

SYLLABUS

English 106 (CRN# 17236) Introduction to Literature / Poetry
Fall 2013 T&Th 2:00-3:20 276 Lokey
Instructor: John Witte (rhymes with city) 346-5935 jwitte@uoregon.edu
Office: 206 PLC Office hours: MW&Th 4:00-5:00, and by appointment.

REQUIRED TEXTS: *A Book of Luminous Things*, Czeslaw Milosz, ed.
A book of poems of your choice, by one of the poets in our anthology.
A Brief Glossary of Poetic Terms (provided at end of syllabus).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

DAILY ASSIGNMENT. For each class you will be required to select a poem from the day's reading assignment and, depending on your group (A or B), be either a presenter or a respondent.

Presenters will turn in a one-page paper (typed, double-spaced) of two paragraphs. In paragraph one, briefly summarize your poem, answering the following questions: What is the author's **intent**? What is the **form** of the poem, and why was this form chosen? What is the **sound** of the poem? How do form and sound converge to amplify the **sense** of the poem? A sample summary will be found at the end of the syllabus. In paragraph two, compare your poem to another in the text, focusing on one shared quality (such as subject, imagery, tone or form). Presenters will read their poems aloud, and share their summaries. Respondents will be prepared to respond to the presentations.

FINAL PAPER. A final paper, of four typed pages, assessing a full-length collection of poems of your choice by one of the poets studied this term, will be due on **December 5**. While writing, keep in mind the following:

Think about your topic and reread the relevant poems and passages several times, taking notes and exploring possibilities. Question yourself, and the text. Decide on a title and a main argument or thesis; then compose a detailed outline of your paper. Begin by writing an introduction that explains your thesis in one paragraph. The body of your paper should develop the thesis logically, with each paragraph enlarging on an important point with specific evidence (such as quotations from the poems) and clear explanation. Pay as much attention to the end of the essay as to its beginning. You should leave your reader with a clear sense of what you have demonstrated and why it matters. *Carefully proofread your paper*, rewriting as necessary, and correcting all grammatical errors. Papers must be typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

Words or ideas not your own must be clearly identified by quotation, and, where necessary, a citation. Plagiarism is a serious academic crime that will result in disciplinary action up to expulsion. If you are uncertain how to properly document or quote other people's words and ideas, I'll be glad to discuss this with you.

GRADING:

Your grade will be determined by your preparedness for and participation in the class discussions (10%), by your nine daily written assignments (70%), and by your final paper (20%).

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is crucial. If you need to miss a class, an explanation will be required. You will be allowed **one unexcused absence**. Each additional unexcused absence will lower your final grade one step (for example, from a B to a B-). If you are sick, you will be required to produce a note from your personal doctor or pharmacist. Absences for athletic events will not be excused.

CLASS SCHEDULE (all assignments from *A Book of Luminous Things*)

- Oct. 1: Orientation and review of syllabus.
- Oct. 3: Introduction – p. 16 *inclusive*. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Oct. 8: pp. 17-32. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Oct. 10: pp. 33-47. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Oct. 15: pp. 49-66. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Oct. 17: pp. 67-84. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Oct. 22: pp. 85-98. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Oct. 24: pp. 100-118. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Oct. 29: pp. 119-133. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Oct. 31: pp. 134-152. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Nov. 5: pp. 153-167. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Nov. 7: pp. 168-186. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Nov. 12: pp. 187-202. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Nov. 14: pp. 204-221. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Nov. 19: pp. 222-235. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Nov. 21: pp. 237-254. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Nov. 26: pp. 256-274. Group A presents; group B responds.
- Thanksgiving Vacation: Nov. 28-29.
- Dec. 3: pp. 275-290. Group B presents; group A responds.
- Dec. 5: pp. 291-306. Group A presents; group B responds.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- First day of class: Oct. 1.
- Last day to drop classes without a 'W': Oct. 7.
- Last day to register/add classes: Oct. 9.
- Last day to withdraw from classes: November 17.
- Thanksgiving Vacation: Nov. 28-29.
- Last day of classes: Dec. 5.

MAXIMUS

God is older than the sun and moon
and the eye cannot behold him
nor the voice describe him.

But a naked man, a stranger, leaned on the gate
with his cloak over his arm, waiting to be asked in.
So I called to him, Come in, if you will! –
He came in slowly, and sat down by the hearth.
I said to him: And what is your name? –
He looked at me without answer, but such a loveliness
entered me, I smiled to myself, saying: He is God!
So he said: *Hermes!*

God is older than the sun and moon
and the eye cannot behold him
nor the voice describe him:
and still, this is the God Hermes, sitting by my hearth.

“Maximus,” by D.H. Lawrence, is a three-stanza poem in free-verse, taking the form of a contrast between the Christian God, who is invisible and indescribable, and the pagan god Hermes, who is shockingly present (“naked”) to the speaker. The dull regularity of the three-line refrain emphasizes the remoteness of the God of the Bible, while the urgent and excited language of the second stanza – full of curiosity and exclamation (“such a loveliness/ entered me”) – conveys the immediacy and power of the pagan Hermes, god of messages, eloquence, and fertility.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF POETIC TERMS

Accent (synonym for Stress):

The emphasis given to certain syllables of words. If a word (usually longer than three syllables) has more than one accented syllable, the heavier accent is called the *primary stress*, the lighter one in the *secondary stress*, and the other syllables are *unstressed*.

