

## English 377: Contemporary Poetry, Sec. 1/Fall 2019

Dr. Patricia Gott

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Office Hours:

--Tuesdays: 3:30-4:15

--Wednesdays: Electronic Office Hour from 11-11:50 (I'm online then)

--Thursdays 12:50-1:50

--Other times by appointment

**Email Policy/Format:** You will be using email regularly this semester as it is the best way to reach me and it's a good way to reach classmates. You will be expected to use proper grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation in your emails, in addition to respectful and appropriate language.

**\*\*Please use your UWSP account for all correspondence related to this class.**

### Course Description:

In *The Young Poet's Primer*, Pulitzer Prize winner and former poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks writes that poetry is "life distilled." Life, Brooks tells us, is "not always nice or proper or normal or happy or smooth or even-edged." The creation of poetry is unfolding all around us, even as we read this document. Contemporary poetry is a dynamic field, displaying an incredible variety of voices, experiences, vocabularies—or lives, as Brooks would say. Also, poems are both experiences and complex linguistic expressions, "the best words in the best order," as Samuel Taylor Coleridge observes. It is a premise of this course that life and language are intertwined, that the content of the poem is connection to its form and function. As Paul Engle states, "Poetry is ordinary language raised to the nth power. Poetry is boned with ideas, nerved and blooded with emotions, all held together by the delicate, tough skin of words." We will be reading a sampling of great poems written by a diverse group of writers; the assigned poetry will be modern, post-modern, abstract, concrete, and it will reflect the varieties of human experience all of us participate in: happiness, sorrow, ecstasy, ennui, fear and perhaps amazement. One hopes wonder, too.

### Required texts:

--Erdrich, Heid E. *New Voices of Native Nations*. 2018 Ed. **PURCHASE TEXT.**

--McClatchy, J.D. *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*. 2003 ed. **PURCHASE TEXT.**

--Selected texts available on Canvas, online or distributed in class (see syllabus)

--Supplies: Please bring pen and paper to each class. Also, you should have a pocket folder to keep handouts that you will be receiving for the course.

**Cell phone/Laptop policy (PLEASE READ AND COMMIT TO MEMORY!):** Use of cell phones, unless for a specific class purpose, IS PROHIBITED. I will deduct points from your final grade if I observe you texting during class. Also, I would prefer that you write up your exercises in a notebook or on notebook paper so you can share your writing in class with others and get written comments on it. See me if you need an exception to this to use a laptop computer.

**Recording Policy:** You may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom, and possibly being reported to the Dean of Students.

**Grading:**

Grades will be based on the following:

Major Assignments:

|                                            |            |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|
| Reader Response Essay                      | 25%        |
| Explication Essay                          | 25%        |
| Presentation                               | 25%        |
| In Class Written and Verbal Participation: | <u>25%</u> |
|                                            | 100%       |

**Assignment Format:** ALL OUT OF CLASS assignments must be typed on white paper double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman or Calibri. Use one-inch margins all around. Include a title with your essays.

At the top of each assignment you should type:

Your name

Eng. 377 Section 1

Date

**Grade Range:** As far as the grade range, a C represents average but satisfactory development of the above criteria, a B represents above average development, and an A representing superior development and effort towards the criteria above. Work that represents below average development will receive a D. D work suggests that a writer is not involved in his or her writing and is unaware of the contexts, format, and stylistic choices that affect that writing. Work that is not submitted will receive an F. **Note: Incompletes can be given only in the case of a medical emergency.** We will discuss the grading rubric in more detail later.

**SCALE:** A = 94-100 %    A- = 90-93%    B+ = 87-89%  
 B = 83-86%    B- = 80-82%    C+ = 77-79%    C = 73-76%    C- = 70-72%    D+ = 67-69%  
 D = 63-66%    D- = 60-62%    F = 0-59%

**Attendance Policy:** You are required to attend all class meetings—this is part of your participation grade. Final course grades may be lowered by one-third letter grade for each absence over two (i.e., B to a B- with 4 misses, a B to a C+ with five). I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences except for religious holidays or officially organized and documented UWSP events. In the case of religious holidays and college events, you must notify me in writing one class period in advance of an absence and complete the required work ahead of time. **PLEASE NOTE: I DO NOT NEED TO KNOW WHY YOU ARE OR WILL BE ABSENT—UNLESS YOU ARE DEALING WITH A SEVERE AND/OR CONTAGIOUS ILLNESS THAT NECESSITATES YOU MISSING MORE THAN A CLASS OR TWO—\*\***in which case you should email me about this. You are also responsible for acquiring any handouts or assignments you miss. I cannot reteach the class you have missed for you.

