

# POETRY

## *& the Art of Language*

English 2240

Fall 2006

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The first question seems obvious: Poetry? What is it? Why read it? And how do we read it? . . . In a world saturated with the “poetics” of popular ad slogans, sound bites, & all those shibboleths of the technological, communication age, is it possible to appreciate poetry and poetic vision as

anything more than an archaic form of expression still practiced in San Francisco cafes by a select few angst-ridden folks sporting black turtlenecks?? And if so, what baggage might a would-be aficionado need to pack in order to be prepared to embark on a discovery of the power of poetry to shape, record, express, &, yes, produce human experience? We'll take the next 16 weeks to familiarize ourselves with some of the basic linguistic, metrical & formal components of poetry as we indulge in samples of some of the finest verse from the English & American oeuvre. Class time will involve a mixture of lecture/presentation and class discussion. We've got a lot of ground to cover here; we're surveying over 1,000 years of poetry! With any luck, by the end of the term, you'll have gained a better eye and ear (& in-sight) for what we might call "the art of language". . . But mind you, any enlightenment or enjoyment you might receive from this course will come as a result of the interest, engagement, and imagination you bring with you to class and to your writings.

Turn the page for details. . .

### Reading Response Topics

Reading poetry, or any other material, without being actively attentive and engaged with the text will likely leave you unprepared to discuss it and to be tested on your comprehension. To motivate you to focus, and to challenge your abilities at analyzing and formulating responses to the poetry you read, I assign regular response topics.

You'll find that on the Reading & Assignment Schedule I've assigned (indicated by "\*\*\*\*\*") require that you to analyze particular elements in a poem. The purpose of the responses is to cultivate your skill at "talking back" to the poems you read. Responses should be typed and demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings. Some responses ask you to define & list vocabulary. For these, you should consult a good dictionary (the *Oxford English Dictionary* is available online at: [www.dixie.edu](http://www.dixie.edu) > Library > Article databases > Alphabetical list > Oxford English Dictionary Online). Most questions ask you to analyze particular elements in a poem and speculate about their meaning. When asked to provide an analysis, you should expect to write at least a solid paragraph. Don't skimp on your analyses; I evaluate the responses based on the noticeable effort and engagement they demonstrate. The further you push your analysis (if it's a lucid and cogent one), the better your grade. While I don't expect that you will always see clearly into the particular issue I ask you to consider, I do insist that you spend sufficient time and energy on your responses. Don't waste time reflecting on the difficulty of the process. Think through the question and formulate a response before you put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, as it were. Responses should be at least half a page in length, and they are due at the beginning of class on the day the poems are assigned.

### Exams

You will take four exams (including a comprehensive final) that will test your understanding of poems, terminology, and critical approaches addressed in class. Exams will consist of brief response questions and longer analysis questions.

### Essay

Students will demonstrate their critical and interpretive prowess by writing a 4-5 page comparative analysis essay. Details to follow.

## Preparation

Students who desire to succeed in this course must come to class having read the assigned poems and defined unfamiliar words.

## Class Participation

Ask questions, seek clarification, and take notes. (Students who don't take sufficient notes tend to fare poorly on exams; learning is not a passive process.)

## Grade Breakdown

<b>Reading Responses</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Essay</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Exams 3 @</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>

## Grade Scale

A = 94.0 & above
A- = 90.0 - 93.9
B+ = 87.0 - 89.9
B = 84.0 - 86.9
B- = 80.0 - 83.9
C+ = 77.0 - 79.9
C = 74.0 - 76.9
C- = 70.0 - 73.9
D+ = 67.0 - 69.9
D = 64.0 - 66.9
D- = 60.0 - 63.9
F = 59.9 & below

## Text

*The Heath Introduction to Poetry, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., Joseph DeRoche, ed.*

## College Policies

All DSC Policies apply to this course (and any other). Plagiarism, cheating, beating the teacher up, etc., are all forbidden. For details on these or other policies, see the "Student" section of the "Policies and Procedures" manual. You can access this information on-line as follows: go to the DSC Home Page; roll over the menu for "Faculty and Staff"; click on "Policies & Procedures," then click the button marked "Student" on the left. Read all sections and pay particular attention to Section 5.33 ("Student Rights and Responsibilities Code").

## Disability Resource Center

If you are a student with a medical, psychological, or learning disability and would like accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in the Student Services Center, Room 201. The Disability Resource Center will determine the eligibility of a student requesting special services and the appropriate accommodations related to his/her disability.

## Things that “Go without saying” (but we say them nonetheless. . .)

Learning is hard work. Seek pleasure and reassurance in new and difficult subjects.

The hallmark of literary study is what we call close reading. Students generally fair better in literature courses when they learn to approach their reading with the proper scrutiny and consideration it requires. You cannot read literature with the same effort you put into reading the ingredients in a box of macaroni and cheese if you expect to perform well on exams and to leave the course having gotten your money’s worth.

The instructor should be given the benefit of any doubt regarding competence until proven otherwise.

My task is to evaluate your work and to indicate its level according to a set standard. I may not give you the grade you want, but I won’t lie to you just to inflate your ego.

Learning for its own sake (not for a job or for any other seemingly practical purpose) is the foundation of a general college-level education. If this is unacceptable, perhaps you’re in the wrong place.

Intelligence (not “street smarts”) in a variety of subjects and skills is a darn good thing; that intelligence generally comes from being taught by another person. Trust in the expertise and guidance of others.

Since every subject or discipline you encounter in college contains its own unique and appropriate terminology, one could argue that learning begins with a vocabulary list. This might sound awfully rote, but a moment of reflection will make it clear. So students shouldn’t be surprised (or angered) to find numerous terms in their reading and in class that require definition. Get yourself a good dictionary.

Like most college courses, this course is not about you. How you feel about the subject and practices we explore is irrelevant. Leave your “self” and all its desires, limitations, and idiosyncracies at home – too often students who unreasonably expect the subject matter and practices of college courses (especially English) to be “fun” and comfortable and to have “something to do with me” set themselves up for certain disappointment. If you must derive some sort of self-validation from this course, seek it in the relative proficiency you demonstrate in reading and comprehending literature, in taking sufficient lecture notes, in broadening your intellect, and in realizing that, on a deep and profound level, literature has everything to do with you.

## Department Objectives for English 2240

Students completing Literature courses at Dixie State College will achieve the following objectives, some of which are difficult to measure in a quantitative way:

- Learn to enjoy and appreciate selections from various literary genres as measured by an assessment test administered at the beginning and at the end of the semester.

- Learn to evaluate selections from literature as measured by essay exams, critical essays, and other objective exam measurements.
- Demonstrate critical thinking through careful reading, through class discussion, through analytical writing as measured by essay exams and other objective exam measurements, and through a critical paper that will be graded.
- Demonstrate critical understanding of the elements of poetry (such as meter, rhyme, form, sound) and poetic devices including metaphor, simile, alliteration, assonance, consonance, personification, verbal irony, imagery, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, caesura, and synecdoche – as measured by oral analysis, objective tests, preparation checks, and critical essays.