

English 343: American Poetry

Instructor Contact Information

Professor Julia Daniel
Rm. 329, Colson Hall
Office Hours: Monday 2-4 and by appointment
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Course Location and Schedule

Time: 12:30-1:20
Location: Woodburn G10

Course Description

In this course, we will read a wide variety of poetry in an attempt to answer the question “What makes a poem distinctively *American*?” Is it a matter of language and style? Or should we consider the content of a piece? Perhaps an interplay between the two? Is the fact that an American wrote the poem enough or should we not take authorship into consideration? To answer these questions, we will investigate a diverse selection of American poetry from the 19th and 20th centuries as we practice the skill of close reading. We will also engage with critics as our partners in this investigation and will work to develop helpful strategies for your own scholarly writing and revision process as you articulate your contributions to this literary discussion.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- 1.) Define what constitutes an American poetics
- 2.) Perform close readings of poetry
- 3.) Identify how the poetry comments on cultural assumptions about American identity prevalent in its historical and social context
- 4.) Use correct poetic and literary terms in discussion and written assignments
- 5.) Articulate your interpretations in fluid, professional prose
- 6.) Engage with literary critics in discussion and written assignments

Required Text

The Columbia Anthology of American Poetry. Ed. Jay Parini. Columbia UP, 1995.
Additional materials on eCampus

Recommended Text

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. Norton, 2009.

Overview of Coursework

Attendance and Participation

Thoughtful, lively, and engaged conversation is at the heart of this class. You will receive no credit for attendance; I expect more from you than occupying a space in the classroom. Instead, you will receive a participation point for every day you contribute to discussion. All the members of this community benefit from your insights and vice versa, so we rely on one another to come prepared for conversation. I recommend walking through the door with reflections and questions already in hand.

When you contribute to discussion, I will take your name card and you will receive a point for the day. If your name card is still on your desk when you leave, you earned no points for the day. **I forgive 2 zeros for the semester.** These cover absences and/or days you do not contribute. Use them wisely. If you miss a day for an approved University function, it is your responsibility to schedule a meeting with me to discuss the day's readings to earn your point. You must do so within a week of your absence in order to receive credit.

Quizzes

There will be several unannounced quizzes during the semester that will cover the reading for the day or material we've covered before. Expect one every day. Quizzes are open book, open note unless otherwise stated. These quizzes are designed to reward engaged reading and active note-taking. I will drop your two lowest quiz scores for the semester.

Oral Presentation

You will give a 4-5 minute oral presentation of a scholarly article or book chapter that addresses some aspect of the poems we have studied to date. This presentation must include 1.) a concise summary of the article and 2.) your critique of the scholar's reading. The presentation must include a 2-to-3 slide PowerPoint or Prezi (excluding the title slide) and a printed outline that you will hand to me on the day of the presentation. I am happy to help you find an interesting piece of criticism. Stop by my office!

Close Reading

In this 5 page paper, you will select one poem and answer the question: "In what ways can we say this piece is 'American'?" (None is a perfectly fine answer, by the way!) To answer the prompt, you will perform a detailed close reading of that poem (or section of a longer poem) to provide evidence for your claims. The length of the paper is designed for you to get as in-depth as possible with the poet's craft.

Revisions

Close Reading: You may revise your close reading paper as many times as you want before the last day of class for up to 30 points above your initial grade. I highly recommend that you meet with me to discuss revision strategies. All revisions must include a one-page revision reflection sheet (available via eCampus). If you have persistent grammatical or syntactical issues, I may include mandatory exercises to address these issues as part of your revision process.

Oral Presentation: You may submit a five-page paper version of your oral presentation for up to 20 points above your original grade any time before the last day of class.

Final Paper

You will develop your own argument for your 10-page final paper. Most students perform a comparative analysis of two poets, but the project is designed to be open ended so that you have the experience of generating your own topic. I will gladly assist you in developing your thoughts for this paper. All papers must integrate at least two and not more than three critical works.

