

ENGLISH 265: “MAKE IT NEW”: MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Spring Semester 2013

M/W/F 10:00–10:50 PM, Palmer 207

CRN: 23282

Dr. Caki Wilkinson

Phone: x3426

Email: wilkinsonc@rhodes.edu

Office: Palmer 304

Office hours: Tu/W/Th 11:00 AM – noon, and by appt.

TEXT

Ramazani, Jahan, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O’Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice. It has not always had
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what
Was in the script.

Then the theatre was changed
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.

– Wallace Stevens, “Of Modern Poetry” (1942)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In their quest to “make it new,” modern and contemporary poets have evolved very different ideas about language, as well as competing views of the poet, the audience, and the poem. This course will trace the development of American poetry in the 20th and 21st centuries, beginning with modernist precursors Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson and ending with contemporary poets Rita Dove, Li-Young Lee, and Sherman Alexie. Our readings and discussions will address both the sound and the sense of poems. We will look closely at linguistic elements such as diction, syntax, and rhythm, considering the ways American poets have revived and reshaped poetic conventions. Additionally, we will consider issues of style and intent, examining some of the 20th century’s key movements and schools, among them High Modernism, the New Criticism, the Confessional school, the Beats, the Black Arts movement, and Language poetry.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Papers

You will write three papers for this course: two shorter papers (3-4 pages or 900-1200 words) and a longer final paper (8-10 pages or 2400-3000 words). The first paper will present a close reading of a poem based only on your own reading (i.e. no secondary sources). The second paper will present a close reading of a poem and may incorporate additional primary material related to the poem or poet (letters, journal entries, interviews, manifestos, etc) but no secondary sources. The final paper will examine some aspect of a poet’s work in multiple poems, and it must

incorporate at least two but no more than five secondary sources. We will talk more in class about strategies for locating and evaluating these materials.

Exams

There will be an exam at midterm and another at the end of the semester. Designed to test your knowledge and comprehension of the assigned poems and essays, both exams will consist primarily of identifications and short-answer questions.

Discussion Questions

Three times over the course of the semester you will submit a discussion question that responds to the assigned reading. A thoughtful and well-crafted discussion question is one that cannot be answered with basic factual information; it is not a question for which there is a clear right or wrong answer. Instead, it will address a poem, group of poems, or poet in light of some larger theme or issue: recurring images, stylistic patterns, historical context, a critic's response, connections to other poems and poets, etc. Discussion questions should aim to generate conversation and normally will require several sentences of setup.

I have divided the class into five groups (see page 5). The assignment schedule lists the dates each group's questions will be discussed. Questions are due the night before class and should be submitted via email by 10 PM. If you fail to submit your question in time you will be marked absent for the day.

Participation

Participation is an important component of this course. You may notice that you have fewer pages to read than you might in another literature course—particularly one that focuses on the novel. Be warned, though, that much of your reading will be dense. In order to make significant contributions in class, you will need to read the poems at least twice, paying close attention to the relationship between form and content—what the poem is saying, and how it's saying it.

I may give quizzes. We will not be able to discuss all of the assigned poems in class, and quizzes will help me keep track of your progress. These will be short (3-4 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them.

You will be marked as absent for the day if you 1) fail a quiz, 2) fail to submit your discussion questions by the deadline, or 3) come to class without your book or other required materials.

Finally, you are required to attend a lecture given by Dr. Randall Fuller (“‘Would the Singer Attempt to Sing?’: The Civil War in Walt Whitman's Poetry”) on April 11 at 7:00 PM in Hardie Auditorium.

Dates for Papers and Exams

Monday, February 18	Paper 1 due
Friday, March 1	Midterm Exam
Friday, April 5	Paper 2 due
Friday, April 25	Final Exam
Wednesday, May 1	Final Paper due

POLICIES

Attendance

You are allowed three absences, excused or otherwise. For each absence after the third, your final grade will be deducted by one point. Keep in mind that, as noted above, all of the following result in being marked as absent: failing a quiz, failing to submit discussion questions, and coming to class without the required materials. If you miss more than eight classes, you will fail the course.

Paper Requirements

All papers should be typed, stapled, and formatted according to MLA style. A few notes on the MLA guidelines for quoting and citing poetry are included on page 4 of this syllabus.

I will collect your papers at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. With the exception of discussion questions, I will not accept work sent through email. Late assignments will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e. B+ to B) for up to one week. Assignments received more than a week late will receive an F.

Grading

First Paper	20%
Second Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Paper	30%
Final Exam	15%

Academic Honesty

All work in this course should be original and individual, unless I have made a group assignment. Evidence of collusion (someone helped you write the assignment), plagiarism (using someone else's published or unpublished words without acknowledgement), or multiple submissions (handing in the same work to different classes) will not be tolerated. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the Honor Code.

**QUOTING AND CITING POETRY
MLA FORMAT**

→ When quoting 1, 2, or 3 lines of poetry, you should blend the quoted lines into your own sentence, using a slash to indicate line breaks. Provide the line numbers (instead of the page numbers) in parentheses.

In the second stanza of “Glazunoviana” the speaker abandons his previous questions, stating, “The bear / Drops dead in sight of the window” (8-9).

→ If you remove words from the middle of a line, use an ellipsis (three, spaced periods) to indicate the omission.

The speaker asks, “The window . . . / Is that here too?” (3-4).

→ Use brackets to add your own clarifications.

The speaker also wonders what has become of “all the little helps, / [his] initials in the sky” (5-6).

→ When quoting 4 or more lines of poetry, separate the lines from your paragraph as a block quotation.

The first stanza of “Glazunoviana” consists of three questions, one after the other:

The man with the red hat
And the polar bear, is he here too?
The window giving on shade,
Is that here too?
And all the little helps,
My initials in the sky,
The hay of an arctic summer night? (1-7)

→ Use indentions (rather than ellipses) to show that you’ve begun a block quotation in the middle of a line. If you remove one or more full lines in the middle of a block quotation, use a row of ellipses to indicate the omission.

The man with the red hat
And the polar bear, is he here too?
.....
And all the little helps,
My initials in the sky,
The hay of an arctic summer night?

→ Remember: if you include a quotation, you should comment on it.