**\*\*If you do end up missing a lot of class because of health issues or for some other reason, it is always a good idea to contact me and all your professors BEFORE YOUR ABSENCES PILE UP in order to determine whether an accommodation can be made.**

**Late Assignment Policy:** All work is due the day indicated on the syllabus. Please make every attempt to make your presentation date/time (discussed later in the semester). Unless I indicate otherwise, final drafts of papers will be docked a half of a letter grade if they are not handed in the day they are due (or the following day). I will not accept late assignments one week beyond the due date except in the case of a documented illness or family emergency. **Please do not email me your papers unless you have made arrangements with me to do so. In most cases, I only accept emailed papers in extreme**

**emergencies, and you will need to contact me for my approval of this.**

**Presentation:** You are required to do a presentation on an American poet of your choice (preferably one who we don't cover in class—exceptions may be granted in some cases if the poet has an unusually large body of work OR impact on the wider culture). The presentation will include sample poems as handouts and an audio/visual element. You will need to turn in to me a write-up of their presentation which includes an analysis of one of the poems and discussion of how this poet/poems fit in with the ideas of the course and this will be due finals week (there's no official final for the class). The time allotted for the presentations will depend on how many students stay with the course by the final weeks.

**Participation:**

This course will involve a blend of lecture, reflective writing and discussion. It is important that you come prepared to participate in class activities and complete all the reading. This includes reading and marking poetry as well as writing a short comment or question about the work(s) assigned for the day. Discussions are particularly important in literature and writing classes, and students are expected to offer their opinions as both readers and writers. Good participation involves thoughtful responses to the assigned readings and a willingness to share your viewpoint. The participation requirement will not be met if you sit quietly through discussion and don't engage with the material. Sometimes, a probing, thought-provoking question can be more useful than an assertion. The essence of discussion is play, trying out new ideas and seeing how they "work." Art is dynamic, and one line of thinking—even if it seems "wrong" or incomplete—will always lead to something new and potentially beautiful. Art without risk is so often mired down in conventionality; thinking without risk (or, put another way, without play) leads to stagnation.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is taking credit for work that is not your own. There will be serious consequences if I find that you have stolen another people's work and turned it in as your own. You should use the MLA system of documentation for all citations (see Purdue University's OWL MLA site if you need a refresher course on in-text citations and Works Cited page formatting). One paper that you write will most likely include outside sources; the explication paper will ask you to rely on your ability to interpret a poem and provide a close reading and discussion of it.

**Academic Freedom Policy:**

As we are a 300 (junior and above) level course, we will be talking about topics that are potentially controversial and discomfiting for some. But as we are a 300-level course, I will expect that you have the maturity and intelligence to grapple with difficult topics such as race, gender, sexuality, mortality, etc. with grace. I will not censor your discussion. However, it is important that we respect one another's divergent opinions.

**Resources:** TLC (Tutoring Learning Center): The TLC, located in the basement of the library, is an excellent resource for this course or any course other where you asked to write regularly. They can also provide valuable help with brainstorming, proper citation/documentation of sources and strategies for revision. They DO NOT edit your papers. Appointments can be made ahead of time or are available on a drop-in basis.

**Students with learning differences** may want to visit UWSP's Office of Disability Services (6<sup>th</sup> floor ALB Hall x 3365) to work with that office.

## ***English 377 List of Readings, Major Due Dates Fall 2019***

**IMPORTANT:** Make sure you complete the assigned reading for each class period **BEFORE** you come to class. Also bring the texts to class that relate to that day's reading(s).

