

Lit. 5-125C Introduction to Poetry
Winter 2009
Thursday 8:00-11:00 (Room 112*)

Dr. Tatiani Rapatzikou (Office: 308 E)
Office hours: Thursday 11:00 - 13:00

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide first year undergraduates with useful advice on reading, thinking critically and writing about poetry.

Required Text: Photocopied material

Assessment:

- a. **In-class exam – Compulsory.** Score: 20% of the overall grade
- b. **Essay** (600-700 words) to be written at home and handed in before Christmas. Score: 30% of the overall grade
- c. **Final Exam** (350-400 words per question). Score: 50% of the overall grade.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is essentially the unacknowledged use of another person's work. It can take the following forms:

1. *The copying (or "quotation") without acknowledgement, of the work of others (including the work of fellow students), published or unpublished, either verbatim or in close paraphrase, including material downloaded from computer files and the Internet.*
2. *Submitting as their own work a piece of work lent to them by a fellow student.*
3. *Learning passages by heart, whether from books or other distributed materials and transcribing them in examination answers without acknowledgement.*

You must not therefore copy the work of others and pass it off as your own. **If you are found guilty of plagiarism, you fail the course.**

Attendance policy:

Attendance is **obligatory**. Students should realize that **regular presence** in the classroom and **active participation** in class discussions is required. It is essential that students will have **studied** the **assigned material** before the class.

Syllabus

- Oct 1 Thur. **Introduction – Course Information/Course logistics**
 Preconceptions or misconceptions about poetry.
 How to approach a poem.
- Exercise:**
(in class)
 Read Langston Hughes’s poem “Harlem” a couple of times, and then consider whether you find this poem interesting and explain the reasons why. Do refer to those poem features that you find puzzling.
- Oct 8 Thur. **Listening to a Voice**
 Theodore Roethke “My Papa’s Waltz”; Randall Jarrell “A Sick Child”; Robert Creeley “Oh No.”
- Exercises:**
(in class)
 Learning how to analyze a poem and how to quote from a poem.
- (homework)**
 What does William Blake’s poem “The Chimney Sweeper” reveal about conditions of life in the London of his day? What is the tone of Blake’s poem?
- Oct 15 Thur. **What a poem says – Word use/Word choice/Word Order**
 William Carlos Williams “This is Just to Say”; Richard Wilbur “In the Elegy Season”; E.E. Cummings “Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town.”
- Exercises:**
(in class)
 Comparing and contrasting.
- (homework)**
 Concentrate on the kind of diction and word order Wallace Stevens employs in his poem “Metamorphosis.” What strikes you as particularly inventive or unusual in its language? Compare and contrast this poem with Gerald Manley Hopkins’s “The Windhover.”
- Oct 22 Thur. **Imagery**
 Elizabeth Bishop “The Fish”; Ezra Pound “In a Station of the Metro.”
- Exercise:**
(in class)
 Preparing for the in-class test: analyzing poems; quoting from poems; comparing and contrasting.
- (homework)**
 Write a short account of the kind of imagery William Carlos Williams uses in his poem “Spring and All.” What images strike you, and why?
- Oct 29 Thur. **Figures of Speech**
 Robert Burns “A Red, Red Rose”; Sylvia Plath “Metaphors”; James Stevens “The Wind.”

**Exercise:
(in class)**

Preparing for the in-class test: analyzing poems; quoting from poems; comparing and contrasting.

Nov 5 Thur. **Test Preparation; Student Presentations**

Nov 12 Thur. **In-class test - Compulsory**

Nov 19 Thur. **Sound and Rhythm – Distribution/Discussion of Essay Topics**

Galway Kinnell “Blackberry Eating”; Robert Frost “Desert Places”; Gwendolyn Brooks “We real cool.”

**Exercise:
(homework)**

Write about your experience when reading aloud T.S. Eliot’s poem “Virginia.” Does the way the poem sounds affect its meaning?

Nov 26 Thur. **Closed Form, Open Form**

William Shakespeare “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?”; E.E. Cummings “In Just—”; Robert Frost “Mending Wall.”

**Exercise:
(homework)**

Edna St. Vincent Millay’s poem “Love is not All” is a sonnet. Using your own words, summarize the octet and then go on to paraphrase the sestet. Do they make use of the same ideas? How do they contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?

Essay discussion (Office Hours)

Dec 3 Thur. **Poems for the Eye**

George Herbert “Easter Wings”; John Hollander “Swan and Shadow”; Richard Kostelanetz “Disintegration”; Dorthi Charles “Concrete Charles.”

**Exercise:
(in class)**

Write and present in class your own concrete poems. Bring with you a pair of scissors, colored markers, interesting letters (in different sizes, font types and colors) that you’ve found in magazines or newspapers. For inspiration do pick some familiar objects and try to look for words that remind you of them.

Essay discussion (Office Hours)

Dec 10 Thur. **Symbol**

T.S. Eliot “The Boston Evening Transcript”; Emily Dickinson “I heard a fly buzz – When I died”; George Herbert “Redemption.”

**Exercise:
(homework)**

Discuss the symbolism in Adrienne Rich’s poem “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers.”

Essay discussion (Office Hours)

Dec 17 Thur. **Retelling Myths – Essay Submission**

D.H.Lawrence “Bavarian Gentians”; William Butler Yeats “The Second Coming”; Thomas Hardy “The Oxen.”

Exercise:**(homework)**

With the aid of an encyclopedia look for the Greek myths appearing in the following lines from John Milton's "Lycidas": Group a) line 15, 16, 58; Group b) 61-63, 75; Group c) 77, 89, 90; Group d) 96, 106, 132. Then re-read the lines you have worked on and write about the details of the poem that become clear. For this exercise you could work in pairs.

Essay Submission**CHRISTMAS BREAK 23 Dec. 2009 – 8 Jan. 2010**

Jan 14 Thur. **Final Revision – Preparing for the Exams**

Books to Consult (On Reserve)

Barnet, Sylvan, et. al. *An Introduction to Literature* (2000).

Hunter, J. Paul. *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* (1996).

Padgett, Ron. *Handbook of Poetic Forms* (1987).

Scholes, Robert, et.al. *Elements of Literature: Essay, Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Film* (1991).

****Have a good semester****