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ENG 2011G-004: Poetry

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ENGLISH 2011, POETRY

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"Poetry is life to me," wrote the poet Frank O'Hara. But for many students, poetry has been reduced to bland themes and symbols that are seldom true to the real challenges and pleasures that poetry can offer. This course is an introduction to those real challenges and pleasures. We'll start with two assumptions: (1) that poets arrange words for the same reasons that painters arrange colors and composers arrange notes—to make works of art that are intellectually, aesthetically, and emotionally compelling and (2) that beginning to understand a poem takes time. In our culture of "continuous partial attention" we'll give continuous full attention to what we're reading.

TEXTS

The Norton Anthology of Poetry (ed. Margaret Ferguson, et al.) and Kenneth Koch's *Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry* are available from TRS.

You should have access to a hardcover collegiate (college-level) dictionary when reading.

REQUIREMENTS

The course will require dedicated daily work (reading, talking, quizzes), several pieces of writing, and a final examination.

QUIZZES

Michael Bérubé, who teaches English at Penn State, gives a good explanation:

Most of my students do most of the reading. How do I know? Loath as I am to admit it, I have begun giving quizzes.

Quizzes are meant to be easy if you do the reading.

ATTENDANCE

Be here, on time, every time. Students who miss class will find it very difficult to do the work of the course.

LATE, MAKE-UP WORK

Missed quizzes and writing cannot be made up. Late writing is acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. If you have a properly verified absence for illness, emergency, or participation in an official University activity, I'll record a blank for a missed quiz, not a zero.

DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

OFFICE HOURS

Talking to professors is one of the smartest things a college student can do. Please, come in to ask questions and talk about your work in the class.

If you feel uneasy about talking to your professors, read "How to talk to a professor," available from the URL in the left column.

E-MAIL

Before you e-mail me, please read "How to e-mail a professor," available from the URL in the left column. One guideline you don't need to follow: no need to sign with your class number and meeting (I'll know your name).

DECORUM

The atmosphere in our class should be serious—not somber or pretentious, but genuinely intellectual. No

eating, talking, sleeping, wandering, texting, drumming, wearing headphones, doing work for other classes, or other private business. Phones and other devices should be turned off and kept out of sight. Please show proper respect to your fellow learners.

DISCUSSION

Consider what the writer Thomas Merton says about a teacher he admired:

Most of the time he asked questions. His questions were very good, and if you tried to answer them intelligently, you found yourself saying excellent things that you did not know you knew, and that you had not, in fact, known before. He had "educated" them from you by his question. His classes were literally "education"—they brought things out of you, they made your mind produce its own explicit ideas.

I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. If you say something and I then ask you a question, I'm doing so in the spirit of dialogue. You should be asking questions too, of me and of one another.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on your written work (30%), quizzes (40%), a final examination (20%), and participation (10%).

Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 108% counts as 108 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as 40 and not as an F (55). Participation in the course receives one of five grades: 100 (consistent, relevant, informed), 85 (frequent, relevant, informed), 75 (less frequent or less informed), 50 (occasional), 0 (little or no participation). "Informed" participation is simply participation that comes from having done the reading. You may check on quizzes and participation at any time.

To calculate semester grades, I use numerical equivalents for letter grades:

A 95 A- 92 B+ 87 B 85 B- 82 C+ 77

2011G-004

C 75 C- 72 D+ 67 D 65 D- 62 F 55

Sometimes when I grade an essay I'll compromise—e.g., B+/A-, which falls between the two grades (89.5).

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a C; below 60, an F.

EW P

Please make sure that you understand the EWP requirements and fulfill them in a timely way. You can find more information about the EWP at <http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/>.

PLAGIARISM

The English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism –“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's original work” (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any breach of academic integrity—from cheating on a quiz to lifting words or ideas without attribution to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Student Standards office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics administered by Student Standards, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other professors that one of their students has violated academic integrity.

You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But because the work of the course is to be an expression of *your ideas in your words*, questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not “borrow” work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to

make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE

(Page numbers mark the beginnings of poems.)

Weeks 1–2: Introduction to the course

Koch, “The Two Languages” (19–26), “The Poetry Base” (71–78), “Reading” (109–123)
Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken”
Frank O’Hara, “A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island” (Koch 297)

Weeks 2–4: Music and form

Koch, “Music” (27–49)
Emily Dickinson, 591 (*Norton* 1121)
Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Spring and Fall” (*Norton* 1168)
John Keats, “Bright Star” (Koch 203)
Lorine Niedecker, “Poet’s Work,” [You are my friend]
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 73 (*Norton* 263)
William Carlos Williams, “Young Woman at a Window” (Koch 47–48)

Weeks 4–5: The poetry language

Koch, “The Inclinations of the Poetry Language” (51–70)
William Blake, “Ah Sun-flower” (*Norton* 744)
Thomas Campion, “There Is a Garden in Her Face” (*Norton* 282)
Allen Ginsberg, “Sunflower Sutra”
Langston Hughes, “Harlem Sweeties” (*Norton* 1432)
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (*Norton* 267)
William Carlos Williams, “Portrait of a Lady” (*Norton* 1273)
William Wordsworth, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (*Norton* 801)
First writing

Weeks 5–6: Finding the words

John Ashbery, “What Is Poetry”
Margaret Atwood, “You Begin” (*Norton* 1896)
Emily Dickinson, 355
Seamus Heaney, “Digging” (*Norton* 1899)
Ron Padgett, “Joe Brainard’s Painting *Bingo*”

Weeks 6–8: Thinking

Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach” (*Norton* 1101)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight” (*Norton* 810)

Philip Larkin, “Aubade” (*Norton* 1658)

Lorine Niedecker, [I married]

Marianne Moore, “The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing” (*Norton* 1335)

Frank O’Hara, “A Step Away from Them”
Second writing

Weeks 9–11: Looking, listening

W.H. Auden, “Musée des Beaux Arts” (*Norton* 1471)
Ted Berrigan, “A Certain Slant of Sunlight”
Robert Frost, “Desert Places”
John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (*Norton* 938)
Wallace Stevens, “Anecdote of the Jar,” “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (*Norton* 1260)
William Carlos Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow” (*Norton* 1274), “Spring and All”

Weeks 11–14: Selves and others

Jon Ashbery, “The History of My Life”
Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” (*Norton* 1012)
Emily Dickinson, 764 (*Norton* 1122)
John Donne, “The Good-Morrow” (*Norton* 293)
Linda Hogan, “The Truth Is”
A.E. Housman, “To an Athlete Dying Young” (*Norton* 1174)
Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B” (*Norton* 1434)
Ben Jonson, “On My First Daughter,” “On My First Son” (*Norton* 323)
Christopher Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (*Norton* 256)
Frank O’Hara, “Mayakovsky”
Sir Walter Raleigh, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (*Norton* 152)
Sufjan Stevens, “Casimir Pulaski Day”
William Wordsworth, “To My Sister” (Koch 187)
Third writing

Week 15: More poems, last things

Fourth writing