

ENGL 131: Poetry and Drama

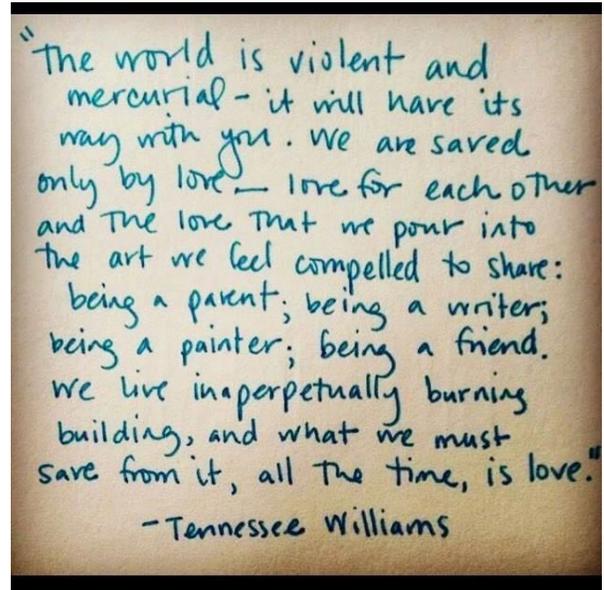
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Fall 2016



Never be afraid to sit awhile and think.

Lorraine Hansberry, *Raisin in the Sun*



Course Description

In this introductory English course, we will study two literary genres rooted in oral expression: poetry and drama. We will study poetic forms (the sonnet, villanelle, and free or open verse) as well as theatrical forms (workers' theatre, social realism, and documentary theatre). The plays and poems will encourage us to grapple with matters of war, memory, love, loss, injustice, and spirituality. Each week, you will strengthen your ability to analyze difficult literary works.

This is a highly interactive class in which you will be expected to contribute to discussion on a regular basis. You will also have the opportunity to compose an original poem and to collaborate on in-class performances.

Required Texts

Irwin Shaw, *Bury the Dead*

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen, *The Exonerated*

The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms, eds. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland

Course Goals

- To create a supportive intellectual community of readers
- To become stronger analytical and creative thinkers
- To slow down and read carefully

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester you should be able to

- demonstrate an understanding of the formal elements of poetry and drama
- ask perceptive questions of literary texts and one another
- contribute with confidence to class discussion
- work creatively and productively with others

English Major Program Goals

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Not all English courses will address all three goals, but the major curriculum as a whole provides opportunities to meet these goals.

Requirements

Four Reader Reflections	20 points
Participation	20 points
Poem and Performance	10 points
Midterm Exam	25 points
Take-Home Final Exam	25 points

Four Reader Reflections

You will write four 500-word reflections to our readings. The syllabus indicates deadlines by which you must have turned in each reflection. Try to focus your writing on a single scene, idea, quotation, or image. It often helps to start with a question you have about the play. See the sample under “Course Information.”

In each reflection, be sure to do the following:

- 1) Include at least **three direct quotations** from the poem or play and provide page numbers in parenthesis after the quote.
- 2) Compose idea-driven and coherent paragraphs. In each paragraph, offer a topic sentence, develop a single important idea or observation, and transition into the next paragraph or, in the final paragraph, conclude your reflection.

****Please read and incorporate these suggestions for writing good paragraphs.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Paragraphing.html>

- 3) Upload your reflections on ECampus under “Discussions” in the appropriate folder by the due date.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Pose a genuine question about the play or poem—a question you cannot answer easily
- ✓ Analyze a quotation closely and situate it within the overall meaning of the literary work
- ✓ Explore a visual image

- ✓ Define a key word or phrase
- ✓ Imagine how you would stage a scene or how you would cast certain roles
- ✓ Reflect on the contemporary relevance of the literary work
- ✓ For ONE of your reflections, you can submit a creative response. See Sample under “Course Information”

Writing Studio

Need help with your writing? The Writing Studio strives to help all members of the university community learn more about effective communication practices. Professional and friendly consultants work one-to-one on all stages of the writing (or speaking) process, from note-taking and pre-writing to revision strategies, proofreading techniques, and presentation practice. Because the Writing Studio works to teach students ways to improve their own work, consultants will not proofread, edit content, or discuss grades. It is helpful to bring your assignment prompt with you on your visit. To make an appointment, call 304.293.5788 or visit the Writing Studio website (<http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio>).

Participation and Attendance

Participation

If this course were only about reading poems and plays, we could all do that by ourselves. If it were only about listening to what one person has to say about literature, we could all find a great lecture online. But English courses are about more than the act of reading and the acquisition of information. They are also about learning how to think and express yourself.

