


 LIT 4930   

(class 26471 / sect. 1WL2)

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Tuesday 9-11 (4:05-7:05 p.m.)
Turlington 4211

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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, though of course it must make sense, at least poetic sense. The poem is due the following week at the end of class (or emailed 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 following day without penalty if you accept a cookie penalty, which requires you to bring lashings of cookies to class the following week. Late assignments will otherwise be marked down severely, one half of a letter grade at noon per day. These penalties are cumulative and cannot be remitted.

From the poems submitted, I’ll choose four or 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 .doc or .docx.* (This also applies to assignments where you didn’t print out enough copies.) Do not leave assignments in my English Department 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 American poetry from Whitman to Elizabeth Bishop, from the pre-Moderns to the Moderns to the post-Moderns, using Cary Nelson's *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*. It's a prerequisite of the course that you buy the book. 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; a second evening, it's two points off, and so on. Ebooks are not permitted, because you can't scribble in them.

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 meanings). 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 of student poems 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 is forbidden. If your cell phone rings, you owe everyone cookies. Free printing can be had at various spots on campus.

For the past two years, I've been conducting an experiment during discussions to make them more like good poetry. Slow down when you speak and censor any impulse to clutter your remarks with words like "like" (except, as here, when used for a comparison), as well as "super," "you know," "sort of," "kind of," "personally," "actually," and "whatever." Do not use the word "flow" when discussing a poem. You may consider this part of the course directed at expression and public speaking.

⇒ *Portfolios*

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 21 (the Friday before the final week of class), accompanied by new revisions of all poems. Put this portfolio 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 11. After reading your brilliantly revised portfolios, 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, of course, 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, 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. (As we are still in COVID days, a diagnosis will trigger more lenient terms for absences and late assignments. You'll need a doctor's note. Do *NOT* come to class if you have symptoms. It is a virulently contagious disease.) 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 (as noted, .doc 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, I will scan and send the worksheet to you. I'm available for walk-in 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 poem look like embroidery. For a similar reason, don't right justify, either. It makes the poem look as if it's scared.
- 4) Put your name, class, my name, and the assignment number in the upper-left corner of the page.
- 5) You must use correct English grammar and punctuation. I will mark 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.
In other words, unless the assignment demands it, I want to see no sentence fragments or dialogue, and a minimum of big, fat abstractions and uses of the passive voice.
- 4) Learn the rules of punctuation. Learn verb tenses. Learn how to use a participle.
Don't write every poem in the present tense—use it no more than, say, three times in the semester.
- 5) Learn the difference between “like” and “as.”
- 6) No rhyming unless the assignment demands it.
- 7) Write only in complete sentences, on pain of defenestration and rustication. No sentence fragments. If you don't know what a sentence fragment is, look it up.
- 8) Unless directed, use the past tense as your main tense.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

—John Keats

Henry James by the Pacific

In a hotel room by the sea, the Master
Sits brooding on the continent he has crossed.
Not that he foresees immediate disaster,
Only a sort of freshness being lost—
Or should he go on calling it Innocence?
The sad-faced monsters of the plains are gone;
Wall Street controls the wilderness. There's an immense
Novel in all this waiting to be done.
But not, not—sadly enough—by him. His talents,
Such as they may be, want an older theme,
One rather more civilized than this, on balance.
For him now always the consoling dream
Is just the mild, dear light of Lamb House falling
Beautifully down the pages of his calling.

—Donald Justice

Florida Twilight, 1905

(St. Augustine)

Returning late, the flushed West to the right,
One saw, aligned against the golden sky
(The very throne-robe of the star-crowned night),
Black palms, a frieze of chiseled ebony.
And even at the moment one resolved
Not to come back, the scent of fruit and flowers
Brought on a sadness as the past dissolved:
Arcades, courts, arches, fountains, lordly towers. . . .

The shore of sunset and the palms, meanwhile—
Late shade giving over to greater shade—
What were they? With what did they have to do?
It was like a myriad pictures of the Nile,
But with a History yet to be made,
A world already lost that was still new.

—Joe Bolton

TEXTS:

Cary Nelson, ed. *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*

week

1 (January 10)	Introduction and Baptism by Fire
2 (January 17)	Walt Whitman
3 (January 24)	Emily Dickinson
4 (January 31)	Ezra Pound
5 (February 7)	T. S. Eliot
6 (February 14)	Robert Frost
7 (February 21)	MOVIE NIGHT
8 (February 28)	Wallace Stevens
9 (March 7)	Marianne Moore
(March 14)	SPRING BREAK
10 (March 21)	William Carlos Williams Jean Toomer / Claude McKay / Arna Bontemps
11 (March 28)	Randall Jarrell Theodore Roethke
12 (April 4)	John Berryman Amy Clampitt
13 (April 11)	Elizabeth Bishop
14 (April 18)	Robert Lowell
	(PORTFOLIOS DUE: Friday, April 21)
15 (April 25)	Fireworks and final pronouncements

It may (but probably will not) be necessary for the instructor to be absent one evening. Warning shall be given!

All the Other Things

Recordings

As this class consists almost entirely of discussion with students, recordings are not permitted.

Classroom Behavior:

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts learning may lead to disciplinary action. Because this course requires collaboration and dialogue among students, it's essential that each student create an environment of respect and tolerance. Remember that students come from very different cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of our may treat controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may be foreign to your own. Disrespectful behavior may result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Important Tip: 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.

Mask Policy: UF asks you to wear masks while in class.

Turn off your cell phone before class.

Grading

A few reminders: (1) This is a studio course, so grading is even more subjective than usual; (2) You're graded on your final assignments and your 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>.

Further UF Stuff

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Emergency services. U Matter, We Care serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

University Counseling Center—301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
 Student Health Care Center—352-392-1171
 Career Resource Center, Reitz Union—352-392-1601
 Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center—
 352-392-1161
 University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); call 9-1-1 for emergencies