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ENG 4300-002: The Language of Poetry

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English 4300 - The Language of Poetry
Spring 1997 - Dr. Peggy Brayfield

Course Texts: John Drury, The Poetry Dictionary
 Michael Meyer, Poetry. An Introduction
 John Frederick Nims, Western Wind
 Karamu 1996

In this course, we will focus intensively on aspects of the language of poetry - the qualities of its words and their arrangements, and the ways poets use these to create the richness and artistry typical of poetic expression.

We will examine a large number of poems, noting, naming, analyzing, savoring, appreciating the qualities of the language used in them.

Most of the reading will consist of poetic texts themselves. We will also read discussions of the language of poetry in Drury, Meyer, and Nims, as well as handouts and a few critical articles.

There will be frequent short writing assignments some of which may be done during part of a class period. There will also be one hour exam, a paper and oral report on it, and a final exam.

The first 11 weeks of the class will each be devoted to developing awareness of one or two specific aspects of the language of poetry. The remaining 4 weeks will be devoted to the study of the work of selected poets in some depth. Groups of students will be assigned one of these authors and one or more specific poems by that author for intensive study, research, a class presentation and a paper of 1000 - 1200 words (4 - 5 pages). due the last class day.

Grading: 1/3 of the term grade will be based on points earned by attendance and daily written assignments (15 points for attendance each class session; up to 25 points for each written assignment). At the end of the semester, a letter grade will be assigned to accumulated points, according to the following scale:

90 - 100% = A
80 - 89% = B
70 - 79% = C
60 - 69% = D
below 60% = F

1/3 of the term grade will be based on the research, including the paper and the class presentation of it.

1/3 of the grade will be based on the average of grades on the mid-term and the final, with the final weighted as twice the mid-term.

(CONTINUES)

English 4300, The Language of Poetry, continued

Late Work, Make-ups: Tests and in-class writings may be made up only for excused absence. Illness and emergencies such as a death in the immediate family are grounds for absence. Confer with the teacher as soon as possible to determine whether work may be made up, and to set a time for it to be done.

Homework is expected to be turned in on the day due. Homework assignments will usually be discussed on the subsequent class day after the teacher has read these papers. If not turned in on time, a homework assignment may be made up only before this class discussion has taken place. (Exceptions can be arranged in cases of illness or other emergencies. Confer with the teacher.)

Final presentations of research in class must be made on time, on the date assigned, unless for unavoidable excused absence. In the event a student is absent or unprepared on the date of his/her research presentation, an "F" will be averaged in as $\frac{1}{2}$ the grade on their research project, assuming it is completed.

Conferences: Students are encouraged and welcomed to confer at any time regarding course work, problems and concerns about the course materials, or interpretations and ideas about poetry generally; you only need ask for an appointment. Don't wait if you are having any difficulties, but come see me right away!

LET'S NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF THIS COURSE:
TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING, ENJOYMENT AND LOVE OF POETRY!

Schedule of Assignments

Note: Changes may be made in the specific dates and assignments listed here. These would be announced in class in a timely fashion. Students are responsible for keeping themselves informed on all such matters.

Week 1. January 13 - 17. The study of poetry requires a heightened awareness of the qualities of words, their denotations and connotations; the way they can convey, without explicitly naming, the emotions and attitudes (tone) of a speaker. Meyer Chapter 2 and Dylan Thomas excerpt (504 - 05); Nims Chapter 6(127 - 138); Drury articles "Denotation," "Connotation," "Tone." Poems as assigned.

Week 2. January 22 and 24. The language of poetry evokes sensory images. Nims Chapter 1; Meyer Chapter 3; Drury article "Image. Imagery." Poems as assigned.

Week 3. January 27 - 31. The language of poetry employs figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, synaesthesia, allusion, personification, animism, synecdoche, metonymy, and others. (Nims Chapters 2 and 4, Meyer Chapter 4). Poems as assigned.

Week 4. February 3 - 7. Continued study of figures of speech. Poems as assigned.

Week 5. February 10 - 14. Continued study of figures of speech. Poems as assigned.

Week 6. February 17 - 21. The language of poetry may use the concrete level of experience to suggest the general or abstract (image to stand for idea). This is literary symbolism. Nims Chapter 3, Meyer Chapter 5. Poems as assigned.

Week 7. Monday February 24 - Hour Exam.

Wednesday & Friday February 26 & 28. For musical and/or other effects, the language of poetry exploits the sounds of words and the physical sensations one experiences in pronouncing poetry aloud (onomatopoeia, sound-mimicry, rhyme, vowel echoes or assonance). Nims Chapters 7 and 8, Meyer Chapter 6. Poems as assigned.

Week 8. March 3 - 7. The language of poetry is chosen and arranged to create rhythms (repetitions with variations) of many sorts, including metrical patterns. Nims Chapters 9 - 10, Meyer Chapter 7, Drury articles on "Meter," "Accentual-Syllabic Meter," "Syllabic Meter," "Foot/Feet," "Free Verse." Poems as assigned.

Week 9. March 10 - 14. Continued discussion of sound, rhythm, metrical patterns. Poems as assigned.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 15 THROUGH 23.

Week 10. March 24 - 28. Whether in a set stanza pattern or in free verse, the language of poetry is given an organization and a visual shape on the page that functions in various ways, in addition to signaling "this is a poem, read it differently to prose." Nims Chapter 12, Meyer Chapters 8 and 9, Drury articles on "Sestina," "Sonnet," "Sonnet Sequence," "Stanza," "Corrupted Form," "Villanelle." Poems as assigned.

Week 11. March 31 - April 4. Continued discussion of verse forms. Poems as assigned.

Week 12. April 7 - 11. The whole class will study selections from Shakespeare. Research reports on selected passages, aspects of poetic language.

Week 13. April 14 - 18. The whole class will study selections from John Donne's poetry. Research reports on selected poems, aspects of poetic language.

Week 14. April 21 - 25. The whole class will study selections from John Keats's poetry. Research reports on selected poems, aspects of poetic language.

Week 15. April 28 - May 1. The whole class will study selections from a fourth poet (to be announced). Research reports on selected poems, aspects of poetic language.

Finals week begins May 5. Term ends May 9.

GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD AND READ POETRY!