This class will strengthen your ability *to think*—to question, analyze, reflect, dispute, and reason. Dialogue is essential to this process. There will be many ways to participate: you can ask questions, read literary works aloud, work in small groups, share your written reflections, and discuss ideas with the class. I know well the pressure, uncertainty, and boredom that can lead to silence in the classroom. I will do my best to create an atmosphere that makes participation enjoyable or at least not painful.

Always be prepared for class. If you do not have the literary work under discussion, you are not prepared!

In addition to the obvious ways to participate, on any day you can write a significant quotation from our literary work on the board for us to discuss. Also, I will often ask for students to prepare two discussion questions.

Attendance

You are allowed three absences for whatever reason. **If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the class** (unless there is a documented emergency. See emergency policy below). Please consider carefully whether this is the class for you.

Routine tardiness will count as one absence.

In order to receive all 20 points for participation, you must have a stellar attendance record, contribute to class discussion regularly and substantially—which means at least once a week—and participate in group rehearsals and performances. At any point, you can visit me in my office to ask about your participation grade.

Poem and Performance

Performance

Everyone will be in a performance group that will create an interpretive response to a play. These ten-minute performances do not have to be professionally acted or memorized. Think of them as a gift to the class and a way to begin our discussion. Groups may choose to:

- Act a brief, important scene -- and then re-enact it with a different interpretation
- Highlight the play's relevance to current events
- Perform an interview with the characters and/or the playwright
- Change the setting to make a point
- Put the play in dialogue with a painting, a drawing, a song, etc.
- Incorporate music, props, lighting, costumes
- Break the fourth wall and include audience members in the performance

Poem

At the conclusion of our poetry section, we will have an open mic week. Everyone will present to the class either an original poem or a memorized poem.

Exams

There will be an in-class midterm exam and a final examination. Exams will evolve out of our discussions and will consist of short-answer and essay questions.

GRADING SCALE

A+ (98-100) ; A (97-94) ; A- (93-91) ; B+ (90-88) ; B (87-84) ; B- (83-81) ; C+ (80-78) ; C (77-74); C- (73-71); D+ (70-68); D (67-64) ; D- (63-61); F (60 or below)

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Plagiarism/Cheating. The following definitions are from the *West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog*. Please see the section on Academic Integrity and Dishonesty for the full definition and discussion of procedures.

Plagiarism: material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part, from the work of others . . . including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition.

Cheating: doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as their own.

Scholastic dishonesty: involves misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the written approval and consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials; interfering with another's work.

Clear cases of plagiarism or cheating may result in an F for the course. If you have any question about how to document sources, please talk to me.

Cell Phone Courtesy. Please turn off cell phones for class.

Inclusivity Statement. 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.

Disabilities. 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. Accessibility Services is located in Suite 250 at 1085 Van Voorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). 304-293-6700; access2@mail.wvu.edu; <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

Emergencies or Health Crises. If you have an emergency or serious health problem in the course of the semester, once you have the opportunity, you should contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will communicate with me. Please reserve the Dean's services for serious circumstances.

SCHEDULE (Any changes to the schedule will be announced on ECampus and in class)

Thurs. Aug 18 Syllabus and Introductions; Muriel Rukeyser, "Yes" (150)

DRAMA

Tues. Aug 23 *Bury the Dead* pp 1-28. Sign up for Performance Groups

Thurs. Aug 25 *Bury the Dead* (entire play)

Tues. Aug 30 *Bury the Dead* – bring TWO quotations to discuss (Can use these quotations in your first reflection if you would like). Volunteers to put on board.

Thurs. Sept 1 *Bury the Dead*

Tues. Sept 6 *The Exonerated* 1-42
Bury Performance Groups

Thurs. Sept 8 *The Exonerated*
First Reflection Due (to *Bury the Dead* or *Exonerated*)

Tues. Sept 13 *The Exonerated*

Thurs. Sept 15 Film version of *The Exonerated*

Tues. Sept 20 **Exonerated Performance Groups**
A Raisin in the Sun Act 1 + Langston Hughes, "Harlem" (epigraph)

Thurs. Sept 22 *A Raisin in the Sun* Act 2

Tues. Sept 27 *A Raisin in the Sun*
Introduction by Robert Nemiroff

Second Reflection Due (to *Raisin* or *Exonerated*)

Thurs. Sept 29 *A Raisin in the Sun* Act 3

Tues. Oct 4 **Raisin Performance Groups**

Thurs. Oct 6 Midterm preparation

Tues. Oct 11 **Midterm exam**

POETRY

Thurs. Oct 13 Introduction to the anthology: glossary (289-292) and biographies (293-333)

A poem has a hidden meaning. T/F

A poem can mean anything. T/F

Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck" (276); Close-Up on "Diving into the Wreck" (287)