*\*Page numbers are taken from **Vintage Book of Contemporary Poetry (in most cases), New Poets of Native Nations (NN), CLASS HANDOUTS, or Canvas.** \*\*Note that changes may be made to this syllabus; if so, I'll email them to you*

- Week 1: W, 9/4** Introduction to the course, one another and the syllabus/Fill out Writing Profile/Pick up Whitman handout "Song of Myself" and terms
- Week 2: M, 9/9** Discussion of Canon//Begin Discussion of **Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (Read first 21 Whitman Leaves)/Read "What is a Poem?" (Muske handout) and "The Line/The Form/The Music" (Baker/Townsend handout)**
- W, 9/11** Read all of Whitman handout "Leaves of Grass"/Before class, pick a few lines from several stanzas that you want to discuss in class and write a few notes about those lines
- Week 3: M, 9/16** Lecture on Modernism/Where contemporary poetry is situated/**Selections from *Vintage*—(let me know if you don't yet have your book): Bishop(28, 34-38): "Shampoo," "In the Waiting Room," "One Art"; Roethke (44-46): "The Waking," "I Knew a Woman," "The Dark Time"**
- W, 9/18** **Berryman: (48-53) Excerpts from "The Dream Songs" stanzas 1, 4, 5, 14, 29, 46, 76, 77 Jarrell 58, 60-62): "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," "The Next Day"**
- Week 4: M, 9/23** **Moving into the Modern: Hayden (85-90): "Middle Passage"; Swenson (99-100): "Staying at Ed's Place," "Strawberrying; Dickey (155-158): "The Heaven of Animals," "The Hospital Window," "Cherrylog Road" (ONLINE—Poetryfoundation.org); Schuyler (175-177): "Shimmer," "Korean Mums" \*\*PRINT UP A CONTEMPORARY POEM YOU HAVE A REACTION TO OR ARE PARTIAL TO**
- W, 9/25** **Ginsberg (225-233): Excerpt from "A Supermarket in California," (ONLINE-poetryfoundation.org/Consider why he mentions Walt Whitman) "Howl," "Sunflower Sutra," "My Sad Self"; Confessional Poetry: Plath: "Morning Song,"**

"Daddy" (370); **Sexton:** "Her Kind"(307), "Music Swims Back to Me" (307); **Olds:** "You Kindly" (497)/**Discussion of Explication/First Essay Distributed**

**Week 5: M, 9/30** **Wright:** "Lying in a Hammock" (290), "A Blessing" (291); **Snyder: Read ALL**, study most closely "Riprap" (360) and "I Went into the Maverick Bar" (365).

**W, 10/2** **Strand:** "Where are the Waters of Childhood" (390); **\*\*Discussion of some of the poems you submitted on 9/23).**

**Week 6: M, 10/7** **Kizer:** "A Muse of Water" 192, "Pro Femina (195); **Rich:** "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" (345), "Diving into the Wreck" (on poets.org)  
**Levertov:** "Intrusion" "Seeing for a Moment" (180), "Prisoners" (181).

**W, 10/9** **Wright:** Read ALL (392-401) **Lorde:** Read ALL (402-408)

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**Week 7: M, 10/14** **Cisneros: (Handouts); Piercy (Handouts)**

**W, 10/16** **Graham:** "Over and Over Stitch" (549); "San Sepolchro" (551), **others TBD**

**Week 8: M, 10/21** **Readings from *Black Nature* anthology (Possible speaker?)/Handouts**  
**Explication Paper Due**

**W, 10/23** **Readings from *Black Nature* anthology poets continued**

**Week 9: M, 10/28** **Readings from *New Poets of Native Nations:* Read Introduction. Poems by Noodin and Pico (Selections TBD)**

**W, 10/30** **Readings from *New Poets of Native Nations:* Atsitty, Long Soldier(TBD) Also Harjo (from poetry.org)**

**Week 10: M, 11/4** **Readings from *NPNN:* Diaz, Forester and Opkik (TBD)**

**W, 11/6** **Readings from *NPNN* (Readings TBD)**

**Week 11: M, 11/11** **Dove: ALL (577-560); Komunyakha: ALL (535-539)**

**W, 11/13** **Doty:** "Brilliance" (563); "A Display of Mackerel" (565);  
**ALL of WS Merwin: (256-264)**

**Week 12: M, 11/18** **Conferences on Presentations (318 CCC); NO CLASS**

**W, 11/20** **Conferences on Presentations (318 CCC); NO CLASS**

**Week 13: M, 11/25** **Paper 2 Due/Poetry TBA**

**W, 11/27** **NO CLASS; AM Conferences on Presentations (318 CCC)**

**Weeks 14-15:** **Presentations**

**Finals WEEK:** **WRITE-UP & HANDOUT for Presentation: Due by 4 p.m. Wed., 12/16 318 CCC**