

## **ENG 106 Introduction to Literature: Poetry (College Scholars), Fall 2015, CRN 12072**

M/W 10-11:20am, 107 Esslinger

Professor Thorsson, thorsson@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: M/W 12-1:30pm, 521 PLC

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will study formal properties of poetry by reading groups of poems about important figures in the long struggle for black liberation in the United States. Through careful analysis of poems about people including Frederick Douglass, Emmett Till, Malcolm X, John Coltrane, and Barack Obama, we will learn to identify conventions of sonnets, ballads, and other poetic forms as U.S. authors use them in a variety of specific political, historical, and cultural contexts. As this list of possibilities suggests, we will think about the complex ways poetry describes and imagines both black masculinity and socio-political change. ENG 106 is not a comprehensive introduction to the traditions poetry in English. It is, rather, designed to help you engage with poetry, improving your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in the process. Weekly readings are relatively short but demanding. This class requires substantial writing and vigorous participation.

### **Goals**

The goal of this course is to help you engage with literature, improving your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in the process. To that end, you will:

1. read texts with 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 and other cultural texts;
4. write focused analyses of literature in clear, grammatically correct prose;
5. employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments; and
6. employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation.

### **Required Text**

The readings and handouts on the schedule below are on the Canvas site for our class.

### **Course Requirements and Policies**

Reading, participation, and attendance are mandatory. Bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them. Your participation grade is based on your work in class including discussion, in-class writing, and group work.

Missing class more than twice in the term will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (B becomes B-) for each absence beyond the two permitted. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If you will miss more than two classes due to observance of religious holidays or UO-required activities (including athletics), see me by as soon as possible to set a schedule for making up work you will miss. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to get notes for that day from a classmate, keep up with the readings, and otherwise catch up on any course content you have missed.

We will discuss each assignment in detail as it approaches. Please print and consult the assignment sheet posted on Canvas. Assignments must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due dates listed below and formatted according to current MLA guidelines, including 1 inch margins, single-side printed, stapled, correct citation and quotation, and a works cited page. Consult the *MLA Handbook* if you are uncertain of correct format. I will mark late assignments down by 1/3 of a letter grade (B becomes a B-) for each day they are late.

If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me soon. Please request that the Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu/>) send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

The University Student Conduct Code (see [conduct.uoregon.edu](http://conduct.uoregon.edu)) defines academic misconduct. Students may not commit or attempt to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should acknowledge and document all sources of information. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, see me.

UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, or stalking, for example), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and helping with legal protective orders. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving harassment, bias, or assault, I may have to report the information to my Department Head or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).

In this class, we are studying literature of the United States in its historical and political contexts. This means that we will read about and discuss racial and sexual violence. There are incidents of both in our readings, some of which include explicit language and graphic sexual acts, both consensual and not. If you wish to select another class to take instead of this one, I will be happy to meet with you in office hours to help you select a suitable course.

**Grading:**

Event Response (2 pages)	10%
Presentation (5-10 minutes)	10%
Close Reading #1 (2-3 pages)	15%
Close Reading #2 (3-4 pages)	25%
Close Reading #3 (4-5 pages)	30%
Participation	10%

### **Week One**

- M 9/28 Introduction  
Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building" (1945)  
Syllabus
- W 9/30 William Wordsworth, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803)  
John Greenleaf Whittier, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1833)  
George Clinton Rowe, from "Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1890)  
Meter Handout

### **Week Two**

- M 10/5 Henrietta Cordelia Ray, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1910)  
Ntozake Shange, "tousaint" from *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf* (1975)  
Close Reading Handout
- W 10/7 Selections from *The BreakBeat Poets* (2015):  
Evie Shockley, "duck, duck, redux" and "post-white" (2011)  
jessica Care moore, "mic-check, 1-2." (2015)  
t'ai freedom ford, "how to get over (for kanye)" (2015)  
Tara Betts, "Hip Hop Analogies" (2015) and "Switch" (2006)  
Chinaka Hodge, "Small Poems for Big" (2015)  
Assignment Sheet
- W 10/7 Attend BreakBeat Poets reading – 7pm EMU Ballroom (doors open at 6:30pm)

