



### Contemporary Poetry in English: Modernism, Confessions & Postmodernism

**Description:** An introduction to contemporary (that is, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century) poetry in English. We will also read a significant amount of critical/biographical information about/on the poets/poetry we will discuss.

**Introduction:** This course is an immersion in the study of modern lyric poetry. Because the poems in question take as their subjects love, hatred, death, transcendence, longing, passion, and regret, these larger topics will preoccupy us as well. The poems we read will become objects of minutely fine-grained inquiry, and each one, in diverse ways, will test and hone our skills in close textual analysis. In this sense, the difficult labor of the poets will be our difficult labor as well; the primary challenge—in essays and in class discussion—will be to speak clearly and coherently about artifacts that frequently violate—or seem to violate—the proprieties of clarity and cohesion.

To say, then, that this is a course in close reading is to say that it is a course in close writing. Students should be prepared to return to the texts in question—not only the poetic texts assigned on the syllabus and but critical texts they author themselves—with scrupulous, tenacious, and unflinching care.

Individual Critical Presentations by students will take place each day, starting in Week 2. These presentations will be biography of the author and summary of a selected piece of critical scholarship/commentary. You will sign up for these reports in Week 1. A visual aid (handout, Powerpoint slideshow, etc) is required for the presentation.

#### Grades:

2 Critical, Close-reading essays, 25% each

Presentation 15%

Final Exam 25%

Participation/Attendance 10%

**Required Texts:** Course Packet.

*The Norton Anthology of Contemporary (Volume Two) Poetry* Third Edition Jahan Ramazani, Ed. ISBN: 0-393-97792-7 • 2003.

#### Schedule of Readings

Week: 1 Introduction to Course

Week: 2 Yeats

Neigh, Janet. "Reading from the Drop: Poetics of Identification and Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan' *Journal of Modern Literature*. 29:4 (Summer 2006) 145-160.

Week: 3 Eliot & Pound

Blair, Sara. "Modernism and the Politics of Culture." From *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Michael Levinson, Ed. Cambridge, 1999.

Week: 4 Frost & Millay

Selection from *Gendered Modernisms: American Women Poets and Their Readers* By Margaret Dickie, Thomas J. Travisano. Chapter 8.

Week: 5 Williams & Stevens

Selection from *Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry, 1908-1934*. By Rachel Blau DuPlessis.

Week: 5 First Paper Due

Week: 6 You choose the poet, selections from anthology

Midterm Course Evaluations

Week: Spring Break

Week: 8 D.M. Thomas & Anna Akhmatova

Selection From *Women and Russian Culture: Projections and Self-Perceptions* By Rosalind J. Marsh and

Week: 9 Bishop & Rich

Betsy Erkkila. "Elizabeth Bishop, Modernism, and the Left." *American Literary History* 1996 8(2):284-310. and Adrienne Rich. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" *College English*, 34:1 (1972) 18-30.

Week: 9 Ginsberg & Snyder

Irving Wexler. "New Wine in Old Bottles" *Social Text*, No. 9/10 (1984), 222-226. and George Sessions. "The Deep Ecology Movement: A Review" *Environmental Review: ER* 11:2 (1987) 105-125.

Week: 10 Sexton & Kumin

Diane Wood Middlebrook. "Housewife into Poet: The Apprenticeship of Anne Sexton" *The New England Quarterly*, 56: 4 (1983) 483-503. And DH George "'Keeping Our Working Distance': Maxine Kumin's Poetry of Loss and Survival" From *Aging & Gender in Literature: Studies in Creativity*, 1993.

Week: 11 Plath & DiPrima

Cheryl Walker. "Feminist Literary Criticism and the Author" *Critical Inquiry*, 16:3 (1990), pp. 551-571. and Roseanne Giannini Quinn "'The Willingness to Speak': Diane Di Prima and Italian American Feminist Body Politics" *MELUS* 28(2003) pp.

Week: 12 Second Paper Due

Week: 13 Final Course Evaluations

**Final Exam TBA**