There are two preparatory writing prompts to help you hone your ideas:

Annotated Bibliography. You will submit a two-page annotated bibliography with two critical sources that you plan on incorporating in your final paper. (You may of course change your mind during the writing process and use different sources in the final draft.) In this annotated bibliography, you will concisely summarize the scholar's argument and then explain how you will incorporate it into your own work (agree, disagree, or modify).

Proposal. In this one-page proposal, you will provide me with a working thesis statement and a brief outline of your general argument for the paper and how you plan on incorporating your sources.

While there are no revisions available for the final paper or related exercises, you may meet with me to discuss any draft materials at any time. In fact, I heartily encourage you to do so! N.B. I will only discuss drafts in person. Because my schedule gets tight, you should plan on making an appointment well ahead of time, at the very least 42 hours before the projects are due.

Grade Distribution

Oral Presentation: 15% Close Reading: 15% Annotated Bib: 10% Proposal: 5% Final Paper: 25%
Participation: 15% Quizzes: 15%

Grade Scale

0%	60%	60%	66%	70%	73%	76%	80%	83%	86%	90%	94%	97%
F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+

Classroom Policies

Paper Submissions and Formatting

Papers must be uploaded to eCampus by the time indicated on the prompt. **I do not accept late work. Late work receives a ZERO. Computer difficulties are not an excuse for late work.** I therefore highly recommend that you upload your projects well before the time the exam is due in case of technical difficulties.

Papers that do not meet the page limit cannot receive better than a C+. Format your paper as follows: 12 pt. Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, uploaded to eCampus as .doc or .docx. Page limits expressed in a range (ex: 5-6) mean that you must *minimally* write a full five pages. If you are a line short, you will

have failed to make the page limit and will not receive better than a C+. Keep an eye on the details and ask me if you have any questions.

Everyone **receives two Panic Cards** for the semester. A Panic Card entitles you to an extra 24 hours to submit your work, no questions asked. However, if you do not use a Panic Card, I will add a full percentage point to your overall grade at the end of the semester as a reward for your timely work. Weigh this in your decision-making process.

Academic Integrity

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

eCampus

eCampus will serve as my primary way of communicating with you throughout the semester. I will provide supplemental readings, links, and videos on this site, and any changes to the schedule can be found in the Announcements section. If you miss a class, PowerPoints from lecture segments can also be found there. It is your responsibility to check eCampus every day.

Accountability Partners

On the first day of class, you will be assigned an accountability partner. Make sure you have a reliable way of contacting your A. P. (Email is usually the best.) If you have a question about the syllabus or a project, or if you miss a day of class and want to get caught up, the first person you will contact is your A.P. Most questions can be solved this way. Do not contact me until you've spoken with your A.P. first.

Electronics

All electronic devices must be turned off at the beginning of class and remain so during our time together. Using a device during class will erase your participation point for the day. On peer editing days, you are welcome to bring a laptop or tablet. I will let you know ahead of time if a class period will be electronics friendly.

Inclusivity

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-

6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Office Hours

Please come and see me during my office hours (listed above). If these times are inconvenient, please contact me and I will try to accommodate your schedule.

Email

I can be easily reached via email. I check my email at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. If we have an exam, I will also add hours on the weekend and will let you know about these ahead of time.

Please remember that emails are both letters and professional communications. I do not reply to improperly formatted emails. Craft your prose accordingly. I will be using your Mix accounts. It is your responsibility to check your email daily.

Emergencies

Emergencies can arise during the semester. Your wellness and safety is my top priority. I am happy to help you access WVU resources as needed. In terms of coursework, **if you would like me to consider an extension due to an extreme emergency (serious illness, etc.), you must submit the necessary paperwork through the Office of Student Life.** You can begin the process by contacting Dean Mosby at kim.mosby@mail.wvu.edu. We will then meet and create a reasonable completion schedule together.

