Course Description

Tracy K. Smith, one of the authors we will read in this course, argues that “poems teach us to read them,” and suggests that poems require things of us as readers that other mediums may not. Additionally, nayyirah waheed writes

i walk into
a poem
and walk out someone else

--writing

Here she suggests that poems have the ability to change us, in the mere act of writing them. This course will ask questions about what poems do, how they mean, and what power they contain. This power, we will discover, has an intimate connection to concepts of beauty and value in poetic texts: what is “beauty” and how is poetry “beautiful” and “valuable?” We will imagine and define these concepts together, using mechanisms of meaning-making that poems especially, and sometimes singularly, teach us to use.

ENG 106 is an introduction to poetry, one of the major genres in literary studies. It is not a comprehensive introduction to the traditions of English and American poetry, but is, rather, a series of intensive exercises designed to equip you with the analytical tools needed to read, discuss, and write about poetry.

Required Texts

We may read poems with explicit and sometimes difficult or provocative themes. If you have any concerns about this, regardless of their nature, please see me before the end of Week 1.

- Your campus email (uoregon.edu account) and your Canvas email/announcements
- Other texts to be posted to our Canvas site; you will be required to print these, read them, and bring them to class on the day the reading is due. You are responsible for materials, announcements, etc. posted to Canvas throughout the term. Check our Canvas site regularly.
**Engaged Participation is expected.** Participation includes your visiting office hours, participation in class discussions, attendance, and preparedness for class. A lack of class participation may result in a deduction of the overall course grade by up to 10%.

---

**English Department Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

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 thoughtful, persuasive arguments.
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgement and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

**Required Course Work**

**Assigned Readings**

Reading will be assigned for each class session. You should come prepared to engage with the readings in class discussions. This means you should bring a printed version of the assigned reading (print out PDFs or bring your book) to class, having critically read it. Please refer to the forthcoming handout on “slow reading” for my expectations regarding “critical reading.”

**NB:** Not all, but some, readings in this class will be rather short. You will be tempted to speed through them or not read them at all, thinking you can “catch up” right before class or during class. Reading poetry, however, is to be done slowly and carefully! Don’t learn this the hard way (papers/exams based on cursory readings of poems will not pass).

**Midterm Exam**
The midterm exam (2 parts) will require you practice your skills in poetic analysis (part 1: take-home exam) and your mastery of the specialized language we use as part of that analysis (part 2: Poetry Kit exercise). More details will be provided in class.

Close Reading Exercise

(2 pages) Assignment details will be provided in class. This is an assignment that is to be incorporated into your final paper. Strong effort here will boost your chances of doing well on the Final Essay.

Recitation

To complete this assignment, you will be required to read a poem of your choice from a list I will circulate early in the course. You will read it aloud to the class and submit a short (!) written analysis. Sign-ups for poems and time-slots will in class. More details will be provided on the assignment sheet.

Final Essay and Reflection

More details about the final essay (4-ish pages) will be given in class. The reflection (1 page) will be a more personalized account of the insights you have developed over the course of the term, and will work to answer some of the broad questions posed in the course description. More details about these assignments will be given in class.

Participation

This class works best when you engage with the readings, thoughtfully respond to themes and questions raised in class, and share your ideas verbally and/or in writing. Therefore, your active participation in class is essential. You will have a reading assignment due for almost each class session. You need to be prepared for class activities, which may include discussions, in-class writing, and small group work. Coming to class unprepared will be a detriment to your learning as well as your classmates’ and may affect your final grade by up to 10% at my discretion.

Course Policies

Access
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Discrimination and Violence Policy

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. Please know that I am willing and available to help, should you need assistance regarding any kind of discrimination or violence. The University Health Center
and University Counseling and Testing Center also provide assistance to and have the ability to work confidentially with students.

**Academic Honesty**
All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly cited. Please refer to the Student Conduct Code on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. In cases where academic misconduct has been clearly established, you will receive an F for the final course grade. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. **PLAGAIRMIS IS NOT WORTH THE RISK.**

**Attendance is required.** Note that I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Please see me if you feel you have an extenuating circumstance. **Excessive tardiness will count as an absence. More than three absences will cause your final course grade to drop an entire letter grade.**

**Late Work**
Because I do not assign daily written work, and all of your assignments are “major,” I will not accept late work. In the case of extenuating circumstances, please contact me at least **three days in advance** to make arrangements.

**Cell Phone Use**
Your phone’s ringer must be turned off before the start of class. You may not text, answer, or make calls in class. Any use of cell phone during class time will result in an automatic absence for the day.

**Lost or Missing Work**
If assignments go lost or missing, you are responsible for providing another copy to turn in. I advise that you save all of your work (drafts and revisions) to avoid issues with lost work. Be sure your assignments have been successfully submitted to Canvas by the deadline.

**Caveat Emptor**

I will accept work in PDF or Word formats; documents submitted in any other format, including “Pages” will not be accepted.

I do not write recommendations for students unless I have known them for more than one full term.

**Your continued enrollment in this course signifies your acceptance of the terms of this syllabus.**
**Tentative Schedule of Assignments**

Assignments listed on each day are due on that day by 2:00 pm unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction: Beauty and Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TH:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Syllabus Confirmation Quiz (via Canvas)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading: “Do Not Expect,” Dana Gioia; Hildebrand, from Aesthetics Chapter 10 (pp. 215-226)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>“The Poetic” [Form and Vocabulary]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: Reading: “Sonnet 29,” Shakespeare; “Sonnet 20” and “Sonnet 22,” Sir Philip Sidney; Hildebrand, from Aesthetics Chapter 10 (pp. 226-231); Selection from The Frontiers of Poetry, Jacques Maritain (pp. 110-116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TH:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listen to Podcast: “The Internal Landscape of Beauty” by Krista Tippett and John O’Donohue in On Being (link is posted on Canvas).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>[Form and Vocabulary]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TH: Reading: Odyssey Book XII, Homer and Inferno Canto I, Dante Alighieri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Aesthetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: Reading: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight Fit I, Anonymous; “Introduction” from Can Poetry Matter, Dana Gioia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TH:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• View the three j.peg files of “kitsch poems” in the Readings folder for this week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Week 5**

**Midterm Exam**

**T: DUE: Midterm Exam Part I:** Take this part of the exam via Canvas

**IN CLASS: Midterm Exam Part II:** Poetry Kit Exercise

**TH:** Reading: “Sonnet 18,” William Shakespeare; “Sonnet 43,” Elizabeth Barrett Browning; “Sonnet 17,” Pablo Neruda

---

**Week 6**

**T:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 3-12

**TH:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 13-24

---

**Week 7**

**Close Reading Exercise**

**T:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 27-34

**TH:** Close Reading Exercise Due via Canvas by 2:00 pm.

---

**Week 8**

**T:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 37-46

**TH:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 47-53

---

**Week 9**

**T:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 57-64

**TH:** Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Holiday

---

**Week 10**

**T:** Reading: *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith: pp. 65-70

**TH:** Reading: TBD

---

**Finals Week**

**Final Paper and Reflection Due on Canvas:** Tuesday December 5th by Noon.

**NB:** We will not meet in person during Finals Week. I will not have regular office hours.