

ENG 106: Introduction to Poetry

Fall 2020 • Czander Tan • czandert@uoregon.edu • PLC 219 • Office Hours: M 2-5pm ([link](#))

Class Time: TR 2:15 - 3:45pm — we will be meeting synchronously via Zoom

<https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/96674918730>

Course Description

Poetry is about what language is and what language does: it is the language of the body: the language of the sleeping mind.

Poetry is sometimes beautiful and poetry is sometimes ugly. Poetry is sometimes confusing and poetry is sometimes dancing. Poetry is sometimes.

Poetry can inflict joy and poetry can fill us with pain. Poetry can move and poetry can stop. Poetry can.

In this way, understanding the process of poetry is understanding the process of action, or, more specifically, *emotion* (e-motion: “movement out of/from”). This course is only an introduction to that understanding.

Although our discussions will consider relevant points from the range of histories on which poetic tradition is based, we will focus on the works of four American poets to consider the question “What is American?” — Walt Whitman, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, and Danez Smith.

Learning Outcomes

1. Learn how to read poetry.
2. Learn how to talk about poetry, noting that poetic discussion is based on textual evidence.
3. Articulate in writing the poetic process of a given poem.

Required Texts & Course Materials

All readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas, under Files.

Course Work

Discussion Posts

Each week, you will respond to a discussion prompt on Canvas. These will usually be due the night before Tuesday class sessions.

Journals

There will be four journal assignments (due on the Friday of weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8), in which you will close-read a couple of lines, chosen by me, from that week's poet. These journals should be around 2 paragraphs (200-300 words) each. In the first paragraph, focus only on the lines given. In the second paragraph, consider how those lines interact with the rest of the poem.

Close Reading Essays

There will be four close reading practicums (within a two-hour span during weeks 3, 5, 7, and 9). You will be presented with a poem from that week's poet. You will then close-read and write on that poem, replicating the close-reading process we do in class. These writings should be at least 500-700 words each; they do not have to follow a specific structure, but I want to see how you are thinking through a poem, how you are following what the speaker is attempting to grasp.

Term Paper

The course includes a term paper (3-4 pages), due at the end of week 10. This essay should answer the question "What is American?", making a clear argument supported by textual evidence from *no more than one poet* we discussed during the term.

Extra Credit

If you would like some extra credit, write and submit a poem that attempts to imitate a poet we have read in class. You can interpret their form and style however you want, but the imitation should be traceable. This is ultimately the best way for you to demonstrate your understanding of poetry.

Engagement

There are different ways to engage in the class, but here are ones that are most beneficial given our circumstances: 1) participating in live class discussions, 2) contributing productive discussions on Canvas posts (beyond what is required), 3) coming to virtual office hours, or 4) discussing your thoughts on the texts with me over email.

Grade Weights

<u>Value</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
20%	Discussion Posts
20 %	Journals
30 %	Close Reading Essays
20 %	Term Paper
10 %	Engagement
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100%	Course Total

Letter Grades:

- A (93-98) = Legit | A- (90-92) = Well Done •
- B+ (87-89) = Very Good | B (84-86) = Good | B- (80-83) = Pretty Good •
- C+(77-79) = Not Bad | C (74-76) = Fair | C- (70-73) = Passing •
- D+ (67-69) = So Close | D (64-66) = Meh | D- (60-63) = Sorry •
- F (≤ 59) = Did Not Meet Requirements •

Course Calendar

Week 1: What is Poetry?

- Day 1 (09/29): Course introduction; syllabus discussion
 “Of Modern Poetry” by Wallace Stevens
- Day 2 (10/01): What is American?
 “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes
 “Manhattan is a Lenape Word” by Natalie Diaz
 “Mnemonic” by Li-young Lee

Week 2: Walt Whitman

- Day 3 (10/06): *Song of Myself (1-14)*
- Day 4 (10/08): *Song of Myself (15-26)*
- Journal 1 due Friday (10/09)**

Week 3: Walt Whitman

- Day 5 (10/13): *Song of Myself (27-41)*
- Day 6 (10/15): *Song of Myself (42-52)*
- Close Reading Essay 1 due Friday (10/16)**

Week 4: Gwendolyn Brooks

- Day 7 (10/20): from *The Bean Eaters*
- Day 8 (10/22): from *Notes from the Childhood and the Girlhood*
- Journal 2 due Friday (10/23)**

Week 5: Gwendolyn Brooks

- Day 9 (10/27): *The Anniad*
- Day 10 (10/29): from *The Womanhood*
- Close Reading Essay 2 due Friday (10/30)**

Week 6: Audre Lorde

- Day 11 (11/03): from *The Black Unicorn*
- Day 12 (11/05): from *The Black Unicorn*
- Journal 3 due Friday (11/06)**

Week 7: Audre Lorde

- Day 13 (11/10): from *The Black Unicorn*

Day 14 (11/12): from *The Black Unicorn*

Close Reading Essay 3 due Friday (11/13)

Week 8: Danez Smith

Day 15 (11/17): from *Don't Call Us Dead*

Day 16 (11/19): from *Don't Call Us Dead*

Journal 4 due Friday (11/20)

Week 9: Danez Smith

Day 17 (11/24): from *Don't Call Us Dead*

Close Reading Essay 4 due Wednesday (11/25)

Day 18 (11/26): — THANKSGIVING BREAK —

Week 10: Poetry Beyond Poetry

Day 19 (12/01): TBD

Day 20 (12/03): TBD

Term Paper due on Canvas by midnight (12/04)

Course Policies

Technical Requirements, Guidance, and Best Practices

The primary platforms that we will be using for this online course are Canvas and Zoom. If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the [Canvas support page](#). Canvas and Technology Support also is available by phone or live chat: Monday–Sunday | 6 a.m.–12 a.m.

