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ENG 2011G-002: Literature, the Self, and the World: Poetry

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michael leddy / eng 2011 / literature, the self, and the world: poetry / sp 2004

class: Coleman 3170, MWF 9:00

office: Coleman 3741 (west hallway), MWF 8:30-9:00, 10:00-11:00, and other times by appointment

telephone: 581-6983 (my office) / 581-2428 (department office) / 345-4310 (home, not after 9:00 p.m.)

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“Poetry is life to me,” wrote the poet Fran O’Hara. For too many students though, poetry has been reduced to bland themes and symbols that are seldom true to the real complexities and pleasures of language that poetry (and life) 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

Margaret Ferguson, et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 4th ed. (Norton)

Paul Hoover, ed., *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology* (Norton)

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 (fairly easy if you do the reading), some memorizing of poems, several short pieces of writing, midterm and final examinations.

attendance

Attendance is essential. Or as the poet Ted Berrigan would tell his students, 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 (35%), quizzes (25%), midterm and final exams (15% each), 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:

A 95 A- 92 B+ 87 B 85 B- 82 C+ 77 C 75 C- 72 D+ 67 D 65 D- 62 F 55

Sometimes when I grade writing 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/>.

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 Spark Notes 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 will be available as photocopies.]

Weeks 1-2: 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 2-4: 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”

John Keats, “Bright Star” (Koch 203)

Lorine Niedecker, “Poet’s Work”

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)

Allen Ginsberg, “Sunflower Sutra”

Langston Hughes, “Harlem Sweeties” (*Norton* 1323-24)

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (*Norton* 240)

William Carlos Williams, “Portrait of a Lady”

William Wordsworth, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (*Norton* 732-33)

[IN-CLASS WRITING, 2/11]

Weeks 6: Finding the Words

John Ashbery, “What Is Poetry”

Margaret Atwood, “You Begin” (*Norton* 1785-86)

Emily Dickinson, 510

Weeks 7-8: Thinking

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight" (*Norton* 742-44)

John Donne, "The Good Morrow" (*Norton* 263-64)

Frank O'Hara, "Meditations in an Emergency" (Hoover 122-24)

Ron Padgett, "Joe Brainard's Painting *Bingo*"

[MIDTERM EXAM, 3/3]

Weeks 8-10: Looking, Listening

Guillaume Apollinaire, "A Phantom of Clouds," "Monday Rue Christine"

Larry Eigner, [trees green the quiet sun], [how it comes about] (Hoover 162, 163)

Robert Frost, "Desert Places"

Rainer Maria Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo" (Koch 220-221)

Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (*Norton* 1155-56)

William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All"

Weeks 11-13: Selves and Others

Rae Armantrout, "Traveling through the Yard"

Catullus, 8, 51

Emily Dickinson, 640, 754 (*Norton* 1018-20, 1021-22)

John Donne, "The Flea" (*Norton* 279)

Linda Hogan, "The Truth Is"

Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B" (*Norton* 1324-25)

Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (*Norton* 233-34)

Bernadette Mayer, "Sonnet" [A thousand apples you might put in your theories] (Hoover 468)

Sir Walter Raleigh, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (*Norton* 14-41)

Sappho, 20

William Stafford, "Traveling through the Dark"

[IN-CLASS WRITING, 3/29]

Weeks 14-15: Another poetry: song lyrics

[In addition to the two class-length in-class writings, there will be shorter in-class (and possibly out-of-class) writing assignments.]