Volunteers to put Petrarchan and Shakespearean rhyme scheme on board

Sonnets

Tues. Oct 18 Verse Forms Overview (3-4); The Sonnet at a Glance, History, and Contemporary Context (55-59)
William Shakespeare, "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" (59)
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, from *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (63)

Thurs. Oct 20 William Wordsworth, "Composed upon Westminster's Bridge" (61);
William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much With Us" (handout)
Third Reflection Due (to any of the poems up to Oct 20)

Tues. Oct 25 Edna St. Vincent Millay, "What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why" (64); Close-up of a Sonnet: "What my lips have kissed . . ." (71); Countee Cullen, "From the Dark Tower" (65); Claude McKay, "If We Must Die" (handout)

Oct 26—Last Day to Drop with a W

Villanelles

Thurs. Oct 27 The Villanelle at a Glance, History, and Contemporary Context (5-8);
Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"; Close-Up of a Villanelle: "One Art" (11)

Tues. Nov 1 Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (12); Theodore Roethke, "The Waking" (11)

Thurs. Nov 3 Hayden Carruth, "Saturday at the Border" (15); Marilyn Hacker, "Villanelle" (16); Volunteer to explain reference to "weaver girl"

Mon. Nov 7—7:30 Talk by Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*

Open Forms

- Tues. Nov 8 Overview of Open Forms (259-260)
Langston Hughes, "I, Too" (266)
Garrett Hongo, "The Legend" (197)
- Thurs. Nov 10 Mark Doty, "Tiara" (199)
Elegy Overview (167-169)
Handout for Open Mic days/Democracy Project Option
- Tues. Nov 15 Yusef Komunyakaa, "Starlight Scope Myopia" (282)
Lucille Clifton, "move" (279)
Volunteers to explain MOVE and to explain starlight scope
Fourth Reflection due (to any of the poems after Oct 20)
- Thurs. Nov 17 Allen Ginsberg, "America" (269)
Sharon Olds, "The Language of the Brag" (280)

Thanksgiving Break

- Tues. Nov 29 **Open Mic** —original poems or memorized poems
- Thurs. Dec 1 **Open Mic**
- Tues. Dec 6 Final thoughts and preparation for take-home exam

Optional Democracy Podcast Recording on Wed. Dec 7, 2:30 – 4:30 in Colson 130

Final Take-home Exam due on Monday, Dec. 10 at noon. Earlier is welcome!

English Dept Readings

Thursday, September 22: Alysia Burton Steele, in the Media Innovation Center
<http://www.alysiaburton.com> (time? good question)

Monday, October 10: Sturm writer Valerie Boyd, 7:30 in the Robinson Reading Room
<http://www.valerieboyd.com>

Monday, October 24: Beth Macy, 7:30 in the Robinson Reading Room
<https://intrepidpapergirl.com>

WVU Creative Arts – Fall Theatre Schedule

***Race* by David Mamet**

September 23 - October 2, 2016

“Race,” by David Mamet, in the Gladys G. Davis Theatre, Creative Arts Center, Sept. 23-Oct. 2: Three lawyers are forced to confront their own feelings about race when they’re offered the chance to defend a white man charged with a crime against a black woman. David Mamet’s customarily crackling dialogue and startling plot twists are the building blocks of a probing and intelligent look at some of the most controversial and important issues of our time. Directed by Jerry McGonigle.

***Noises Off* by Michael Frayn**

October 20 - 23, 2016

“Noises Off,” by Michael Frayn. in the Metropolitan Theatre, Morgantown, Oct. 20-23: Things go from bad to worse to beyond chaotic as a rag-tag theatre troupe prepares for the opening night of a new comedy, “Nothing On.” Onstage mishaps and backstage backstabbing reach laugh-out-loud heights in this classic comedic farce. Directed by Lee Blair.

***The Trojan Women* by Euripides, translated and adapted by Gwendolyn MacEwen**

November 17 - 18, 29, and December 4, 2016

“The Trojan Women,” by Euripides, Translated and Adapted by Gwendolyn MacEwen, in the Gladys G. Davis Theatre, Creative Arts Center, Nov. 17-18, 29-Dec. 4: A meditation on the true cost of war, “The Trojan Women” raises up the voices of the survivors of Troy’s fall to the Greeks as they learn their fates. Separation, despair, and death -- along with sharp and painful lessons -- await the women of Troy in this magnificent and timeless tragedy. Directed by Jay Malarcher.

PERFORMANCE SIGN UP – Please sign up for ONE performance group

***Bury the Dead* Performance Groups**

Performances Sept 6

1)

2)

***Exonerated* Performance Groups**

Performances Sept 20

1)

2)

***Raisin in the Sun* Performance Groups**

Performances Oct 4

1)

2)