541-346-4357 | livehelp.uoregon.edu

Specific guidelines for best practices using Canvas Discussion:

1. Use subject lines that clearly communicate the content of your post.
2. Write clearly and concisely and be aware that humor or sarcasm often doesn't always translate in an online environment.
3. Be supportive and considerate when replying to others' posts. This means avoiding inappropriate language, disagreeing with respect, and providing a clear rationale or evidence to support your different view.
4. Keep focused on the topic and cite readings and other class materials to support your points.
5. Proofread your submissions, and try to use correct spelling and grammar and. After submitting, use the edit feature to make corrections and resubmit (don't create a new or duplicate post that corrects your error).
6. Contribute and interact often!

Specific guidelines for best practices using Zoom:

Zoom is an accessible online platform for video and audio conferencing. If you do not already have the Zoom app on your device, you will be prompted to download it the first time you click on the URL inviting you to the meeting. We recommend downloading the Zoom app now at <https://service.uoregon.edu/TDClient/2030/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=101628>

1. Please test your video and audio prior to joining a live class session. You can learn more about testing your audio and video by visiting the Zoom Help Center at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>
2. Please make the same effort to join the meeting on time that you would make to arrive on time for class. It can be distracting to have participants join late. We will try to schedule things so that people can join the meeting up to ten minutes prior to the officially scheduled start of discussion.
3. Try to find a quiet setting without lots of noise or background activity. Please do not eat or

multitask during the meeting; instead, treat our time online as if it were a regular class session, and conduct yourself accordingly.

4. If the Zoom meeting is set up to include audio options for you, please mute your audio when you are not actively contributing. When contributing, avoid making other noises such as typing or eating or having side conversations with others that might be present with you. (You can conveniently unmute while speaking simply by pressing the spacebar of your keyboard.)
5. When you wish to speak, use a microphone or speak closely to your computer microphone so that others can hear you. If you have video on, try to look at your camera, not the screen, when you are contributing.
6. While others are contributing, you can chat by text to pose questions or offer insights “on the side.”
7. Note that some Zoom meetings may feature a professor giving answers to questions you type “on the side” (in Zoom chat), but may not permit student audio (this may help keep things orderly).
8. For help and troubleshooting with Zoom, visit the Zoom Help Center at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

To learn more about options for Internet accessibility, visit Information Services’ [web page on going remote](#).

Academic Integrity

In accord with English Department policy, academic dishonesty (plagiarism or cheating) will minimally result in an automatic failing grade for this course. In addition, all incidents of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by the University.

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words or ideas without due acknowledgment. It may be intentional or unintentional. To make sure you have avoided plagiarism in your work, you should:

- Accurately quote the original author’s words if you are quoting.
- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks.
- Follow the quotation with an in-text citation.
- Introduce quotations with a phrase that includes the author’s name (Baxter argues that...)
- If you are paraphrasing someone else’s ideas or words rather than quoting, you must still cite the source with in-text citation, footnote, or a phrase that includes the author’s name.
- Provide a list of references with full citation information at the end of the paper.

The bottom line is that all work submitted in this course must be your own, and written

exclusively for this course. The use of all external sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented, and you are not allowed to cut and paste from Internet sites into your paper. (N.B. Most internet essays aimed at students are not written at the college level. Stealing from this work, even in the case that you are not caught, often results in a lower grade.)

For further guidance, see the UO library website (under “How-To Guides” on the library homepage) for more on citation practices. If you remain uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism, definitions are available in the “Student Conduct Code” section of the Student Life website (<http://studentlife.uoregon.edu>). Additional information is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism. You are also welcome to contact any of us if you have any questions about these definitions.

Finally, if you are having trouble writing a paper or understanding what we are looking for, please contact one of us. We do not expect that you already know how to do what we are teaching you. Extra help is always available. There’s nothing wrong with getting something wrong; often it takes mistakes to learn, and this is not something to panic about. However, if you take ideas from elsewhere and pass them off as your own, you learn nothing—so the next paper will therefore be no easier—and risk incurring significant academic penalties.

Course Content Advisory

You should be aware that the texts we will read this term deal with adult themes and subject matter, and will often contain beliefs and opinions that are very different from our own. The ability to encounter unfamiliar and even disturbing ideas with an attitude of critical distance is fundamental to university-level thinking. We do not expect you to like everything you read (indeed, we hope for a more complicated response than that). But you must be willing to approach these texts with an open mind, even if you ultimately decide that you do not agree with or share the values they sometimes express. We believe that the cultivation of such open-mindedness is good practice not merely for scholars of literature and media; it can also help prepare students to live as tolerant, ethically-minded members of a diverse and inclusive society.

Accommodations

Please reach out to me at any point in the term if you feel that your current circumstances require adjustments of any kind to help you succeed in the class. While there are some accommodations I cannot make, there are plenty of other ways I might be able to help if you feel comfortable disclosing limited personal information to me.

Incompletes

Please see me if circumstances arise that make it difficult for you to complete the course. Approval

of incompletes will be granted only in cases when some minor but essential aspect of the course cannot be completed by students through unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

Attendance

Attendance is expected. We only meet a limited number of times per term. Please let me know in advance if you have a pressing need for missing class – what you miss is your responsibility to make up.

Late Work

Turn in your work on time. Unless previously arranged, late work will result in a zero for the assignment.

Communication

If you have a question, first refer to this syllabus. If the syllabus can't answer your question, feel free to email me or drop in during virtual office hours.