Alliteration (initial rhyme):

Repetition of sounds, usually at the beginning of words.

Allusion:

A reference, usually brief, to something outside the literary text itself.

Ambiguity (multiple meaning):

The use of language so that more than one interpretation of a word or passage is relevant to the meaning.

Assonance:

Repetition of vowel sounds preceded and followed by different consonant sounds, as in "time" and "mind."

Cacophony:

A combination of sounds that is harsh, discordant, or hard to articulate, usually because of clusters of consonants.

Cadence:

The rising and falling rhythm of spoken language, resulting from the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Caesura:

A pause within a line of verse, dictated by speech rhythm rather than meter.

Consonance:

Repetition of consonant sounds where the vowels before the consonants differ, as in "struts" and "frets."

Dissonance:

A discord of sounds. Dissonance may be cacophony, harsh and unpleasing, or it may be an interesting variation of sounds.

Elegy:

Meditation, usually in the context of sorrow over the dead.

End-stopped line:

One in which the end of a syntactical unit (a phrase, clause or sentence) coincides with the end of the line.

Epistle:

A poem in the form of a letter to a specific person.

Figurative language:

Language that means something more than or other than what it literally says.

Foot:

A metric unit consisting of one stressed and one or more unstressed syllables.

Found poetry:

A piece of discovered writing (it may be a news item, advertisement, travel book, catalogue, etc.) That is read as poetry though it was not intended to be.

Free Verse:

Poetry in which rhythm is based not on strict meter but on a highly organized pattern of cadences.

Iamb:

A metrical foot of two syllables, with a weak stress followed by a strong.

Image:

A word or cluster of words that evoke sense-perception: sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch. Poets embody their thought in images, for we can hardly grasp an idea unless we conceive it in physical terms.

Intensity:

Concentration of meaning; to charge language with meaning to the utmost degree.

Light verse:

Verse written mainly to entertain or amuse (nonsense verse, limericks, nursery rhymes).

Line:

A row of words. In prose the lines run on; in poetry each line ends or breaks where the rhythm dictates. Prose-writers think in sentences. Poets think in lines.

Lyric:

Any poem with a musical cadence expressing emotion rather than describing events.

Meaning:

The meaning of a poem is in the form, images, rhythm, and tone, as well as in those ideas which could equally well be expressed in prose.

Meter:

The regular recurrence of patterns of accented and unaccented syllables. The basic metrical unit is the foot, which can be iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic or spondaic.

Metaphor:

An implied comparison, omitting explicit words of comparison such as like, or as. A metaphor is more compressed than a simile, because it identifies two things with each other, rather than simply comparing them.

Narrative:

A poem that tells a story.

Objective Correlative:

A set of objects, or situation, or chain of events which is the formula for a particular emotion, reliably triggering that emotion in the reader.

Occasional poem:

A poem written to commemorate a specific event or occasion.

Parable:

A short, simple story intended to illustrate a moral lesson.

Pathetic fallacy:

The attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects, in a way that is less complete than personification.

Persona:

The fictitious narrator imagined by the poet to speak the words of a poem.

Personification:

A figurative use of language in which human qualities or feelings are attributed to nonhuman organisms, inanimate objects, or abstract ideas.

Prose poem:

Writing that has all the qualities of a poem, but is written as prose and not in lines of verse.

Refrain:

A line or lines repeated at regular intervals in a poem.

Rhyme:

The identity or similarity of sound patterns. Rhyme at the end of a line is called *end rhyme*. Rhyme occurring within a line is called *internal rhyme*. A *true rhyme* repeats a sound exactly. A rhyme that is not perfect may be called a *slant, approximate, or off rhyme*. The *rhyme scheme* is the pattern formed by the end rhymes of all the lines in a stanza.

Run-on line:

A line that completes its grammatical unity and meaning by going on into the next line without a pause.

Simile:

An expressed comparison, using the words *like, or as*.

Stanza:

A group of lines considered as a unit, forming a division of a poem, and recurring in the same pattern or variations of the pattern.

Stream of consciousness:

Referring to the continuous flow of inner experiences, and the replication of that flow in words.

Surrealism:

Going beyond realism, deep into the inner world of the unconscious mind.

Texture:

The surface detail of a text, especially the phonetic patterns, the sensory quality of the images, and the additional richness of meaning suggested by the connotations of the words.

Theme:

A central idea or major point of a literary work. Theme can mean the subject of a work, such as time, love, death, beauty, and so on.

Tone:

The attitude of the writer toward his or her audience. The tone may be serious or light, formal or intimate, scornful or sympathetic, straightforward or ironic.

Unity:

The coherent relationship of all the parts of a work to the whole.

Voice:

The voice identifies the speaker, as either the poet talking to himself (or to nobody), the poet addressing an audience, or perhaps the poet speaking through a dramatic character.

