ENG 2011G-001: Literature, the Self, and the World

Michael Leddy
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2003

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2003/75

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2003 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2003 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
For too many students, poetry has been reduced to bland themes and symbols that are seldom true to the real complexities and pleasures of language that poetry can offer. This course is an introduction to those real complexities and pleasures. It might better be titled Poetry as a Second Language, because learning to read poems is indeed like learning a second language, with its own conventions and rules and ways of saying things. We’ll work from the assumptions (1) that poetry is (as the poet David Antin calls it) the “language art,” (2) 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 (3) that readers need time to really appreciate the art of a poem. We’ll read poems slowly and closely (we won’t just glance), with maximum attention to their intelligence and integrity, and we’ll examine the ways in which poets explore language to engage the deepest questions of human life. If you’d like to know why poetry matters (or if you already believe that it does), you’ll enjoy the course. If you want to begin the feel at home in the possibilities of poetry, you’ll enjoy the course.

Texts
Kenneth Koch, Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry (Simon & Schuster)
Sappho, Poems and Fragments, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Hackett)

Requirements
Dedicated participation in the daily work of the course (reading and talking), quizzes (easy if you do the reading), some memorizing of poems, several short pieces of in-class writing, a final examination.

Policies
Attendance
Attendance is essential: you should attend class as often as I do. You are responsible for all assignments, whether or not you are in class when they are announced. If you must miss a class, you should get in touch with me beforehand to find out what you will miss. (You may call me at home if you need to; I don’t have voice mail for my office number.)
Late Work and Make-Up Work
Missed writing cannot be made up. Late writing assignments are 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 will 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
Coming in to talk can be a great way to engage in genuine intellectual dialogue. It can also be a great way to clear up questions and dissolve anxieties and get expert help with writing problems. Feel free to come in to talk—about a question that you didn’t get to ask in class, an idea that you want to discuss, a writing problem, an assignment, a grade, etc. If office hours aren’t workable for you, talk to me and we can figure out another time. And when you come in, you needn’t apologize for taking up my time. Having office hours is part of what a college prof does.

Decorum
Our purposes here are serious—not grim or morbid, but genuinely intellectual. No eating, talking, sleeping, doing work for other classes, or other private business. Please turn off cell phones before class begins. Anyone who interrupts the work of the class on a continuing basis will be asked to leave.

Some Words About Discussion
I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. So I think of discussion as a matter of asking questions to get at the substance of what we’re reading. 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 (The Seven Storey Mountain).

When I was a student I always felt patronized when someone replied to my contributions by saying something like “Very good” or “That’s interesting,” so when we talk as a class, I try not to give those rote non-responses. Instead I try to engage what someone is saying. Sometimes a student’s comment will make me think of something I hadn’t thought to say before. Or I might ask a question—sometimes for the sake of debate, sometimes to look for a
lengthier explanation (for instance, "What makes you see it that way?"). So 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.)

A few guidelines about discussion: Please raise your hand. If someone else gets recognized first and you still want to say something, just raise your hand again (don’t think that I’ve decided not to “call on” you). When I ask a question, I always try to look first for someone who hasn’t yet contributed before going to someone who’s already contributed.

If everyone comes in prepared to make some contributions to each discussion, we will have wonderful discussions. If you have general qualms about participating in class discussion, please talk to me as soon as possible. If at any point you have qualms about how things are going in class, please talk to me.

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

Short writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 103% counts as 103 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 informed participation), 85 (frequent informed participation), 75 (less frequent participation or less informed participation), 50 (only occasional participation), 0 (little or no participation). You may check on quizzes and participation at any time. To calculate semester grades, I use the following numerical equivalents for letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes when I grade an essay I’ll make a “slashed” grade—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 D; below 60, an F.

Electronic Writing Portfolio
If you’re doing the EWP, you should know that English 2011 is considered a “writing-intensive” General Education course. Your portfolio is your responsibility; please make sure that you understand the requirements and fulfill them in a timely way. You can find more information about the EWP at http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/. For graduating seniors, November 21, 2003 is the deadline for Fall 2003 submissions.
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 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 "getting ideas" from SparkNotes to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Judicial Affairs office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to participate in an ethics course organized by Judicial Affairs, whose staff will keep a record of your misconduct and notify your other profs (without using your name) 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 since the work of the course is to be an expression of your own ideas in your own words (aside from words and ideas derived from the works we're reading), questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise.

Provisional Outline

[Poems without page references are photocopies.]

Week 1: 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 297-99)

Weeks 2-3: Music and Form
Koch, "Music" (27-49)
Emily Dickinson, 465 (Norton 1016)
Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring and Fall" (Norton 1064)
Robert Johnson, "Love in Vain"
Lorine Niedecker, "Poet's Work" (Nelson 541)
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 73 (Norton 238)
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)
Thomas Campion, "There Is a Garden in Her Face" (Norton 253)
Emily Dickinson, 288, 754 (Norton 1021-22)
John Donne, Holy Sonnet 10 (Norton 288-89)
Kenneth Koch, "To My Twenties"
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (Norton 240)
William Carlos Williams, "Smell!"
First in-class writing (9/24)

Weeks 6-8: Seeing
Guillaume Apollinaire, "A Phantom of Clouds," "The Windows"
John Ashbery, “The Instruction Manual”  
Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos” (Koch 286-287)  
Allen Ginsberg, “Sunflower Sutra”  
John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (Norton 848-49)  
Rainer Maria Rilke, “Archaic Torso of Apollo” (Koch 220-221)  
William Wordsworth, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (Norton 732-33)  
Second in-class writing (10/15)

Weeks 9-10: Thinking  
Gregory Corso, “Marriage” (Norton 1694-1697)  
John Donne, “The Good Morrow” (Norton 263-64)  
Lorine Niedecker, “I married”  
William Shakespeare, Sonnet 29 (Norton 236)

Weeks 10-11: Remembering  
Ted Berrigan, “Red Shift”  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight” (742-44)  
Li Bai, “The City of Chao” (Koch 148-49)  
William Butler Yeats, “The Wild Swans at Coole” (Norton 1087-88)  
Third in-class writing (11/10)

Weeks 12-14: Speaking  
Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach” (Norton 999-1000)  
Emily Dickinson, 640 (Norton 1018-1020)  
Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B” (Norton 1324-25)  
Kenneth Koch, “Variations on a Theme by William Carlos Williams” (Norton 1584-85)  
Mina Loy, “1:00 at Night” (Koch 236-37)  
Bernadette Mayer, “Sonnet” [A thousand apples you might put in your theories]  
William Carlos Williams, “This Is Just to Say” (Norton 1167)  
Fourth in-class writing (12/3)

Weeks 14-15  
Sappho, Poems and Fragments  
Last things