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

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English 2091G Literature, the self, and the world: poetry, honors  
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Fall 2002  
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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. For more information, visit the assessment website: www.eiu.edu/~assess

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. In-class 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 at all.

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
Three brief writing assignments (2-4 pp., typed): 20%
One longer essay (6-8 pp., typed): 20%
At least twelve on-line responses to reading: 20%
Midterm and final: 20%
Involvement/participation, in-class writing, 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 (which receive a 0) affect the grade tremendously. Any paper may be rewritten; if substantially improved, it will receive a new grade which
will be averaged in with the first.

**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.

**Attendance:** Because presence in class is essential to involvement, excessive unexcused absences will count directly against this portion of your grade. More than 5 unexcused absences will result in a grade of 0.

**Group presentation:** In groups of two, 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, and then lead a class on him/her at the end of the semester. I suggest you make this person the subject of your final (longer) paper.

**Tentative Syllabus**
Mon August 26: Introduction to the class.
for Wed 28: Read Griffith 86-111 and bring to class.

Mon. Sept 2: labor day, no class.
Wed 4: Whitman, “Song of Myself section 8 to 14 (pp. 27-30).
Fri 6: Whitman, “Song” section 46-end (30-35). Response due W or F.

Mon 9: Whitman, “To a Locomotive in Winter” (43)
Wed 11: Dickinson, poems 49, 214, 249, 258 (46-48)
Fri 13: Dickinson, poems 303, 328, 341, 435, 465. Response due M, W or F
Mon 16: no class.
Wed 18: Dickinson, poems 585, 632, 657, 1129, 1732


Mon 30: McKay, “America” (Norton 518); Hughes, “I, Too,” “Let America be America Again” (handout).


Mon 14: Rich, “Diving into the Wreck” (1327).
Fri 18: fall break.

Mon 21: Lorde/Review
Wed 23: Midterm.

Mon 28: Hand in 2nd writing assignment. Bring all three anthologies. Select poets for group presentations.
Fri Nov 1: no class.

Wed 6: Komunyakaa, “Untitled” (97-8), Mora “Immigrants” (119), Geok-lin Lim, “Lost” (124), Nye, “My Father” (263), Anzaldua, “Cultures” (300), Geok-lin Lim, “I Defy” (333).
Fri. 8: Outsiders: Clifton, “Slaveships” (470), Balaban, “Heading” (18), Levine, “Soloing” (160), Kinnell, “Memory” (134), Simic, “Inner” (266). Response due M, W, or F.

Mon 11: 3rd writing assignment due. Peer evaluation.
Fri. 15: conferences

Mon. 18:conferences
Wed 20: Group presentation.
Fri 22: Group presentation. Response due W or F.
Thanksgiving recess

Mon Dec 2: Group presentation
Wed 4: Group presentation
Fri 6: Group presentation. Response due M, W, or F

Mon 9: Group presentation
Wed 11: Group presentation. Response due M or W.
Fri 13: Hand in final writing assignment.

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