

   CRW 4906   

(sect. 2017/M136)

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Monday 9-11 (4:05-7:05 pm)
Online (ZOOM)

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4211-H Turlington (Tuesday, 2-3:45 pm) or by phone

Poetry requires the manipulation of words—it’s the words, even more than the feelings within them, that make poetry memorable. To treat poetry as simply a collection of words would be too austere, like treating a dog as just a bundle of DNA (not that some dogs shouldn’t be so treated). We’ll look closely at words and the way that altering even a single one may change the effect of a poem, without ever forgetting that a poem must proceed simultaneously through what those words evoke.

Eliot said of Milton that a “man may be a great artist, and yet have a bad influence.” We will be looking at poets who are by and large good artists and trying to see what might make them good influences as well.

⇒ *Logistics*

At the end of each class, I’ll give you a writing assignment. Assignments vary from the straightforward to the perverse. I’ll ask you to write a poem to a form of my devising, with three or four additional requirements meant to obstruct your conscious mind and give access to your imagination. I hope to entangle your censoring conscious so completely that you’ll concentrate on fulfilling the form and not worry overmuch about what’s being said. The poem is due the following week at the end of class (sent to me and then distributed to the listserv). I’m immune to excuses for late assignments, however ingenious. You may obtain grace until noon the next day without penalty. (Normally this triggers a cookie penalty, where you bring lashings of cookies to class the following week.) Late assignments will otherwise be marked down severely, one point per day (one-third of a grade, so A becomes A-). These penalties are cumulative and cannot be remitted.

From the poems submitted, I’ll choose five as the worksheet for our discussion (emailing you the names of the lucky poets), to which the first half of class will be devoted. Over the course of the semester, each poet’s work will be workshopped about the same number of times. *Late assignments should be sent to me as attachments in .pdf (preferred) or .docx.* (When classes again meet face to face this also applies to assignments where you didn’t print out enough copies.) Do not leave assignments in my school mailbox. *All assignments must have your name, class, number of the assignment, and my name in the upper-left corner. (Do NOT use MS Word’s header feature—type in the information just above the poem.)* *Don’t make me your secretary.*

In the second half of each class, we’ll discuss assigned readings. This term we’ll

read Amy Clampitt's *Collected Poems*, Henri Cole's *The Visible Man*, Philip Larkin's *Collected Poems*, Marianne Moore's *Complete Poems*, and, as our anthology, R. S. Gwynn's *Contemporary American Poetry*. It's a prerequisite of the course that you buy the books. Failure to complete the readings or engage in discussion is a sign of lack of interest in a decent grade. You can buy the books at the campus book-store or on the web. (Used books from Amazon or ABE are much cheaper than new.) If you don't have a particular book one evening, it's one point off your grade; if you don't have it a second evening, it's two points off your grade, and so on. Ebooks are not permitted.

I won't set the direction of our discussions, but I like to look intensely at the collusive uses of language and the habits and craft of revision. My complaint about many contemporary poets is that they have no concern for the richness of words, the complication of expression, and rarely use what might be called the subsidies of sense (as opposed to plain bread-and-butter prose meaning). These subsidies include ambiguity, nuance, the right wrong word, music of various sorts (alliterative, consonantal), patterns of adherence (meter, set form), thematic tangles, sensitivity to verb tense, timing, and delay—in short, the ways that poets have traditionally put English on English.

⇒ *Discussions*

You're responsible for printing out and reading the worksheet each week *in advance of class*, making notes upon it, and bringing it with you. Copious notes. The quick wit, intelligence, and charm of your analysis will be appreciated by all. Use of laptops or cell phones during class, except to connect to us online, is forbidden. If your cell phone rings, you owe everyone cake or cookies—if we return to face-to-face classes.

⇒ *Notebooks*

The week after I receive your assignment, I'll hand it back with suggestions. Keep these copies! These annotated assignments should be collected in a file folder, due April 15 (the Thursday before the final week of class), accompanied by new revisions of all poems. Put the folder in my mailbox in Turlington 4301 or on my porch. There's no midterm, no final, just the hard work of poems. I may on occasion ask to see your notes, which will be marked from 0-5 and count in your final grade.

⇒ *Grades*

I'll give you ten poetry assignments, the last due April 5. After reading your brilliantly revised portfolios (see deadline under *Notebooks*, above), I'll give each poem a mark of 1 to 10 (these are chili-pepper grades, from ultra mild to red hot). The mark will reflect the courage and imagination shown in the assignment, as well as the technical dexterity or ingenuity, and, in addition, the quality of the revision. Class participation will be awarded 0 to 10 additional points. I'm not able to reward mere chatter, but I'm sure that you'll always respond to the poems and the opinions of others

in a deft and polite and witty manner.

