignments will set a choice of interpretive problems and invite you to explore them across a single poem, or a range of poems. The final exam will test your understanding of key definitions and concepts from lecture, your ability to analyze short passages of poetry using techniques from class or section, and your ability to recall the poems that we have read and to identify authors and styles of composition.

Each week, the class will read a handful of poems, each chosen to demonstrate the key ideas in

that week's lecture. We will consider words (their history, sounds and meanings), metaphor and analogy, poetic meter, stanzaic form, rhyme, tone, voice, and attitude, and imagery, among other central topics. Many poems will center around the key pronouns in the English language: first person ("I / me," "we / us,"), second person ("you," both singular and plural), third person ("he / him," "she / her," "it," "they," "them"). What does it mean to use a poem to speak in the first person? Are all first person utterances equal? What does it take to make an "I" into a "we"? Who can become "they" or "them"? When does "he" or "she" become an "it"? Can an "it" become an "I"? As a backdrop to these problems, and as a way of studying how poetry in all historical periods responds to the world at large, we will return constantly to several major themes: poetry and strong feeling (or "affect"), poetry and things, poetry and nature, poetry and war.

This course meets several learning goals for students in English Department classes, especially #2 (relating to strategies of interpretation) and #4 (relating to the ability to write persuasively and precisely in a scholarly form). It is also part of the Rutgers SAS Core (meeting learning goal AHp, "analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies" and WCd, "communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry"). By the end of the course, students will also have developed:

- Mastery of basic skills and critical vocabulary for the analysis of poetry
- Familiarity with a broad swath of canonical poems written in English
- Deeper knowledge and experience of selected poetic forms and genres
- Ability to gather and synthesize insights about a poem into a cogently-written analytic essay
- Ability to evaluate poems' relations to one another within a particular poetic tradition
- Ability to discuss the broader implications of poetic style and to ask intelligent questions about the relations of poems to the cultures in which they circulate.

WEEKLY PREPARATION

For every class, you should come prepared with lines, images, or other moments in the text that strike you as significant, telling, exciting, frustrating, ambiguous, or unexpected. If you don't notice any of these moments while you read, you probably aren't reading closely enough. Reading closely means re-reading, writing on the page, circling words that repeat, stopping to think and write something down.

COURSE ATTENDANCE POLICY

I take very seriously the principle that students should attend every class meeting. You are in college to learn; because so much of your intellectual work happens in class, attendance at each lecture and section is *mandatory*. Over the course of the entire semester, you are allowed *three* absences for any reason, and you do not need to submit a note for these absences. These will cover religious holidays, deaths in the family, major illness, loss or damage to physical property, traffic and other transportation delays, colds, hangovers, desultory moods, break-ups, defective alarm clocks, sudden naps brought on by a second (or missing) breakfast, misplaced

assignments, unread texts, and foggy absentmindedness. *Every absence beyond those three will lower your final grade by five points.* For example, five total absences will lower your final grade 10 points, from an A to a B+, or from a B to a C; six total absences will lower your grade 15 points, from an A to a B-, or from a B to a C-. Any student who has missed *more than six* class meetings total (for any reason: that is three whole weeks of class!) will automatically receive a failing grade for the entire course, regardless of whatever grades he or she has already received. If you are absent from class, you are responsible for any assignments you miss and any material discussed. I strongly suggest that you photocopy the notes for that day from a colleague: be sure to ask someone who seems to take good (complete, detailed, clear) notes.

Finally, a word about attendance during class. I don't simply expect you to come to class—I expect you to sit through it attentively for the duration, to take careful notes, and to ask any questions that you may have. It is disruptive and mildly disrespectful to get up in the middle of class and disappear for several minutes. To receive credit for attendance, you must bring the assigned readings with you to class. You should turn off your electronic devices during class, unless you are using a laptop to take notes. *Texting, emailing, and the use of the internet for non-course related reasons are prohibited during the lectures.* If you are doing this and I become aware of it, I will ask you to leave the lecture.

Students with Disabilities

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should speak with me at the start of the semester. You may also contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (848.445.6800).

Grading Standards

A- Outstanding. Demonstrates thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B- Good. The student's work demonstrates serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C- Satisfactory. The student's work satisfies requirements but shows significant problems or major gaps in mastery of course material.

D- Poor or minimal pass. The student completes the basic course requirements, but the student's work is frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

Failure. Student has not completed all course requirements or turns in consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to instructor discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without completing all response papers and essays.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is one of the most serious offences a student can commit. Any student who plagiarizes in my course will receive a zero on the assignment, with no possibility of re-submission; an automatic, immediate, and permanent F in the course; and an official letter of reprimand in his or her academic file. The Dean of Students may opt to pursue additional penalties, including academic suspension or expulsion from the university. Obvious examples of plagiarism include:

1. Submitting of essays, or portions of essays, written by other people as one's own.
2. Failing to acknowledge, through proper footnotes and bibliographic entries, the source of ideas essentially not one's own.
3. Failing to indicate paraphrases or ideas or verbatim expressions not one's own through proper use of quotations and footnotes.
4. Submitting an essay written for one course to a second course without having sought prior permission from both instructors.

