

ENG 407 – St. Louis Seminar: Robert Frost
Fall, 2014 – CRN 12236
Tuesday 2:00-4:50 – 360 Condon

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Office Hours: M, Tu, W: 12-1
and by appointment



It takes all sorts of in- and outdoor schooling
To get adapted to my kind of fooling.

Robert Frost

St. Louis Seminars offer junior and senior English Majors opportunities to work closely with faculty members in a small class setting, study compelling literary topics, and pursue an advanced research project. In this course we will read and discuss Robert Frost's poetry in relation to his poetic theories as expressed in a number of prose writings.

Requirements:

- Class attendance and participation 20%
- Weekly reading response papers (8) and portfolio reflective essay 40%
- One oral report 20%
- Research essay (in 5 prescribed stages) 40%

Texts:

Required:

- *The Poetry of Robert Frost*. Lathem, ed. (in the bookstore)
- *Collected Prose of Robert Frost*. Richardson, ed. (in the bookstore)
- occasional readings to be handed out or made available on Blackboard

On Reserve for this class in the Knight Library:

- *A Concordance to the Poetry of Robert Frost*. Lathem, ed.
 - PS3511 .R94 1969 Sup
- *The Letters of Robert Frost*. Sheehy, et. Al., eds.
 - PS3511.R94 Z48 2014
- *Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost*. Faggen. Ed.
 - PS3511.R94 Z559 2001
- *Robert Frost: A Biography*. Thompson.
 - PS3511.R94Z954 1982

Policies:

So that we all have the same text on the same page, please bring to class your copy of the editions of poems and prose ordered for this class through the UO Bookstore (aka “Duckstore”).

As a courtesy to other students and the instructor, please do not use laptops, phones, or other electronic devices in class. (I reserve the right to count you absent if you text, answer phone calls, play games, or send emails, etc. during class.)

Be on time to class. Treat others respectfully.

All of the writing you do for this class must be exclusively your own and written exclusively for this class. All sources used must be acknowledged. Ask me if you have any questions about what is or is not plagiarism. Plagiarism on any writing assignment will result in failure of the class. Attendance in class signifies agreement with this policy and familiarity with the Student Code of Conduct in reference to Academic Dishonesty.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand and appreciate the art of Robert Frost;
- Gain knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of Frost’s aesthetic theories;
- Improve ability to understand and appreciate poetry and its potential as equipment for ethical living;
- Improve research skills, including critical reading of secondary sources;
- Improve academic writing;
- Improve oral delivery skills (discussion and formal reporting).

The Department’s assessment procedure for the Undergraduate English Major is built around six desired learning outcomes: 1) read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions; 2) draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts; 3) perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts; 4) write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose; 5) employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments; 6) employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

Weekly reading responses and portfolio:

- At the beginning of each class session (weeks 2-9), bring a one-page reading response in which you reflect on any aspect of the readings assigned for that class. This is an open assignment, intended to give you the opportunity to develop any idea that you find compelling in the reading. You are free to ask questions, speculate, express doubts, make connections But always try to develop your response and pursue its implications.
- These will be handed back with comments, but no grades, at the next class meeting.
- Soon after you get my comments, add a few more sentences of further speculations or “second thoughts” to your response. Label these “*second thoughts*.”
- Keep the returned responses with comments and second thoughts in a file.
- At the end of the class you will turn in a portfolio containing all of your reading responses and second thoughts, along with a short reflective essay in which you discuss your responses and their role in your learning during the term. (Instructions to be handed-out later in the term.) The portfolio will receive one grade, based on the number of responses completed on time, their overall quality, and the quality of your reflective essay.

Oral Reports:

- Each student will select a topic from the list below and prepare a ten-minute oral report for the class. You will respond to questions after the report for an additional five minutes.
- You may have notes, but do not use a prepared, written text. Talk to us, do not read to us. Practice. Stick to your time limit.
- Avoid an overly colloquial or informal speaking style and habitual verbal tics: “you know,” “I mean,” “uh,” “like”. (See Ted Gup on “Diss Like,” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* at <http://chronicle.com/article/Diss-Like/130202/>)
- Relate the topic of your report to specific poems by Frost and say how they are relevant to your topic.
- In preparing your report, make use of relevant portions of *Collected Prose*, the books on reserve in the library, and at least two additional print sources. (I.e. go beyond the internet and way beyond Google.)
- At the conclusion of your report, hand in a “Works Cited or Consulted” page.

Oral report topics:

- Frost’s childhood
- Frost’s education
- Frost and William James
- Frost and Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Frost and Emily Dickinson
- Frost in England
- Frost and Edward Thomas
- Frost and Ezra Pound
- Frost as farmer
- Frost’s religious beliefs
- Frost as teacher
- Lionel Trilling at Frost’s 85th birthday
- Frost’s marriage and children
- Frost’s political beliefs

Research Essay:

You are encouraged to look for a topic by reading ahead of the assigned poetry and prose, sampling Frost's poems and ideas that we have not yet read for class.

The research essay will be completed in five specific stages as follows (see the schedule for due dates for each stage):

- **Research question.** A precise, focused question which you wish to investigate in your research. Include a statement of why it matters to you or should matter to us, e.g. an answer to "so what?" Why is it "at issue?"
- **Annotated bibliography.** In pursuit of answers to your question, consult related primary and secondary sources thoroughly. (Seek my assistance or that of a reference librarian if needed.) List each source consulted, and write a brief précis of that source, and an assessment of its relevance to your question (about 100 words). My expectation is that your bibliography will contain a minimum of ten print sources, and include journal articles as well as books. The absence of major sources that are obviously necessary to your research project will be noted.
- **Research abstract.** This is a one-paragraph description of the argument you intend to make in your research essay. It should contain a clear statement of the thesis you intend to argue and the nature of the evidence you intend to use. Say why your idea matters to you. The statement may be hypothetical, i.e., you need not be certain of your conclusion yet, and you may find that your ideas change as you further your research and compose your essay. (No more than one page.)
- **Research essay draft.** A first draft of your complete essay (8-10 pages, roughly.)
- **Research essay final draft.** A revision of your first draft in response to comments. MLA documentation style should be used accurately throughout.

Hand in the final draft with all of these parts attached. One grade will be given to the entire project.

Schedule:

The schedule lists the days on which reading should be done for class discussion. Read all of each individual book of poetry listed, from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, and reread poems you wish to discuss. I strongly urge you to read many of the poems aloud, both to yourself and to someone else. The readings from *The Collected Prose of Robert Frost* are indicated by the numbers given to the prose writings in that collection. Other reading, usually in the form of short excerpts, may be added to the schedule, and announced in class. Oral reports will be scheduled in week two for the rest of the term.

We have no final exam. But please note that the reading response portfolio and the research paper revision are due during finals week, as indicated on the schedule.