LIT 120.03: Introduction to Poetry

Professor John Hunt, LA 127
Fall 2015 (CRN 75341)
Office hours: TR 2-3 and by appointment
LA 106, TR 12:40-2:00
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Course outcomes:
This course will introduce you to a lot of good poems, teach you terms and concepts important for reading poetry, and help you feel your way into unfamiliar poetic texts and articulate their effects. Two in-class essay exams and two formal papers will assess your ability to use the class concepts in reading particular poems. A required memorization, recitation, and discussion will help you make one poem intimately your own. Occasional unannounced quizzes and short in-class writing assignments will encourage you to read the assigned poems carefully and look up unfamiliar words.

Texts:
We will not use a textbook. Instead, I will post a page of readings on Moodle before each class meeting (at least three days in advance), and when we’re discussing a poem in class I will project it on the screen for all to see. In addition to links to poems that are available online, each of my Moodle posts will define and discuss a few terms and concepts that are relevant to reading those poems. You must have the ability to access the course shell on Moodle, and you must access it regularly. If you would like to purchase a textbook to read on your own, I can suggest several good ones.

Schedule of reading assignments
(read everything by class time on the day specified):

Sept.
1 Reading some poems, my choices (no assigned reading)
3 Reading some poems, your choices (bring in a poem you like)

States of Mind
8 The speaker
10 Tone and voice
15 Personas
17 The second person

Images
22 Descriptive imagery
24 Concrete and abstract
29 Metaphor

Oct.
1 Other comparisons
Extended comparisons
Symbolism

Sound Effects
Rhyme and repetition
First in-class exam (no assigned reading)
Consonant patterns
Vowel patterns
The verse line
Rhythm

First paper due (4-5 pp.)

Nov.
Meter
Iambic verse

Mental Effects
Ambiguity and punning
Irony and innuendo
Allusion and outside knowledge
Second in-class exam (no assigned reading)
Paradox and contradiction
No class (Thanksgiving)

Formal Structures
Short and long stanzas
Sonnets
Villanelles and sestinas
Prose poems

Second paper due (6-7 pp.)

Memorization:
You’ll sign up for a day in which you’ll stand or sit at the front of the room and recite the lines, which we’ll project on the screen behind you so that everyone can think about the words as you speak them. After you’ve recited the poem, you should talk for at least 3 minutes about why you like the poem, or ask some focused questions that will get others talking about it.

Exams and papers:
The exam format will be simple. I’ll give you a poem you haven’t seen before, and ask you to describe all the interesting things you see happening in it, using the concepts that we’ve covered to that point. Organization and argument will be much less important than careful reading. For the papers, I’ll
expect a more organized, argumentative format. Guidelines for the papers, and suggestions for how to analyze poems in an expository essay, will be posted on Moodle.

Taking notes:
No matter whether you read poems on your computer, print them off and read them on paper, or some combination of the two, I recommend that you keep a notebook to record comments and questions as you read. This will help you start making sense of the material, it will give you questions and comments to bring into class, and it will supply you with raw material when it comes time to start a paper.

Finding poems:
I encourage you to read on your own and suggest poems that we might all read. In addition to books, good websites include www.poetryfoundation.org (also try their nice app for mobile devices), www.poets.org (try their poem-a-day, sent to your inbox), www.bartleby.com, and www.luminarium.com (medieval and Renaissance poetry only).

Grading:
Your course grade will be determined as follows:

- 20% first exam
- 20% second exam
- 20% first paper
- 25% second paper
- 15% participation, memorization, and quizzes

Attendance:
I will check attendance every day. If you must miss class for a good reason, let me know in advance or within one day, and I will note it as an excused absence. You are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences. More will lower your course grade.

Lateness:
Having everybody in their seats at the beginning of the hour is important to me, but I would rather have you in class than not. So if something comes up (or falls apart!), please join us late. If it happens often, however, it may lower your course grade. Similarly with papers: I will read and grade ones that arrive a day or two late, but if it happens more than once I may lower the grade.

Students with Disabilities:
Students with documented disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations. Please speak with me privately at the beginning of the semester about any accommodations you need, and be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator. I will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process.
Plagiarism:
All work submitted for this course must be your own and written solely for this course. While all the ideas discussed in our classroom are common property, unacknowledged use of others' written work, whether paraphrased or quoted directly without attribution, constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is an affront to the fundamental values of an academic institution, indicating a lack of respect for intellectual labor and a lack of responsibility for one's part in sustaining an academic community. You must acknowledge, by citation of name, title, and location, all work that has influenced your thinking, using established academic guidelines for documentation. If you violate this policy I will take action according to university procedures spelled out in the Student Conduct Code at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

Academic deadlines:
Please consult the university’s Official Dates and Deadlines calendar at http://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/201570ImportantDatesDeadlines.pdf and http://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/2015AutumnRegistrationDeadlineChart.pdf for all add/drop and fee deadlines. The last time to drop classes on CyberBear is 5:00 PM, September 21.