ENG 2091G-099: Literature, the Self, and the World: Poetry

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English 2091G-099: Literature, the Self, and the World: Poetry
Dr. Miho Nonaka
Time: 10-10:50 p.m. MWF Class Location: Coleman 2120 Office: Coleman 3050
Mail Box: Coleman 3155 Phone: 581-6121 Email: mnonaka@eiu.edu
Office Hours: MW 11-11:30 am, 3-4:15 pm; F 11-11:30 am; and by appt.

Course Objectives: Poetry, like any other art form, evokes thoughts and sensations that are easier to feel than to describe. We will start this course by exploring and naming the tacit effects poetry has on us in detailed language. We will read poems aloud and take them into parts to examine how and why they sound the way they do. The course will approach poetry in its formal aspects as well as its psychological complexities. Together, we will consider each poet's unique mastery of language and imaginative sense of the world. In order that we can observe how the modern poetic sensibility has been influenced by and interacting with the older schools of poetry, our reading list ranges from the canonical to the recent. The goal of this course is to become both perceptive and intelligent speakers and writers on poetry.

Texts:
   New York: W.W. Norton, 2005
   Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 1999
   Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2007
Xeroxed handouts and electronic resources

Policies:
* You are expected to attend all classes. If you have unexcused absences for more than 3 classes, I will lower your final grade by a letter. If you have unexcused absences for more than 5 classes, you will either drop the course or accept an F for the semester. As outlined in the student catalogue, I will consider an absence excused only for “reasons of illness, emergency, or university activity.” For each case, you must show me an appropriate document to verify your absence. In case of illness, wait until you have recovered to present documentation for an excused absence.

* I will give unscheduled reading quizzes to make sure you keep up with the assignment. They are meant to be easy if you do the reading. These quizzes and in-class writing assignments must be turned in by the end of class, and cannot be made up at a later date; that is the reward for attending class regularly.

* I expect you to arrive ready to participate in discussion. The quality as well as the frequency of your contributions determine a significant portion of your participation grade.

* If you are absent, you are still responsible for knowing the material, completing all of the readings and turning in any assignments for that day. I recommend getting several
classmates' phone numbers and email addresses so that you can keep up. Do not email me to ask for an "update" on missed assignments, or to explain an absence. Instead, I ask that you stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk.

* Late comers (who arrive after 10 minutes) will receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I can mark their attendance. Every 3 instances of tardiness will count as 1 absence. Leaving the class early will be treated in the same manner.

* Assignments must be handed in within the first 10 minutes of class on the day they are due unless we have worked out a prior arrangement. Work handed in after that time will lose one letter grade for each class period it is late. Any work turned in a week past the deadline will receive a zero. I will not accept assignments via email.

* All assignments must be typed and printed in black ink, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1 inch margins. Remember to include page numbers and staple your paper in the upper left-hand corner. When citing secondary sources, use the MLA style of documentation. You are responsible for saving copies of any work turned in for grading.

* You are responsible for information given in class, including key terms, ideas and facts during both lectures and discussions. Make sure to take good notes! They will come in handy when preparing for midterm and final exams.

* Cell phones must be turned off before coming to class and kept out of sight in our classroom at all times.

Grading:
Professionalism (attendance, active preparation, participation and cooperation): 15%
Quizzes: 5%
Poem recitation: 5%
Writing assignments (in-class and short at-home writing assignments): 10%
Presentation and leading class discussion: 10%
Midterm exam: 15%
Close reading paper: 15%
Final exam: 25%

To calculate semester grades, I use numbers rather than letters. These will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, percentage totals may be adjusted also.

Note: I do not keep a running tally of your current grade from day to day, so please don't ask. You should keep your own record of your participation and all of your assignments.

Professionalism: Your attendance is crucial, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class. If you remain silent every class of the semester, expect a lower grade. Similarly, if you habitually arrive late or leave early, or if you
cannot conduct yourself in a respectable manner, expect a lower professionalism grade.

**Poem Recitation:** Poetry is an oral tradition as much as it is written: it is meant to be spoken aloud to an audience. It is, first and foremost, a musical occasion. You will present to the class a poem you have memorized (of 14 lines or more) from *Norton Anthology* or *Outsiders*. After reciting the poem, you will explain briefly what your experience was like as you selected and memorized the poem. Why did the poem interest you? What changed for you when you recited it, or when you committed it to memory? How did you memorize it? How did the poem’s meaning change for you? What sounds did you begin to notice the most?

**Presentation:** I will assign these presentations early in the semester. In your presentation, you must introduce the poet, make 3 claims as to what the poet is trying to achieve artistically in the poem (or poems) that are assigned for our discussion that day, and explain why you came up with those claims.

Keep the poet’s background information minimum. I am more interested in your own interpretation of the poet’s particular use of language, given that poets arrange words for the same reasons that painters arrange colors and composers arrange notes. Also, keep in mind that your main task is to analyze the work critically, as opposed to responding to it personally and emotionally.

In addition to the presentation, you must prepare several analysis questions for the class to discuss following your presentation.

Your presentation should be about 12-15 minutes. At the end, you must turn in your typed interpretation (2-3 pages) and discussion questions attached to a separate sheet of paper with your assigned poem(s).

**Close Reading Paper:** You will analyze one poem and make an intelligent argument about it, taking into account how the poem sounds and works, in 4-5 pages of polished prose. More specific guidelines will follow.

**Electric Writing Portfolio:** This is a writing intensive course. If you wish to use your assignment for EWP, you need to speak with me at least a week before the last class day.

**Midterm and final exams:** The exams will test your knowledge of readings and discussion topics covered during the first half and the second half of the course through short answer, passage recognition, essay, and/or other question formats.

