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## ENGL 373-01, Developments in Contemporary Poetry, Fall 2007

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## Developments in Contemporary Poetry, Course 373, Barrett 020

Dr. Tina Barr's New Office is 308B Palmer Hall, 843-3979 Office Hours Mondays 1:30 to 3:00 pm, Tuesdays, 11:00 to 12:30, and by appointment. You can also email me at: [TinaBarr@rhodes.edu](mailto:TinaBarr@rhodes.edu) & [TinaBarr@bellsouth.net](mailto:TinaBarr@bellsouth.net). Extra copies of the syllabus, the Sr. Writing Project Guidelines and Recommendation request guidelines are in folders in the bin outside my office door. Any forms can be left and will be signed mornings between Mondays and Thursdays. Stop back at the end of the day to pick up your form.

**Course Description:** This class will advance students knowledge of current developments in contemporary poetry through readings in **Required Texts:**

1. *Taboo* by Yusef Komunyakaa 2. *Blackbird & Wolf* by Henri Cole 3. *Intervale* by Betty Adcock, 4. *the Iron City* by John Bensus, 5. *On Looking*, essays by poet Lia Purpura 6. *Men in the Off Hours* by Anne Carson 7. *Fleur Carnivore* by Rich Lyons and 8. *Fata Morgana* by Reginald Shepherd. (8 texts) **In addition you will receive 25 pages of supplementary xeroxed material by Frost, Eliot, Pound, Toomer, Hughes, Moore, Bishop, Lowell, Williams, Yeats, Stevens, Pound and others. Keep this material with you and bring it in to each class.** Students are expected *to analyze and prepare to discuss the poems and essays they read ahead of time, so that they will make significant contributions to class discussion.* The more each member contributes in different ways to the seminar/tutorial the more interesting it will be.

### **Course Requirements:**

**1.** Students must attend carefully to the **reading requirements** by preparing the reading outside of class, and **contribute significantly to class discussion.** (20%).

**2.** Students must turn in two technical analyses (50% of final grade) of a particular poem twice during the semester, short papers that will demonstrate their ability to read clearly and analyze the techniques involved in making the poem. I am NOT INTERESTED in your doing any research, but am interested in your ability to read poems. You need to focus on one or two, perhaps three techniques used by this particular poet in the particular poem you choose. *You cannot discuss a poem we have already discussed in class.* You would focus on say: the use of imagery in a certain Komunyakaa poem, or word choice in a Carson poem, for example. My job as your professor is to instruct you in techniques of poetic analysis and model for you the terms and approaches to that analysis. A poem has meanings in the plural. It presents an array of ideas. I would like you to arrive at a conclusion about meaning **through an analysis of technique.** *Because I consider it part of my task to assist you in your learning to write these kinds of essays I will set aside certain classes and in lieu of meeting in class, you will meet with me for conference time in my office about your proposed essay. You should bring in the outline of the essay you are working on. That way, we can be sure that you have devised an intelligent method of analysis and that you understand the meaning of the poem.*

**3.** Students will prepare one oral presentation on topics to be selected. (30%) You will be graded on them. If I feel the class needs to be prodded in terms of careful attention to

the assigned reading, I may surprise the class with spontaneous quizzes, which will be graded as part of class participation.

**Attendance:** Students should miss no more than 3 classes a semester, based on a medical absence or family emergency. Thus, barring surgery, if you get sick, you will be covered. So do not miss class unless you inform the professor. If you need to miss a class based on either a family emergency or an illness, please call or email the professor. More than 3 (unexcused) absences will likely result in a reduction in the final grade for the course.

