

Introduction to Poetry

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English 200, Section 001
Fall Semester 2015

Office: Simpkins 109
Hours: M, 3:00-4:00; TTh, 3:30-5:00

TTh, 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Simpkins 14

No prerequisites.

Texts

Addonizio, Kim. *Tell Me*. ISBN: 9781880238912
Hughes, Langston. *The Weary Blues*. ISBN: 0385352972
The Norton Anthology of Poetry. Shorter Fifth Ed. ISBN: 9780393979213
There will be poems to download from my webpage (not WesternOnline).

Introduction to the Introduction to Poetry

Marianne Moore's famous poem, "Poetry," begins, "I too dislike it." Certainly many people would agree, not considering that their favorite rap or song lyric is poetry, or perhaps forgetting the healing words spoken at a grandparent's funeral. We often turn to poetry when something happens in our lives that needs special expression, such as when we fall in love, contemplate death, or want to speak at a public event. It is true that poems can be difficult, but they can also ring easy and true. Poems may cause us to think hard, or lead us to feel something deeply.

This course offers a broad introduction to poetry, across time and around the globe. For most of the semester, the readings are organized around formal topics crucial to understanding poetry, such as imagery, irony, and free verse. The course also attends to traditional verse forms, which are not only still in use today, but also help us better to understand non-traditional poetry. Toward the end of the semester, we shift focus toward poetry books, looking at Langston Hughes' 1926 *The Weary Blues* and Kim Addonizio's 2000 *Tell Me*.

Although Marianne Moore recognizes that many people "dislike" poetry, she insists that "one discovers in / it after all, a place for the genuine." William Carlos Williams concurs:

Look at
what passes for the new.
You will not find it there but in
despised poems.
It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

All the same, Frank O'Hara jokes, "Nobody should experience anything they don't need to, if they don't need poetry bully for them."

Course Objectives

This course assist students in becoming engaged and competent readers of poetry. At the same time, Introduction to Poetry develops the ability to formulate and develop interpretive arguments, and to respond creatively. It brings issues of social justice, including those involving race, gender, sexuality, and class, to bear on the study of poems, celebrating the diversity of both poems and people.

Requirements

Introduction to Poetry involves three five-page essay assignments and two creative assignments. You will receive instructions for each, and you have the option of rewriting all except the last. Send all assignments and homework to me through email as Microsoft Word attachments. If I don't have assignments at the beginning of class, they will be counted late. Writing should be paginated and double-spaced in a standard-sized font. Handwritten work gets zero credit, with no opportunity to redo it.

Students will be responsible for leading small group discussions on a rotating basis. When it is your turn, you will prepare three typed, double-spaced questions for discussion and send them to me before the beginning of the class. You need to have your own copy in class, electronic or print. There will also be in-class and homework exercises.

Absences will not be taken lightly, only excused with a doctor's note or other suitable documentation. Please refer to <<http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student/>> for student rights and responsibilities. Everyone *must* actively participate. Lack of participation will damage your grade. This means doing the homework, completing the readings, and joining in class discussion.

Grading

Participation	10%
Homework	10%
Discussion Questions	10%
Creative Assignments	20%
First Essay	10%
Second Essay	20%
Third Essay	20%

Unless excused, late essays receive a one-time, one-letter grade reduction (11:01 a.m. on the due date is late). I will grant an extension for almost any reason, but only if the student contacts me *at least 24 hours in advance*. Plagiarism will result in an “F”, and I will report the student for academic discipline. See WIU’s Policy on Academic Integrity at <<http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>>. Unexcused absences will affect the participation grade, and four of them is an automatic “F” for the course. Do not expect an “A” if you don’t talk regularly in class.

Please take the opportunity to meet with me in Simpkins 109, during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings and your writing. If something about the course bothers you, please don’t wait until the end, when it is too late to change it.

The Writing Center

The University Writing Center can assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The tutor’s job is to add another voice in response to your writing. The one-on-one assistance available at the Writing Center can help with generating ideas, suggesting organization, and even working through grammatical issues. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3rd Floor, West Side). Call for an appointment (298–2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. For more information on other locations, see www.wiu.edu/uwc.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Schedule

I give each day's assignment at the end of class. Do not pack your bags until everyone has had a chance to write it down. Contact me by email if you cannot attend.

Week 1: August 25 & 27

Introduction to the Course.

Week 2: September 1 & 3

Tone & Irony.

Week 3: September 8 & 10

Words. Saying & suggesting. Syntax.

Week 4: September 15 & 17

Imagery.

Week 5: September 22 & 24

Metaphor & Figurative Language.

First Creative Assignment due Tuesday, September 22.

Week 6: September 29 & October 1

Stanza & Ballad.

Week 7: October 6 & 8

First Essay Due in Class on Tuesday, October 6.

Alliteration, Assonance, & Rhyme.

Week 8: October 13 & 15

Sound & Meter.

Week 9: October 20 & 22

Meter. Closed and Open Forms.

Week 10: October 27 & 29

Symbol, Allegory, Parable, & Archetype.

Week 11: November 3 & 5

Identity. Experimental poetry.

Second Essay Due in Class on Thursday, November 5.

Week 12: November 10 & 12

The Weary Blues.

Week 13: November 17

The Weary Blues. **Class is canceled for November 19.**

Thanksgiving Break.

Week 14: December 1 & 3

Tell me.

Week 15: December 8 & 10

Second Creative Assignment due December 8.

Tell Me.

Final Exam Week

Final essay due on Monday, December 14 at 1:00 p.m. (Due December 11 at 10:00 a.m. if you want comments).