

MEDAILLE COLLEGE  
AGASSIZ CIRCLE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

COURSE OUTLINE

Program: Humanities  
Course Number: ENG 405  
Course Title: Themes and Topics in American Literature: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Movements  
Number of Credits: 3  
Prerequisites: Any 200-level literature course

A. Catalog Description of Course:

A course in which the focus is the evolution of American poetics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Discussion of various poetic movements – including their key practitioners and core theories – will provide students a chronological/historical overview of literary development in the U.S., as well as an understanding of how today's writers have formed currently-held poetic, aesthetic, and sociopolitical values.

B. Goals:

1. To enhance students' consciousness, understanding, and appreciation of important authors and ideas from 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature in general, and 20<sup>th</sup> century American poetry in particular.
2. To help students see literary works as not just venues for self-expression, but as also responses to social, cultural, and political stimuli.
3. To help students make connections between literature and their own lives.

C. Objectives:

Students will be able to

1. Recognize and understand the social, cultural and political contexts in which particular poems were created and within which particular poets functioned.
2. Recognize and understand the various techniques, devices and features of different poetics written in the U.S. in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Recognize a variety of poetic styles and the writers associated with them.
4. Demonstrate a functional vocabulary of key poetic and theoretical/critical terms, and how to properly apply them when interpreting poetry and understanding the motivations behind a poet's particular practice.

D. Outline of Course Content:

1. Reading and discussion of selections from 20<sup>th</sup> century American poets, and discussion of their poetic accomplishment and techniques, from the following generalized headings:

- A. 1900-1950s
  - a. Modernism
  - b. Harlem Renaissance
  - c. Beat poetry/the Postmodern
  - d. New York School/the Postmodern

- B. 1950s-1970s
  - a. Confessional poetry

- b. Black Mountain School
- c. Identity poetics
- d. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry
- C. 1980s-2000
  - a. Post-Language poetry
  - b. New Formalism
  - c. Resurgence of prose poetry/hybrid texts
  - d. “Disjunctive”/“Post-Postmodern”/“Elliptical” poetry
- 2. Evaluation of students’ progress in learning and applying course material through writing that uses poetic and theoretical/critical terminology.
- 3. Evaluation of students’ progress in learning and applying course material through quizzes.

E. Required Texts:

Gioia, Dana, David Mason, Meg Schoerke, eds. *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*. NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003.  
 McGowan, Christopher, ed. *Blackwell Guides to Literature: Twentieth-Century American Poetry*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.  
 Roberts, Neil, ed. *A Companion to 20th-Century Poetry*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

F. Suggested Modes, Media, and Techniques of Instruction:

Lecture/recitation, discussion, questions/answers, research  
 Library resources, audio & video tapes

G. Instructors’ References

Allen, Donald, ed. The New American Poetry 1945-1960. NY: Grove Press, 1960.

Andrews, Bruce, and Charles Bernstein, eds. The "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E" Book. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.

Andrews, William, Frances Foster and Trudie Harris, eds. The Concise Oxford Companion To African American Literature. NY: Oxford Press, 2001.

Barry, Peter, Beginning Theory. UK: U. Manchester Press, 1995.

Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane, eds. Modernism. NY: Penguin, 1976.

Dumanis, Michael and Cate Marvin, eds. Legitimate Dangers: American Poets of the New Century. KY: Sarabande Books, 2006.

DuPlessis, Rachel Blau and Peter Quartermain. The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1999.

Eliot, T.S. Selected Essays: 1917-1932. NY: Harcourt, 1950.

— To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings. U. Nebraska Press, 1992.

“Elliptical Poets.” *American Letters & Commentary* #11 (1999-2000).

Foerster, Norman. American Criticism: A Study in Literary Theory From Poe to the Present. NY: Russell & Russell, 1962.

Gabbin, Joanne, ed. The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry. U. Virginia, 1999.

Gioia, Dana. Can Poetry Matter?: Essays on Poetry and American Culture. MN: Graywolf, 2002.

- Graham, Jorie, ed. Earth Took of Earth: A Golden Ecco Anthology. NY: Ecco, 1997.
- Henry, Brian and Andrew Zawacki, eds. The Verse Book of Interviews: 27 Poets on Language, Craft and Culture. Seattle: Wave Books, 2005.
- Honey, Maureen, ed. Shadowed Dreams: Women's Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance. NJ: Rutgers, 2006.
- Hoover, Paul, ed. Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology. NY: Norton, 1994.
- Hughes, Glenn. Imagism and the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry. NY: Biblio-Moser, 1973.
- Ingersoll, Earl, Judith Kitchen and Stan Sanvel Rubin, eds. The Post-Confessionals: Conversations With American Poets of the Eighties. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989.
- Jancovich, Mark. The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism. UK: Cambridge U. Press, 2006.
- Koch, Kenneth and Kate Farrell, eds. Sleeping on the Wing, eds. NY: Vintage, 1982.
- Lehman, David. The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets. NY: Anchor, 1999.
- Liu, Timothy, ed. Word of Mouth: An Anthology of Gay American Poetry. NJ: Talisman, 2000.
- Messerli, Douglas, ed. Language Poetries. NY: New Directions, 1987.
- “Objectivist Timeline.” Webpages. <http://students.washington.edu/dwhunts/objectivism.htm>.
- Poetry Society of America (essays by various writers). “What’s American About American Poetry?” <http://www.poetrysociety.org/whatsamer.html>.
- Pound, Ezra. Selected Prose, 1909-1965. Ed. William Cookson. NY: Norton, 1975.
- ABC of Reading. Norton, 1960.
- Prins, Yopie and Maera Shreiber, eds. Dwelling in Possibility: Women Poets and Critics on Poetry. NY: Cornell, 1998.
- Raskin, Jonah. American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation. U. California, 2004.
- Rosenthal, M.L. The Modern Poets: A Critical Introduction. NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
- Rothenberg, Jerome and Pierre Joris. Poems for the Millennium, V. II. CA: U. California Press, 1998.
- Silliman, Ron, ed. In the American Tree. Orono, Me.: National Poetry Foundation, 2002.
- Waldman, Anne. Beat Book. CA: Shambhala, 1999.
- Whitehead, Kim, ed. The Feminist Poetry Movement. U. Press of Mississippi, 1997.
- Yezzi, David. “Confessional poetry & the artifice of honesty.” *The New Criterion* V. 16 #10, June 1998.