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ENG 2011G-002: Literature, the Self, and the World: Poetry

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English 2011G Literature, the self, and the world: poetry

Fall 2001

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Goals: The main aim of the class is to deepen your understanding of and appreciation for poetry. I'm hoping that among the many poets we read, you'll find one or two with whom you can really connect, and that you go out of the class more likely to keep reading poetry in the future.

The course's title (Literature, the self, and the world) implies that reading poetry will also help you locate yourself more clearly in relation to the world. Throughout the semester, I'd like to focus on the idea of "America." By reading some of the ways in which poets have defined what it means to be American, I'm hoping we can all figure out which of these ways we, as individuals, feel comfortable with, and which we might want to change, and how others' versions of "America" might differ from our own. Even as they play with language and sound, creating imaginative universes of great beauty and intricacy, poets also attack, praise, and tell us how to live. I hope you'll listen to these poets with an open mind, agree with some, argue with others, and perhaps come, by the end of the semester, to a new understanding of what being "American" means.

This is a writing-intensive class. You may submit a paper from this class as part of your EWP.

Policies: English Department 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 representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Plan to hand in papers on time. If you're having problems, let me know. Brief writing and on-line assignments must be done for the assigned class to be acceptable. Essays a week or more late will not be accepted.

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

Requirements/grades

Two brief essays (2-4 pp., typed): 20%
One longer essay (4-6 pp., typed): 20%
At least thirteen on-line responses to reading/brief writing assignments: 20%
Midterm: 10%
Final exam (not cumulative): 10%
Involvement/participation, group presentation: 20%

Essay grades will be based on Guidelines for Evaluating Writing Assignments in EIU's English Department. I plan to use number rather than letter grades; this will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 65-70=D; below 65=F

Because I grade on a 100-point scale, missing assignments affect the grade tremendously.
Responses: At least once per week, I’d like each of you to write a response to the assigned poems (a paragraph or so) on the Web CT bulletin board, on-line (If this is inaccessible, give me a 1-page typed response in class instead). The response should reflect your thoughts and questions on the poems due in class BEFORE class discussion. I will not give credit for responses entered after the class period in which the relevant assignment has been discussed, though of course you’re welcome to make additional comments then. Choose one or more of the assigned poems to focus on, then begin your posting by responding to any relevant earlier postings. Then make whatever points strike you: comment on what you like or didn’t like about the poem or poems you’ve chosen to discuss, connections you see, or questions you have. Please keep comments respectful and on-topic. I will not grade these individually; a grade will be given for your collected contributions based on the thoughtfulness, precision, depth, and punctuality of your comments.

Class participation/involvement: It’s nearly impossible to read a poem alone. Reading well requires rereading, reading aloud, discussing, and interaction. It’s crucial that you read the assigned poems before coming to class: carefully, more than once, aloud, with a dictionary. To encourage careful preparation, a substantial portion of your grade is based on class participation and on-line responses to the poems. Class participation is hard to evaluate, but here’s my advice:
For an A: comment frequently in ways that advance the conversation. This could be bringing up some aspect of the poem we’ve forgotten, disagreeing with a student or with me, or asking a question of a student or me. Hardly ever miss class. Be a leader in group discussions and presentation.
For a B: attend consistently, look alert, and speak occasionally. Do a good job with group discussions and presentation.
For a C: say nothing and skip class occasionally. Participate in group discussions and presentation, but minimally.
Below a C: skip class often and contribute nothing.

Group presentation: In groups of three, I’ll ask you to select a contemporary poet represented in at least one of our anthologies and find out everything you can about him/her. Read all the poems you can find by that person, then lead a class on him/her at the end of the semester. This person might, but need not be, the subject of your final (longer) paper.

Tentative Syllabus
Mon August 20: Introduction to the class.
Fri. 25: Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (p. 35), To a Locomotive in Winter” (43).
Mon. Aug.27: Whitman, “Song of Myself” section 10 to end (pp. 27-35). Response due W or F
Wed 29: Whitman
Fri 31: Dickinson. Response due M, W, or F
Mon Sept 3: labor day, no class
Wed 5: Dickinson
Fri 7: Stevens. Response due W or F
Mon 10: Stevens
Wed 12: Hughes.
Fri 14: Hughes. Response due M, W, or F
Mon 17: Hughes. Essay #1 due.
Wed 19: Ginsberg
Fri 21: Ginsberg. Response due M, W, or F

Mon 24: Lorde
Wed 26: Lorde. Response due M or W
Fri 28: Exam

Mon Oct 1: Groups meet to decide on poets.
Fri 5: fall break, no class

Mon 8: 4 more
Wed 10: 4 poems from "performing"
Fri 12: 4 more. Response due M, W, or F

Mon 15: 4 poems from "naming"
Wed 17: 4 more
Fri 19: 4 poems from "negotiating." Response due M, W, or F

Mon 22: 4 more
Wed 24: 4 poems from "re-envisioning"
Fri 26: Laviera, "AmeRican" (hand-out); McKay, "America" (Norton 518); Hughes, "Let America be America Again"; other America poems? Response due M, W, or F

Mon 29: Groups meet to discuss presentations.
Wed 31: Group presentations
Fri. Nov 2: Group presentations. Response due M, W, or F

Mon. 5: Group presentations
Wed. 7: Group presentations
Fri. 9: Group presentations. Response due M, W, or F

Mon. 12: Group presentations
Wed 14: Group presentations
Fri 16: Group presentations. Response due M, W, or F

Thanksgiving recess

Mon 26: Rich, Diving
Wed 28: Rich
Fri 30: Rich

Mon Dec 3: Rich
Wed 5: Rich
Fri 7: Hand in essay #3.

There will be a final exam (not cumulative) during exam week.