**Course Structure:** We will be approaching the study of contemporary poetry by reading current collections. These particular texts are quite challenging, but offer a wide range in terms of stylistic examples. We will be reading them in conjunction with the powerful influences of their predecessors: Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, Gertrude Stein, Sterling Brown, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. When we read Henri Cole's book, for example, we will look at the influence of Moore, Bishop and Lowell on his work. Some of the collections are narrative, some highly allusive, with reference to ancient Greek texts, for example. One of the major ways that publishers and readers tend to think now is in terms of the "isms"----multiculturalism, objectivism, symbolism---and other categories of writers: gay, Asian, African-American, categories that reflect a global and polyglot culture. In a world in which there is no longer any real sense of homogeneity, but a polyglot culture, ways to subdivide and thus identify "readerships," have had a very strong influence on the arena of contemporary poetry. The genre of Creative Non-Fiction, for example, hardly existed 20 years ago, but this new method is reflected in Purpura's essays, which are themselves "poetic," for example. We'll read books by 3 women, 2 African-American poets and 3 male poets, 2 of whom live nearby, in Mississippi and in Memphis. John Bensko will visit one of our classes to talk about his work. I want to make this course as engaging as possible, so rather than structuring the course as I have in the past, with heavy attention to moving chronologically; instead I will introduce the influences of the past concurrently, in conjunction with our discussions of these recently published books.

**Student Reports:** You will give an oral report during the semester. You should take about 20 minutes of class time.

### **Week 1, 8/22, Wednesday**

Introductions, class requirements, sign up for oral reports. Pay careful attention to the syllabus to follow the requirements of the course. Handout of Komunyakaa references.

*Assignment for next week:* Focus on the following poems in Yusef Komunyakaa's book, *Taboo*: "Lingo," "Imhotep," "Bacchanal," "Monticello," "The Quadroon's Masque Ball," "Antebellum Silhouettes," "Satchmo, USA," "Daddy Red," "Homage to a Bellhop," "In Line at the Bank."

**Week 2, 8/27 & 8/29**

Video of Komunyakaa reading. Discuss Komunyakaa's poetry, in conjunction with work of Langston Hughes, & jazz.

*Assignment for next week:* Student Reports on a poem by Komunyakaa. Please research any allusions and supply class with references. Reread the Komunyakaa poems we did not yet discuss. Each class member should be **prepared to speak in detail** about your responses to **one** of the above assigned poems we have not yet discussed.

**Week 3, 9/3 & 9/5**

Final discussion of Komunyakaa poems. Student Reports on a poem by Komunyakaa. Please research any allusions and supply class with references. Introduction to work of Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost and Ezra Pound, all referenced by poet Rich Lyons, whose book you will read from for next week: *Fleur Carnivore*

*Assignment for next week:* This weekend begin your reading of the work of Rich Lyons, another lover of jazz. Focus on "Snow Falling Through Midnight," "Lunch by the Grand Canal," "Monolith, West Texas," "Neither Road Taken," "Chinese Winter Jasmine at St. Jacques Gate," "Black Expatriate Playing Near the Ligurian Sea." Student Report on a poem by Rich Lyons.

**Week 4, 9/10 & 9/12** Consult Dr. Barr to read your poem or another's for scheduled Poetry Slam, Tuesday night, 9/11, from 6 to 7:30 in Rhea Lounge, Pizza, & Jazz Ensemble

Begin discussion of poems by Rich Lyons on Monday. Student Report on poem by Rich Lyons on Wednesday

**Tony Doerr reads from his fiction at 7:30pm on 9/13.** Tuthill Music building small auditorium, Hassell Hall

*Assignment for next week:* Begin reading from poet Lia Purpura's series of essays and focus on: "On Aesthetics," "On Form," "The Pin" "The Smallest Woman in the World," and "On Looking Away, a Panoramic."

**Week 5, 9/17 & 9/19 ----**

On 9/17 Discussion of T.S. Eliot reference in Purpura's essays. Begin discussion of Purpura essays. Conclude discussion of Purpura next week.

*Assignment for next week :* continue reading from poet Lia Purpura's series of essays.

**Week 6, 9/24 No class on 9/26, Professor Barr doing poetry reading at Southern Women's Writers Conference in Georgia**

Conclude discussion of Lia Purpura's essays and begin Cole discussion (Bishop, Lowell, Moore).

*Assignment for 10/1 & 10/3:* Read from Henri Cole's book, *Blackbird & Wolf*, with a focus on the following poems: "Sycamores," "Mimosa Sensitiva," "Gulls," "Oil and Steel," "Twilight," "The Tree Cutters," "American Kestrel," "Homosexuality," "Beachwalk," and "Dead Wren."

