

ELIT11: Introduction to Poetry

Fall 2017/ Ken Weisner

#21184 ELIT 011.62Z

Office: Forum 2C

On Campus Office hours: Tue/Thu 12:30-1:20 PM (Virtual Office Hours TBA)

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GOALS: In this introductory survey we read poetry from British and American traditions as well as some poetry in translation from other cultures and languages. We approach poetry analytically and also in connection to one another's views and feelings. Students explore more deeply those poets and poems they find most exciting, and we are especially attentive to the study of:

- interpretive strategies and critical terminologies
- poems and poets of the canon
- a variety of contemporary poets
- great world poets
- multiple interpretations
- writing about poetry
- forms, periods, types, and functions of poetry
- poetry on the web, poetry out loud
- poetry's importance in humanizing the dehumanized

TEXTS & SUPPLIES: Gioia, D, and Kennedy, X.J., [An Introduction to Poetry](#), 13th Edition.

A reliable internet connection.

REQUIREMENTS: Do weekly reading; type and upload one weekly assignment, participate fully in two weekly forum discussions; take weekly quiz—plus complete midterm, final. Here are details:

- Keep up with [the reading](#), which is normally about one-two chapters per week while we're reading the Kennedy/Gioia textbook during the first half of the quarter. I'll let you know which poems and page numbers to concentrate on. Then later in the quarter I'll ask you to read and respond to supplementary materials posted (and linked) to the [CANVAS](#) site. You're also asked to explore various websites and read some independently each week.
- [The quizzes, midterm and final](#) will cover poems, vocabulary, and craft techniques you've been assigned and should be familiar with or have had a chance to discuss.
- **Participation:** there are 12 weeks in the quarter including finals week. There will be eleven sets of weekly readings, discussions, quizzes, and homework along with one essay-test midterm and final. Please message instructor in CANVAS or contact by e-mail if you are having some trouble with course or assignments. (If you decide to drop the course make sure to go through the official college "drop" procedure (or you could end up with "F").

• **Grades:**

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Discussions (18) | 400 (20 for each set of posts and responses—40 pts. free) |
| Weekly homework responses (10) | 250 (25 for each assignment) |
| Quizzes (5, first half of quarter) | 150 (30 per quiz) |
| Midterm: | 100 |
| Final: | 100 |
| Total: | 1,000 |

Grading Scale (A+ = over 1,000)

A= 920-1000

A- =900-919

B+ =880-899

B= 820-879

B- =800-819

C+ =780-799

C= 700-779

D =600-699

F =0-599

Responding to Poems (Assignments and Forum Postings—and take home tests) in this course.

When you respond to a poem, and share your feelings and ideas about that poem:

- Why did you choose that poem to write about and why is it meaningful/ effective to you?
- Make sure to quote specific lines or passages that epitomize the meaning or effect that you are trying to describe and appreciate. Focus on specific language and imagery that illustrate your point.
- Be specific connecting language of poem to construction of meaning you appreciate. Spell it out!
- In other words: how and why is the writing effective and meaningful to you?
- Make good use of terminology from our text. You're learning a *discourse* (specialized vocabulary). Practice it.
- Practice connecting all your examples to *ideas* and to *meaning*. (i.e., does it really matter if I point out for example alliteration or assonance if I've expressed no meaning or value to me that it contributes to the poem as far as I know?)
- Writing and sharing feelings and ideas about poetry in this course, you will not only get better at employing the discourse of the craft of poetry, but you will also get better at *writing about the relationship between form and content*, or craft and meaning.
- You'll also get better at literary analysis—in this case, not only liking something, but figuring out why you like it. How did the poet create that effect?
- In other words, what does that assonance or alliteration you notice (from our example above) *do* to create meaning in the poem through use of sound, and how does it do that? How does the poem's use of craft and form create tone and *meaning*? Your textbook will illustrate how to do this if you read carefully— and so will I—and so will we for one another ☺.
- To give another example, what if you want to show how particular connotations or diction (word choice) or some metaphor create *meaning* for the reader. Well, we want to learn not just to clinically identify a metaphor or a simile, or say only that we “like it,” but in this course to practice and improve our ability to *say why we that metaphor contributes to the tone and meaning of the poem*.
- So reading and understanding poetry is a lot like “critical thinking” in the consideration of any art—connecting sensations to ideas to examples—and asking *why* we like something—until through writing about it we understand and *deepen* our relationship to it in a variety of contexts. Writing about poetry or any art form should help us more deeply *appreciate* that art form.
- Consider the multiple layers of meaning in the texts you write about. Are there social, historical, gender, or class contexts to the poem that matter? Talk about them and how and why you see them as linked to the meaning of the texts you write about. *Poems often mean more than one thing*.
- Poems often mostly want to ask us, confront us: *how do you make meaning? who are you, dear reader?*
- Consider: what are the questions, themes, tensions raised—and explored—by the poem? Good poems are usually raising crucial questions, opening up usefully controversial areas for discussion, or exposing normally repressed spaces for reflection—poems do this kind of work more so than providing us with solutions or answers. Or maybe they raise our consciousness by startling us.
- Does the poem shift or evolve upon multiple readings? How is this instructive? Good poems are always about the reading *process*. They are *about us* as readers, individuals, members of a culture, etc.

Plagiarism policy: Reminder: never plagiarize! Plagiarism will give you an automatic “F” for the assignment and puts your course grade (and college career) in jeopardy. If you use the ideas or words of others, give them credit immediately, in writing. See sample essays in Kennedy/Gioia text for appropriate MLA method citation techniques.

Tentative Schedule—

(refer to class handouts for updates and further specifics)

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| Sept 25-Oct 1 | Kennedy/Gioia chapter 1-2: types of poetry, tone, irony. |
| Oct 2-8 | Kennedy/Gioia chapters 3-4: “Words,” “Saying and Suggesting.” |
| Oct 9-15 | Kennedy/Gioia chapters 5-6: “Imagery” “Figures of Speech.” |
| Oct 16-22 | Kennedy/Gioia chapter 7-8: “Song” and “Sound.” |
| Oct 23-29 | Kennedy/Gioia chapter 9-10: “Rhythm” and “Closed Forms” |
| Oct 30-Nov 5 | Kennedy/Gioia chapter 10—Sonnets & closed forms, continued — <i>midterm this week</i> |
| Nov 6-12 | Kennedy/Gioia chapter 16, “Poetry in Spanish, Literature of Latin America,” focus on Pablo Neruda and Cesar Vallejo Kennedy, chapter 11, open forms, odes, love poems, <i>Carpe Diem</i> |
| Nov 13-19 | Walt Whitman, Gary Snyder, and Allen Ginsberg (see postings/ links in Catalyst) |
| Nov 20-26 | Kennedy/Gioia chapters 19: Langston Hughes & Emily Dickinson |
| Nov 27 – Dec 3 | Adrienne Rich, Marilyn Chin, Lucille Clifton, Naomi Shihab Nye, Joy Harjo (see postings/ links in Catalyst) |
| Dec 4 - 10 | Jimmy Santiago Baca, Jalaluddin Rumi, Jim Harrison (see postings/ links in Catalyst) |
| Dec 11-15 | — <i>final this week</i> |