⇒ *Absences*

You may have two absences for any reason, especially whimsical; but you must notify me *in advance*. Email me or call me at home to do so. Each unnotified absence and each absence beyond those permitted will result in loss of half a letter grade for the term. Lateness over ten minutes is equivalent to half an absence. *If you miss a class, your assignment is due by email, sent to me by noon the following day (.pdf or .docx format, please). Otherwise it will be treated as late.* ~~[Poems late because of absence do not have to be rescued by sweets.]~~ When you're absent, you may pick up your packet from my mailbox in 4301 Turlington. I'm available for conferences Monday afternoons, 2-3:45 pm—or by appointment if the normal time is impossible due to a scheduled class (not a job or a hot hook-up). Take advantage of office hours—the jokes may be funnier then.

Rules of presentation

- 1) Title your poems.
- 2) Single space with at least a 12-point font (13, if Times Roman) and don't use a clever font.
- 3) Don't center justify. It makes the poor poems look like embroidery.
- 4) Put your name, class, my name, and the assignment number in the upper-left corner of the page.
- 5) You must use correct grammar and punctuation. I will make all errors and ask you to write a paragraph that gives the correct rule and form.

Rules of composition

- 1) Stay away from abstraction until you can handle detail.
- 2) Stay away from passive voice and sentence fragments until you can handle sentences.
- 3) Stay away from dialogue until you can handle exposition.
- 4) Learn the rules of punctuation. Learn verb tenses. Learn how to use a participle.
- 5) Learn the difference between "like" and "as."
- 6) Write only in complete sentences, on pain of defenestration and rustication. No sentence fragments.

Sad Steps

Groping back to bed after a piss
 I part thick curtains, and am startled by
 The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness.

Four o'clock: wedge-shadowed gardens lie
 Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky.
 There's something laughable about this,

The way the moon dashes through clouds that blow
 Loosely as cannon-smoke to stand apart
 (Stone-coloured light sharpening the roofs below)

High and preposterous and separate—
 Lozenge of love! Medallion of art!
 O wolves of memory! Immensements! No,

One shivers slightly, looking up there.
 The hardness and the brightness and the plain
 Far-reaching singleness of that wide stare

Is a reminder of the strength and pain
 Of being young; that it can't come again,
 But is for others undiminished somewhere.

—Philip Larkin

With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies,
 How silently, and with how wan a face,
 What may it be, that even in heav'nly place
 That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?

Sure if that long with Love acquainted eyes
 Can judge of Love, thou feelst a lovers case;
 I read it in thy looks, thy languisht grace,
 To me that feel the like, thy state describes.

Then ev'n of fellowship, O moon, tell me
 Is constant love deem'd there but want of wit?
 Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
 Do they above love to be loved, and yet

Those lovers scorn whom that Love doth possess?
 Do they call Virtue there ungratefulness?

—Sir Philip Sidney

“With how sad steps, O Moon thou climb'st the sky.

How silently, and with how wan a face!”

Where art thou? Thou whom I have seen on high
 Running among the clouds a Wood-nymph's race?

Unhappy Nuns, whose common breath's a sigh
 Which they would stifle, move at such a pace!

The Northern Wind, to call thee to the chace,

Must blow tonight his bugle horn. Had I

The power of Merlin, Goddess! this should be
 And all the Stars, now shrouded up in heaven,

Should sally forth to keep thee company.

What strife would then be yours, fair Creatures, driv'n

Now up, now down, and sparkling in your glee!

But, Cynthia, should to Thee the palm be giv'n,

Queen both for beauty and for majesty.

—William Wordsworth

Cows

The cows of Potter and Albert Cuyp are timeless;
 in the depths of Europe, we find their scrawly pastures
 and scrawlier hamlets unwatered by paint or Hegel,
 the benighted provincial kirk. None of our rear-guard painters,
 the lover of nature, the hater of abstraction,
 can do these landscapes. With a bull's watery eye,
 dewlap and misty phallus, Cuyp caught the furthest glisten,
 tonnage and rumination of the sod. . . .
 And there is a whiteness; behind your sixties dress,
 feudal vassal's workday, and R.C. code,
 lies the windfall abandon of Giorgione,
 Renaissance idleness—only the lovely,
 the good, the wealthy served the Venetian, whose art
 knew nothing yet of husbandry and cattle.

