

TLP ENG 110 English Literature The Language of Music and Feeling

Instructor: Kirby Record
Office: A7
Office Hours: TBA
Day and Time: TBA
Style of Class: seminar
Course credits: 3

DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on the basic principles for reading, understanding, and appreciating poems. It will touch upon not only some of the great poets who shaped and modernized the English language—Beowulf, Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare—but also some of the finest poets writing in English today. Poetry lies at the heart of literature. Even the earliest known fiction, in the sense of “story telling,” was spoken or sung in verse. The Homeric epics, written in metric verse, for example, predate the earliest known novels, or even the so-called medieval Romances, by several thousand years. Thus, a thorough understanding and appreciation of literature properly begins with the study of poetry, because the use of rhythm, assonance, symbolism, metaphor, imagery, irony, and other linguistic devices are fundamental to literary language in all *genres*.

Students will consider poetry in a variety of ways, as both written and as living, continuously evolving, oral texts. The class will read selections from the screenplay of the film *The Dead Poets Society* as well as watch the film, which explores the power of poetry to discover, express, and celebrate the nature of human experience. The course will also examine the role of poetry in current popular culture, through films like *Slam*, and poetry performances, called “slams.” Another aspect of the course will introduce students to the relationship between poetry and other arts, especially performance art. Students will be expected to participate in and lead small group discussions, write two analytical papers, keep a journal and, of course, read extensively. But most of all, this class will be devoted to the living experience of poetry as the supreme language of feeling.

METHOD

This course adopts a seminar/workshop format, with student participation, and critical response, paramount. Lecture will necessary at times, but only to facilitate this fundamental objective.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will be expected to

- 1) learn the basics of poetic language, form and substance;
- 2) learn the process of understanding and appreciating great poems written in English;

- 3) learn how reading and understanding poetry can help in the processing of other kinds of texts, literary and non-literary;
- 4) learn how poetry functions as a social force, locally and globally;
- 5) sharpen their ear to language and expand their imaginative thinking powers;
- 6) raise their consciousness of individual and cultural diversity within a universal framework of human feeling and experience;
- 7) learn how the reading of literature through poetry is enormously beneficial to their personal English language development, both in speaking and in writing proficiency.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

It Could Be Verse, by John Timpane
Six American Poets, (Ed.) by Joe Conarroe

***Film Materials (students do not purchase)**

The Dead Poets Society (the film)
Slam (a film treating rap poetry and its social significance)
Extensive handouts

These readings reflect a key course objective, which is to make poetry accessible to students and pertinent to their personal experience. At the same time, the course will be academically rigorous, requiring extensive reading and writing in response to the poems themselves and related films, and other texts used in the course. *It Could Be Verse* is a delightfully witty and informative introduction to poetry appreciation, while *Six American Poets* is one of the most successful poetry anthologies ever.

*Class time for film viewing is limited so some of these activities will be optional but highly recommended

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT

10% Attendance
30% Class discussions, in-class worksheets and in-class writing
30% Reading Journal
30% Response Paper 1 (800 to 1000 words)

*Students will be expected to lead small group discussions and whole class discussions at various times during the course. Precise guidelines will be provided for this.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE

Course Introduction
It Could Be Verse
Introduction from Chapter One

Journal Entry

WEEK TWO

It Could Be Verse
from Chapter One
from Chapter Two
Journal Entry

WEEK THREE

It Could Be Verse
from Chapter Two
Journal Entry

WEEK FOUR

It Could Be Verse
from Chapter Three
Journal Entry

Six American Poets
Various selections

WEEK FIVE

It Could Be Verse
from Chapter Three

Six American Poets
Various selections
Journal Entry

WEEK SIX

Dead Poets Society (viewed outside class time)
Selections of screenplay and related poems

WEEK SEVEN

Robert Frost
Analytical Paper 1 Draft 2

WEEK EIGHT

Robert Frost
Haiku and Imagism:
William Carlos Williams,
Journal Entry

WEEK NINE

W.C. Williams and Wallace Stevens
Journal Entry

WEEK TEN

Langston Hughes and other African American Poets
Slam, the film, and the rap artist connection
Journal Entry

WEEK ELEVEN

Women poets writing in English:
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Elizabeth Bishop
Journal Entry

WEEK TWELVE

Women poets writing in English
Laurie Anderson (performance artist)
Stevie Smith

WEEK THIRTEEN

Stevie Smith
Emily Dickinson

Analytical Paper/Project 2
Topic and Outline/discussion

WEEK FOURTEEN

Dickinson

WEEK FIFTEEN

Poetry Slam (In-class and/or as performance art out of class)
Analytical Paper/Project 2 due