Note: I reserve the right to alter or revise class policies and requirements for the course.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. I will follow the English Department policy 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 own 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 a grade of “F” for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.”

**Students with Disabilities:** 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.

**Course Calendar**

Unless otherwise specified, your reading assignments come from the following three:

- **P=Poetry:** *An Introduction*
- **N=Norton Anthology*
- **Outsiders**

This is a tentative schedule, which will evolve as the class progresses. Changes will be announced in class, so stay tuned!

**Week 1**

- **M Aug 24:** Introduction
- **W Aug 26:** Suggestions for Approaching Poetry (P 40-41)
  - Billy Collins, “Introduction to Poetry” (p 42)
  - Elizabeth Bishop, “The Fish” (P 32-34)
  - Thomas Lux, “The Voice You Hear When You Read Silently” (P 58-59)
- **F Aug 28:** NARRATIVE versus LYRIC (P 183-185)
  - Anonymous, “Lord Randal” (N)

**Week 2**

- **M Aug 31:** DICTION and SYNTAX (P 68-75)
  - Emily Dickinson, “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” (P 2-3)
- **W Sep 2:** LINE
  - William Carlos Williams: “Poem” (N)
  - D.H. Lawrence: “Snake” (N)
  - Gwendolyn Brooks: “We Real Cool” (N)
- **F Sep 4:** TONE
  - Emily Dickinson, “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers - “ (P 314) & “After great pain, a formal feeling comes -” (P 323-324)
  - Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (P 81-82)

  *Last Day to DROP a course with No Grade*

**Week 3**

- **M Sep 7:** No class; Labor Day
- **W Sep 9:** IMAGES and SENSORY EXPERIENCE (P 109-110)
  - Jimmy Santiago Baca, “Green Chile” (P 117)
  - John Keats, “To Autumn” & “This Living Hand” (N)
- **F Sep 11:** SOUNDS (P 187-194)
  - Sylvia Plath, “Blackberrying” (handout)
  - Thomas Lux, “Onomatopoeia” (P 196-197)

**Week 4**

- **M Sep 14:** POETIC FORMS (Shakespearean versus Petrarchan sonnets) (P 237-242)
W Sep 16: THE SONNET FORM
   William Shakespeare, “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” & “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” (P 243-244); Edna St. Vincent Millay, “I will put Chaos into fourteen lines” (P 244)
F Sep 18: THE SONNET FORM
   George Herbert, “Prayer (I)” (N); Thomas Wyatt: “Whoso List to Hunt” (N); Robert Lowell: “Dolphin” (handout)

Week 5
M Sep 21: FIGURES OF SPEECH (P 133-143)
   Emily Dickinson, #764 (754) “My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun-“ (N)
   Last Day to Withdraw
W Sep 23: SYMBOL (P 156-158)
   Robert Frost, “After Apple-Picking” & “The Oven Bird” (N)
F Sep 25: IRONY (P 161-164)
   Michael Palmer, “I Do Not” (N)

Week 6
W Sep 30: William Blake, “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” (handout)
F Oct 2: William Blake, “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” (handout)

Week 7
M Oct 5: Muriel Rukeyser, all selections from Norton Anthology
W Oct 7: Langston Hughes, all selections from Norton Anthology
F Oct 9: No class; Fall Break

Week 8
M Oct 12: Audre Lorde, all selections from Norton Anthology
W Oct 14: Midterm Exam
F Oct 16: WRITING ABOUT POETRY (P 60-67, 695-699)

Week 9
M Oct 19: Go over midterm
W Oct 21: Peer Review
F Oct 23: Close Reading Paper due
   Gwendolyn Brooks all selections from Norton Anthology

Week 10
W Oct 28: ELEGY (P 255-257)
   Simon Armitage, “The Shout” (N)

Week 11
W Nov 4: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE
   Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” (P 177-178); Alfred Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses” (P 625-627)
F Nov 6: Frank Bidart, “Ellen West” (handout)
   Last Day for W for Course Withdrawal

Week 12
M Nov 9: God, the Big Question
   Christopher Smart, from “Jubilate Agno” (N); Edward Hirsch, “Wild Gratitude” (handout)
W Nov 11: God, the Big Question
   Philip Larkin, “Church Going” (N) & “High Windows” (handout); W. B. Yeats, “The Second Coming” (N)
F Nov 13: God, the Big Question
   John Clare, “I Am” (N); selection of poems by Jane Kenyon (handout)

Week 13
M Nov 16: ALLUSION (P 82-86)
   Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (P 81-82)
W Nov 18: ALLUSION
   Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach” (P 115-116); Anthony Hecht, “The Dover Bitch” (P 529-530)
F Nov 20: ALLUSION
   John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale” (P 209-212); Galway Kinnell, “Oatmeal” (go to the following site and print out the poem):
      www.americanpoems.com/poets/Galway-Kinnell/3044

Week 14
M Nov 23: No class; Thanksgiving Break
W Nov 25: No class; Thanksgiving Break
F Nov 27: No class; Thanksgiving Break

Week 15
M Nov 30: ALLUSION (mythological)
   Jane Yolen, “Fat Is Not a Fairy Tale” (P 101); Louise Gluck, “Gretel in Darkness” (N);
   Emily Dickinson, “Hope is the thing with feathers-“ & “My Life had stood-a Loaded Gun-“;
   Billy Collins, “Taking Off Emily Dickinson’s Clothes” (handout)
W Dec 2: HUMOR and SATIRE (P 516-517)
   Selected readings to be announced
F Dec 4: HUMOR and SATIRE
   Tony Hoagland, “America” (handout); and other poems to be announced

Week 16
M Dec 7: BORDER CROSSINGS (P 534-552)
W Dec 9: OUTSIDERS
   Selected readings from Outsiders
F Dec 11: Last class day