**Week 7, 10/1 & 10/3**

Reference to Whitman poem as background to Cole's work, along with poems by Bishop and Lowell. Discussion of Cole's work.

*Assignment for next week:* **Two** Student reports next Monday on a poem by Henri Cole. Begin reading the poems of Anne Carson in *Men in the Off Hours*, with a focus on the following: "New Rule," "Sumptuous Destitution," "Hokusai," "Audubon," "Shadowboxer," "Catullus," Pages 38-45—"Father's Old Blue Cardigan," "TV Men: Akhmatova," pages 102 to 114, *Irony is not Enough; Essay on my Life as Catherine Deneuve*, pages 119 to 126. *Although I think you will find Carson's work engaging, in certain ways she is more challenging. I've given you your assignment for this weekend, so you need not read over Fall Break, but please put as much work as you can into this assignment. I will help you into understanding her work next week.*

**Week 8, 10/8 & 10/10**

**Two** Student reports on a poem by Henri Cole. Complete discussion of Cole. Introduction of Carson through the work of Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. Videos???? Introduction to Deneuve, Akhmatova, etc.

Over Fall Break review your reading of Carson

**Week 9, 10/17**

Discussion of Anne Carson's work.

*Assignment for next week:* **Select a poem by one of the writers whose work we have discussed, but not a poem we have already discussed. Write the first draft of a 3 to 5 page essay on one to three techniques they use in the poem.**

**Week 10, 10/22 & 10/24**

Complete discussion of Anne Carson on Monday. **No class on 10/24, see Dr. Barr in brief conference to go over your ideas or outline for your technical essay.**

*Assignment for next week:*

**Week 11, No class on 10/29, see Dr. Barr in brief conference to go over your ideas for your technical essay. Bring in the poem you've been writing about.**

**On Wednesday 10/31 we meet in class:** Barr lecture on poems by John Benske and Professor Barr will assign the weekend reading in the Benske collection.

*Assignment for next week:* Complete your final draft of your analysis of technique essay of 3 to 5 pages. Read the work assigned in *The Iron City* by John Benske. Student reports on poems by John Benske

**Week 12, 11/5 & 11/7**

Essay Due.

*Discussion of John Benske's poetry,* Student reports on poems by John Benske

*Assignment for next week:* Review your favorite Benske poem and compose 3 questions for John Benske. Type up 2 copies of these questions and give me one at the beginning of class on 11/12.

**Week 13, 11/12 & 11/14**

Visit by John Benske on 11/12. On 11/14 we will not meet in class. Instead I want you to choose one poem by Betty Adcock that you will be able to talk about in class, and prepare a discussion of one aspect of this poem that you want to comment on.

*Assignment for next week:* Choose a poem by Betty Adcock that you want to discuss in class. I will go around the room and ask each one of you to discuss one aspect of this poem that you want to comment on when we meet on Monday, so Monday's class will reflect not my choices of poems, but yours!!!! And it will be a student-generated discussion. You will like her work; it will seem much easier to read than a number of the poets we've read so far this semester!!!! Decide on a poem by any writer we've read this semester, for your final 3 to 5 page essay.

**Week 14, 11/19**

**Each student will discuss one aspect of a Betty Adcock poem of their choice, from *Intervale*. Professor Barr will assign the reading in *Fata Morgana*.**

*Assignment for over Thanksgiving. Begin your reading of Reginald Shepherd's book. Two Students to prepare reports on Reginald Shepherd's work*

**Week 15, 11/26 & 11/28**

Two Student Reports on poem by Reginald Shepherd on Monday. Final discussion on the poems of Reginald Shepherd.

*Assignment for next week:* **Work on your final essay**, on a poem by any writer we've read this semester, for your 3 to 5 page essay. Obviously you cannot write on a poem we've discussed in class.

**Week 16, 12/3 & 12/5 ----**

**On 12/3 class will be cancelled, and Dr. Barr will be in her office for consultations on the final essay, to be turned in on Wednesday, no exceptions!**

**On 12/5 we'll have a party, so don't eat any dessert at lunch and you will turn in your final essay!**