ENG 4390-001: Voice in Poetry

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"Who's there?" is not only the first line of Hamlet but also the question we ask when we answer the phone, take part in a "knock, knock" joke, or read a poem. We want to know the identity of the person speaking, to know if that voice is reliable or not, is telling us the truth or lying. How we know that voice, and how the poet has created one for us, is the focus of this course. We will read, study, and discuss a wide variety of poems by poets from all ages to see how each has presented a voice for us to hear, one that comes to us through time like a long distance call.

Requirements:

1. class participation;
2. two short papers (3-5 pages, typed) presented to the class as oral reports of ten to fifteen minutes; the subjects for these will be individual poems;
3. a seminar paper (12 pages, typed) on a particular poet presented to the class as an oral report of twenty to thirty minutes;
4. a final exam.

Grades:

Your final grade will be based on your overall performance during the term, not on percentages assigned to one requirement or another. Thus, each class period counts, and your daily participation through questions asked and answered will determine your grade as much as anything else. Be curious, open, and eager; this is your seminar.

Organization:

I. Saying "Hello"

A. Introduction to the course

1. The telephone and poetry
2. Barter, money, and language
3. Two voices, one poet: Poe's "The Raven" and "Alone"
II. Ways of Speaking

A. The Dramatic

2. Arnold, "Dover Beach"
3. Bradstreet, "The Author to Her Book"
5. Robinson, "Mr. Flood's Party," "Richard Cory"
7. Reed, "The Naming of Parts"
8. Lowell, "Skunk Hour"
9. Plath, "Daddy"

B. The Lyric

1. Anonymous lyrics of 13th-15th century
2. Wyatt, "They Flee from Me"
4. Herrick and Lovelace: selected poems
5. Blake: selections from Songs of Innocence and Experience
6. Wordsworth: selected poems
7. Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight"
10. Thomas, "Fern Hill"

C. The Elegiac

1. Milton, "Lycidas"
2. Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village"
3. Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed"
4. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats"

D. The Rational

1. Tichborne, "Elegy"
2. Donne, "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," "The Flea"
3. Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"
4. selected epigrams
5. Pope, "Essay on Man"
6. Dickinson: selected poems

E. The Satiric

1. Shakespeare, "Sonnet 130"
2. Pope, "Rape of the Lock"
3. Swift: "The Lady's Dressing Room," "A Description of Morning," "City Shower"
4. Frost, "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep"
5. Baraka: selected poems
F. The Narrative

1. selected ballads
2. Coleridge, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"
3. Keats, "Eve of St. Agnes," "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"

III. Voice in Form

A. The Sonnet


B. The Ode

1. Comparison/contrast of odes by Pindar, Horace, Jonson, Marvell, Keats, Whitman, Neruda.

IV. Learning to Speak

A. Visions and revisions

1. Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth"
2. Eliot, "The Waste Land"
3. Wright, "A Blessing"
4. Guernsey, "Smoke"

V. Distinctive Voices

A. Seminar reports on a poet of your choosing; topics to be approved.