

English 387

Mary Ann Samyn, ENGL 387, Fall 2006, Topics in Women's Literature: Emily Dickinson

Mary Ann Samyn

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English 387: Topics in Women's Literature: Emily Dickinson

Fall 2006

Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:30-3:45 p.m.

415 Armstrong

Texts

- The Poems of Emily Dickinson ed. RW Franklin
- Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Judith Farr
- Emily Dickinson: Selected Letters ed. Thomas Johnson
- My Emily Dickinson by Susan Howe (selections, provided by the instructor)
- The Master Letters by Lucie Brock-Broido

Course Description

This course focuses on one of the greatest poets of all time: Emily Dickinson. No doubt you've encountered Dickinson's work before and have some ideas about who she was and how she wrote. We'll dispel some of those myths as we seek a deeper understanding of her sometimes challenging, frequently exhilarating work.

Course Requirements

Much reading, much writing, daily participation, sustained engagement. We'll approach Dickinson's work from several angles: by reading the poems themselves (of course! first and foremost, always!), by reading her letters, by seeing what scholars of all persuasions have had to say, by exploring the various creative responses Dickinson has inspired. Similarly, the assignments will ask you to deal with the poems in each of these ways: via explication, via scholarship, via critical analysis on an exam, via creative response.

Grading

The major assignments are as follows:

- Explication (100 points): This assignment asks you to do a close reading of one of Dickinson's poems that we did not talk about in class.
- Scholarly essay (100 points): This assignment springboards off the various scholarly essays we'll read from *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*. You'll write about one or more poems not already dealt with by using the critical approach of one of the essays.
- Exam (100 points): The exam will require that you use poetic terminology correctly and write about Dickinson's work without the aid of classroom discussion/feedback.
- Creative response (100 points): This assignment invites you to approach Dickinson's work as a fellow writer might.

During the semester you will receive more specific information about grading rubrics for each assignment.

Weekly and in-class writing assignments (approx. 100 points): Throughout the semester you can expect various smaller writing assignments that are designed to get you ready for class discussion.

Participation/readiness/professionalism (50 points): I expect that you'll be ready for class, willing to participate, open to new ideas and the opinions of others, and diligent in your pursuit of excellence.

Attendance

I take attendance seriously, don't you? Attendance means being in class, on time, with all homework (reading and writing assignments) completed, and being ready to participate. Anything less will be counted as an absence. You're allowed (but not entitled!) to three absences. Beyond that, your final grade will go down 1/3 for each absence. If you are absent more than six times, you will fail the course no matter how "well" you're doing. Excessive tardiness (as defined by me) and lack of participation (again, as defined by me) will also result in a lowered final grade. If you are absent for some unavoidable reason, it's your responsibility to contact me and/or a classmate and keep up with all assignments. Note: I do not accept late work.

Social Justice

WVU is committed to social justice, as am I. That means you can expect a learning environment that is constructive, based on mutual respect and non-discrimination. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, as you no doubt know, is passing off someone else's work as your own. Please don't do this; it will only complicate my life and quite possibly change the trajectory of yours in very serious ways.

Schedule

(Note: schedules can and do change. It is your responsibility to contact me when you are absent and to turn in all work on time. I do not accept late work.)

Week 1: August 22, 24 Course introduction. Reading Dickinson. Reading poetry. For Thursday: Compose three lists: (1) your three favorite poems; (2) three strategies/techniques ED tends to use; (3) three words that recur in her poems.

Week 2: August 29, 31 Reading Dickinson. Her letters.

Week 3: September 6, 8 Writing explications.

Week 4: September 13, 15 Explication draft due Tuesday. Explication due Thursday.

Week 5: September 20, 22 Scholarly approaches: Sandra Gilbert, "The Wayward Nun beneath the Hill: Emily Dickinson and the Mysteries of Womanhood" and Richard Wilbur, "'Sumptuous Destitution'"

Week 6: September 27, 29 Scholarly approaches: Jane Donahue Eberwein, "Emily Dickinson and the Calvinist Sacramental Tradition" and Suzanne Juhasz, "'The Landscape of the Spirit'"

Week 7: October 3, 5 Scholarly approaches: David Porter, "Strangely Abstracted Images" and Christanne Miller, "Dickinson's Experimental Grammar: Nouns and Verbs"

Week 8: October 10, 12 Scholarly approaches: Sharon Cameron, "Amplified Contexts: Emily Dickinson and the Fascicles" and Jerome McGann, "Emily Dickinson's Visible Language"

Week 9: October 17, 19 Working as a scholar

Week 10: October 24, 26 Scholarly essay draft due Tuesday. Scholarly essay due Thursday.
Creative Scholarship: Susan Howe, My Emily Dickinson

Week 11: Oct. 31, Nov. 2 Creative Scholarship: Susan Howe, My Emily Dickinson, cont'd. Review for Exam.

Week 12: November 7, 9 No class Tuesday: Election Day. Exam on Thursday.

Week 13: November 14, 16 Creative responses to ED: Lucie Brock-Broido, The Master Letters, Irene McKinney, and others...

Week 14: November 28, 30 Responding creatively.

Week 15: December 5, 7 Creative response draft due Tuesday. Creative response due Thursday and final discussion and appreciation

Questions?

Email me: MaryAnn.Samyn@mail.wvu.edu