—Robert Lowell

Anne Boleyn (later version of *Cows*)

The cows of Potter and Albert Cuyp are timeless;
 in the depths of Europe, scrawly pastures
 and scrawlier hamlets unwatered by paint or Hegel,
 the cow is king. None of our rear-guard painters,
 lovers of nature and haters of abstraction,
 make an art of farming. With a bull's moist eye,
 dewlap and misty phallus, Cuyp caught the farthest glisten,
 tonnage and rumination of the sod. . . .
 There was a whiteness to Anne Boleyn's throat,
 shiver of heresy, *raison d'état*,
 the windfall abandon of Giorgione,
 Renaissance high hand with nature—only the lovely,
 the good, the wealthy serve the Venetian, whose art
 knows nothing yet of husbandry and cattle.

—Robert Lowell

TEXTS:

R. S. Gwynn, *Contemporary American Poetry*Amy Clampitt, *Collected Poems*Henri Cole, *The Visible Man*Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems*

week

- 1 (January 11) Introduction and Baptism by Fire
- 2 (January 18) CLASS CANCELED—MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
- 3 (January 25) Philip Larkin, *The Less Deceived*
Bukowski, Wilbur
- 4 (February 1) Philip Larkin, *Whitsun Weddings*
Hecht, Justice
- 5 (February 8) Philip Larkin, *High Windows and Uncollected Poems*
Snodgrass, Merrill
- 6 (February 15) Marianne Moore, *Selected Poems*
Ginsberg, Ashbery
- 7 (February 22) Marianne Moore, *What Are Years* through *Collected Later Poems*
Merwin, Levine
- 8 (March 1) Marianne Moore, *Like a Bulwark* through *Hitherto Uncollected*
Rich, Gunn
- 9 (March 8) MOVIE NIGHT
- 10 (March 15) Amy Clampitt, *The Kingfisher*
Plath, Strand
- 11 (March 22) Amy Clampitt, *What the Light Was Like* and *Archaic Figure*
C. K. Williams, Hass
- 12 (March 29) Amy Clampitt, *Westward* and *A Silence Opens*
Collins, Olds
- 13 (April 5) Henri Cole, *The Visible Man*
Glück, Forché
- 14 (April 12) Henri Cole, *The Visible Man*
Schnackenberg
(NOTEBOOKS DUE Thursday, April 15)
- 15 (April 19) Fatal pronouncements and Cold Comfort

It may be necessary for the instructor to be absent one evening. Warning shall be given!

All the Other Things

Classroom Behavior:

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts the learning process may lead to disciplinary action. Because this course requires much contact, collaboration, and dialogue among students, it is essential that each student work to create an environment of respect and tolerance. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the readings we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Important Tip: *You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location.*

Final Grade Appeals: Students should consult the Associate Chair of the English Department.

Turn off your cell phone before class.

Grading (For UF Grading Policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>)

A few reminders: (1) This is a studio course, so grading is even more subjective than usual; (2) You are graded on your final assignments and you class participation; (3) There are penalties for late assignments that may affect your final grade; (4) There are penalties for lateness to class, or for missing more than two classes.

A

Assignments almost always show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as a complete understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might often pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is almost always adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

A-

Assignments often show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as an almost complete understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might reasonably often pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is usually adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

B+

Assignments reasonably often show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as an excellent understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might fairly often pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is frequently adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

B

Assignments more often than not show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as a very good understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might sometimes pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is sometimes adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

B-

Assignments sometimes show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as a very good understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might very occasionally pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is on occasion adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

C+

Assignments rarely show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, as well as a fair understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might once or twice pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is usually not adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions.

C

Assignments almost never show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, have a not so good understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and might once or twice pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is almost never adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions. In addition, there may be frequent problems with grammar and syntax.

C-

Assignments virtually never show remarkable ingenuity or imagination, have a poor understanding of the formal or informal demands of the poem, and would probably never pass for graduate-level work. Class participation is virtually never adept, insightful, and surprising in its perceptions. In addition, there may be very frequent problems with grammar and syntax.

D+

C- work further marred by problems of insight and understanding, as well as persistent difficulties with grammar and syntax.

D

D+ work further marred by very great problems of insight and understanding, as well as extraordinary difficulties with grammar and syntax.

D-

D work further marred by inexplicable and apparently ineradicable problems of insight and understanding, as well as even more extraordinary difficulties with grammar and syntax.

E

D- work further marred by nearly incomprehensible insights and understanding, as well as difficulties with grammar and syntax far beyond the norm for someone who cares about the language.

Remember that these are the rubrics only for the assignments and class participation. Your grade may move down with penalties for late attendance or late assignments.

UF Stuff

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition (not *Humanities*). For more info, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-educationrequirement.aspx>

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more info, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more info about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see <http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-educationrequirement.aspx#learning>.

This class will not be recorded and you may not record it yourself. That would be a violation of privacy.