In all of your academic work, you are responsible for adhering to the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students. The text of the policy is available at: <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>. If you have questions, contact me or one of the course TAs *before* you turn in your paper.

Course Requirements

Writing an Introduction (10%)

Paper #1 (25%)

Paper #2 (25%)

Final Exam (20%)

Attendance, Participation, and Quizzes (20%)

Schedule

Week #1

September 3rd: No Class

Week #2 What theme(s) does this poem carry?

September 10th:

Herrick, Robert. "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time"

Marvell, Andrew. "To His Coy Mistress"

Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet XII"

Shelley, Percy B. "The Flower that Smiles Today"

Frost, Robert. "Carpe Diem"

Hughes, Langston. "Columbia"

Week #3 How does the poem imply images?

September 17th:

Pound, Ezra. "In a Station of the Metro"

Hughes Langston, "Harlem"

Dickinson, Emily, "Hope is the thing with feathers (254)"

Toomer, Jean, "Reapers"

Stevens, Wallace, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"

Week #4 How does this poem use metaphor?

September 24th:

Donne, John. "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"

Burns, Robert. "A Red, Red Rose"

Stevens, Wallace. "Sunday Morning"

Dickinson, Emily "My life had stood- a Loaded Gun"

Williams, William Carlos. "The Red Wheelbarrow"

Week #5 How does this poem utilize rhythm?

October 1st

Hughes, Langston. "The Weary Blues"

Roethke, Theodore. "My Papa's Waltz"

Dickinson, Emily. "There's a certain Slant of light, (320)"

Blake, William. "A Poison Tree"

Milton, John. "The Invocation" from *Paradise Lost*

October 4: Assignment Due (via Sakai) "Writing an Introduction" (1-2 pages)

Week #6 How does this poem use irony?

October 8th

Brooks, Gwendolyn. "We Real Cool"

Crane, Stephen. "Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind"

Dickinson, Emily. "I heard a Fly buzz- when I died- (591)"

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Frost, Robert. "Escapist- Never"

Week #7 Who is speaking this poem?

October 15th

Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Hughes, Langston. "Theme for English B"

Shakespeare, William. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" Sonnet 130

Browning, Robert. "My Last Duchess"

Mullen, Harryette. "Dim Lady"

October 18th: Assignment Due (Via Sakai) Paper #1 (5 pages)

Week #8 Who is being addressed & What audience is being evoked?

October 22nd

Donne, John. "Death, be not proud" (Holy Sonnet 10)

Wheatley, Phillis. "On Being Brought from Africa to America"

Spencer, Anne. "Before the Feast of Shushan"

Bradstreet, Anne. "The Author to Her Book"

Hayes, Terrance. "Lighthouse's Guide to the Galaxy"

Week #9 Is there a narrative in this poem?

October 29th

Keats, John. "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

Brown, Sterling. "Slim in Atlanta"

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Raven"

Hughes, Langston. "Letter from Spain"

Lawrence, D.H. "Snake"

Week #10 Form 1: The Sonnet

November 5th

Wordsworth, William. "The World is Too Much With Us"

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. "Sonnets from the Portuguese 43: How do I love thee? Let me count the ways"

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Sonnet: On Receiving a Letter Informing Me of the Birth of a Son"

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ozymandias"

Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 138: When my love swears that she is made of truth"

Week #11 Form 2: The Ode

November 12th

Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Marvell, Andrew. "A Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ode to the West Wind"

Keats, John. "Ode to a Nightingale"

Wordsworth, William. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"

Week #12 Form #3: The Villanelle

November 19th

Robinson, Edward Arlington. "The House on the Hill"

Auden, W.H. "If I Could Tell You"

Thomas, Dylan. "Do not go gentle into that good night"

Hacker, Marilyn. "Villanelle for D.G.B."

Bishop, Elizabeth. "One Art"

November 26th- Thanksgiving Week No Classes**Week #14:** Author studies: Selected Poems by Elizabeth Bishop and Sylvia Plath

December 3rd

Plath, Sylvia. "Lady Lazarus"

Plath, Sylvia. "Daddy"

Bishop, Elizabeth. "In the Waiting Room"

Bishop, Elizabeth. "The Moose"

Bishop, Elizabeth. "Sestina"

December 6th: Assignment Due (Via Sakai) Paper #1 (5 pages)

Week #15: Love and Loss: LGBTQ Valentine's Day offerings from Poetry magazine

December 10th

Hacker, Marilyn. "Didn't Sappho say her guts clutched up like this?"

Lourde, Audrey. "Recreation"

Douglas, Lord Alfred. "Two Loves"

Crane, Hart. "Voyages"

Oberman, Miller. "On Trans."

Final Exam- TBA

Course Readings: Available on Sakai