### **Week Three**

- M 10/12 T. Thomas Fortune, "Nat Turner" (1884)  
Sterling Brown, "Remembering Nat Turner" (1939)  
Robert Hayden, "The Ballad of Nat Turner" (1962)  
Alvin Aubert, "Nat Turner in the Clearing" (1989)
- W 10/14 Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last In the Dooryard Bloom'd" (1865)  
Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" (1891)  
William Cullen Bryant, "The Death of Abraham Lincoln" (1865)  
**Event Response Due**

### **Week Four**

- M 10/19 Frances E. W. Harper, "President Lincoln's Proclamation of Freedom" (1871)  
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Lincoln" (1903)  
Henrietta Cordelia Ray, "Lincoln" (1910)  
Langston Hughes, "Lincoln Monument: Washington" (1927)  
Langston Hughes, "Abe Lincoln" (1960)

W 10/21 Joseph Seamon Cotter, Sr., "Frederick Douglass" (1898)  
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Frederick Douglass"  
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Douglass" (1903)  
Henrietta Cordelia Ray, "In Memoriam (Frederick Douglass)" (1910)  
**Close Reading #1 Due**

Th 10/22 Extra Credit Opportunity: Attend Professor James Peterson's talk "A Song, A Slogan, and A Service: Dispatches from the Movement for Black Lives" at 7:30pm in the EMU Ballroom and write a response.

### **Week Five**

M 10/26 Robert Hayden, "Frederick Douglass" (1947)  
Langston Hughes, "Frederick Douglass: 1817-1895" (1966)  
Evie Shockley, "*from* The Lost Letters of Frederick Douglass" (2011)

W 10/28 Paul Laurence Dunbar, "To Booker T. Washington" (1900)  
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Booker T. Washington" (1903)  
Joseph Seamon Cotter, Sr., "Dr. Booker T. Washington to the National Negro Business League" (1909)  
Langston Hughes, "Ballad of Booker T." (1953)  
**Extra Credit Response to Prof. Peterson's Talk Due**

### **Week Six**

M 11/2 Sterling Brown, "Ma Rainey" (1932)  
Robert Hayden, "Homage to the Empress of the Blues" (1962)  
Michael S. Harper, "Last Affair: Bessie's Blues Song" (1972)

W 11/4 Langston Hughes, "Song for Billie Holiday" (1949)  
Sonia Sanchez, "for our lady" (1969)  
Gayl Jones, "Deep Song" (1979)  
Rita Dove, "Canary" (1989)  
**Close Reading #2 Due**

### **Week Seven**

M 11/9 "Ballad of John Henry"  
Margaret Walker, "Big John Henry" (1942)  
Melvin B. Tolson, "The Birth of John Henry" (1965)

W 11/11 Langston Hughes, "Mississippi" (1955)  
Langston Hughes, "The Money Mississippi Blues" (1955)  
Bob Dylan, "The Death of Emmett Till" (1962)

### **Week Eight**

M 11/16 Gwendolyn Brooks, "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon" (1960)

Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till" (1960)

W 11/18 Audre Lorde, "Afterimages" (1981)  
Wanda Coleman, "Emmett Till" (1986)  
Anthony Walton, "The Lovesong of Emmett Till" (1996)  
**Close Reading #3 Due**

**Week Nine**

M 11/23 Margaret Walker, "For Malcolm X" (1967)  
Larry Neal, "Malcolm X—An Autobiography" (1967)  
Amiri Baraka "A Poem for Black Hearts" (1967)  
Gwendolyn Brooks, "Malcolm X" (1968)  
Sonia Sanchez, "Malcolm" (1970)  
Lucille Clifton, "malcolm" (1972)

W 11/25 Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee), "Don't Cry, Scream" (1969)  
A. B. Spellman, "Did John's Music Kill Him?" (1969)  
Jayne Cortez, "How Long Has Trane Been Gone" (1969)  
Michael S. Harper, "Dear John, Dear Coltrane" (1970)  
Michael S. Harper, "Here Where Coltrane Is" (1977)  
Kamau Brathwaite, "Trane" (1976)

**Week Ten**

M 11/30 Elizabeth Alexander, "Praise Song for the Day" (2009)  
Patricia Smith, "Man, Roll the Window Down!" (2009)  
Wayne Kostenbaum, "Sick Poem" (2010)  
Thomas Sayers Ellis, "First Grade, All Over Again" (2010)  
Evie Shockley, "bop for presidential politics, c. 2008" (2011)  
Evie Shockley, "(mis)takes one to know one" (2011)

W 12/2 **Conclusion**