Please note that the withdrawal date for the course is Oct. 24th to drop selectively, December 8th to withdraw from all classes.

Work Schedule

I reserve the right to amend this schedule and syllabus. If I do so, I will inform you of it ahead of time. Lists of specific readings are available on eCampus. When class discussions go well, as I anticipate they will, we often get behind, so please keep your eye on the readings list as it will most likely evolve during the semester. I will notify you in class and via eCampus of these alterations.

M 8.18 Introductions, America (?!)

W 8.20 How to Read a Poem Like a Poem

Read: "How to Read a Poem" handout via eCampus

Take: Poetic terms quiz via eCampus. Check answers on key prior to class.

F 8.22 Sigourni: Introduction; Elegy, Landscape, and the Noble Savage

Read "Indian Names"

M 8.25 Sigourni: Faith and Critique

W 8.27 Thoreau: Introduction, Transcendentalism

Read “Within the Circuit of This Plodding Life”

F 8.29 Thoreau: Sound and Light

M 9.1 NO CLASS

W 9.3 Thoreau: Science and Experience

Read “Tall Ambrosia”

F 9.5 Whitman: Introduction, I am America

Read “One’s-Self I Sing,” two editions (one in your text, the other is on eCampus)

M 9.8 Whitman: Nature, City, Crowd, and Poet

Read “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”

W 9.10 How to Write About a Poem

Read: Sample Student writing and rubric (eCampus)

F 9.12 Whitman: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry groups 1-3

M 9.15 Whitman: CBF groups 4-6

W 9.17 Whitman: CBF groups 7-9

F 9.19 Peer Editing

Peer Editing sheets due via eCampus by 6 p.m.

M 9.22 Dickinson: Introduction, Elegaic Landscapes

Read: There is a certain slant of light

PAPER DUE: 6 p.m. via eCampus

W 9.24 Dickinson: Native Elements

Read: There came a wind like a bugle

F 9.26 Dickinson: Gender and Landscape

Read: I Started Early

M 9.28 Dickinson articles

Read: Article selections available via eCampus

W 10.1 They Say/I Say Model, Frost Intro

F 10.3 Frost: Manifest Destiny Revisited

Read “The Gift Outright”

M 10.6 Frost: Speech and Simplicity

Read “The Oven Bird”

W 10.8 Frost: Building and Breaking Community

Read: “Mending Wall”

F 10.10 Presentation Tips and Tricks; PowerPoint Dos and Don'ts

Read: Sample student PowerPoints on eCampus

M 10.13 NO CLASS

W 10.15 Presentations A

F 10.17 Presentations B

M 10.20 Presentations C

W 10.22 WCW: Introduction, The American Pastoral

Read: Pastoral

F 10.24 WCW: The American Reverdie

Read: Spring and All

M 10.27 WCW: Landscape and Language

Read: To Elsie

W 10.29 WCW cont., Hughes Intro

F 10.31 Hughes: Rebutting or Reclaiming Whitman

Read: The Negro Speaks of Rivers

M 11.3 Hughes cont., Intro to final project

W 11.5 Hughes: American Sounds

Read: The Weary Blues

F 11.7 Project brainstorming lab

M 11.10 Hughes: "That's American"

Read: Theme for English B

W 11.12 Strategies for Comparative Analysis; Proposal Workshop

F 11.14 Research Techniques and Annotated Bibs

Read: Sample of student an. Bib on eCampus

M 11.17 In-Class Proposal Peer Editing

Tue- Wed 11.18-19 Meetings

AN BIB and PROPSAL DUE TUESDAY 11.18 by 10 a.m. via eCampus

M 11.24 NO CLASS

W 11.26 NO CLASS

F 11.28 NO CLASS

M 12.1 Thesis Statement Workshop

W 12.3 Peer Editing Circles

F 12.5 Finishing School.

FINAL PAPER DUE by 6 p.m.

M 12.8 What is America to Me? Final Reflections

Stay warm! Safe travels! Keep reading poetry!