

EngLit 0316  
MW 4:30 - 5:50 Biddle 215  
Catherine S. Cox, PhD  
Spring Term 2016

### Course Syllabus: Reading Poetry

**Objectives:** EngLit 0316 is a seminar course designed to offer interested students an opportunity to learn, at an introductory level, how to read and understand different kinds of poetry and poetic language. The course will emphasize close reading, critical thinking, and interpretive analysis. We will examine the texts in their historical, intellectual, and literary contexts, considering a variety of introductory critical approaches. Enrollment in EngLit 0316 is selective, and presupposes academic skills, including facility with standard written and spoken English, appropriate for lower-division college work, as well as an active and open-minded interest in reading and writing about literature. The course is SE, speaking enhanced, for Gen Ed purposes.

**Format and Requirements:** We will read and analyze a sequence of poems, covering a range of authors, eras, subgenres, and subject matter. For organizational purposes, there will be two units of poetry selections followed by a third unit of project work (applied research and interpretation). For each of the first two units, each student will offer one oral class presentation with Q&A (about ten minutes total), and complete one graded in-class written exercise. For the third unit, there will be one individual project presentation that combines analysis, research, interpretation, and creativity. Specific requirements for the formal assignments will be provided in writing at the time each assignment is made. The primary mode of class activity will be close readings of the literary texts in connection with formal and informal student participation.

**Materials Needed:** The textbook *Poetry: An Introduction*, ed. Michael Meyer (Bedford, 6th or 7th edition) is the assigned text for class and assignment purposes. Be sure to activate/forward your Pitt email account for class information updates.

**Attendance Policy:** Class attendance is recommended every day and required on your scheduled presentation days. You are responsible for your scheduled presentations, the project due date, and all material covered in class, regardless of individual attendance; unexcused late work will not be accepted or arranged for grade credit. Students attending are reminded that class activities are more enjoyable and productive for everyone involved when standard classroom decorum and etiquette are observed. The use of cell phones or unapproved electronic equipment (iPods, laptops, pagers, etc) is not permitted during class hour; they must be silenced and stored out of view; violations detected during presentations (your own or a classmate's) or exercises will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

**University Policies:** All UPJ courses, including this one, are governed by the University's published academic and campus-life policies for students and instructors, including disability and student-support services and academic-integrity guidelines, which are available online at <<http://www.bulletins.pitt.edu/johnstown/index.html>>. Students who wish to request disability accommodations are urged to contact the Office of Health & Counseling Services, G-10 Student Union Building, 814.269-7119, as early as possible in the term; for other services, contact the Academic Success Center, G-16 Owen Library, 814.269-7998. I will be glad to discuss any of these policies and services with you at your request.

**Grade Information:** Your final grade will be determined by the average of your five earned letter grades: one grade for the two graded in-class exercises, averaged; one for each of the two presentations; and a double grade for the project. UPJ uses the standard four-point scale of minimum averages, as described in the UPJ bulletin. I do not curve class grades to meet any predetermined range or offer formal extra credit assignments, but I do take into account effort, attitude, participation, and improvement on an individual basis.

**Office Hours:** Office hours will be held for interested students on Tues & Thurs from 3:30 – 4:30; additional hours, by appointment, may be arranged. My office is at 227 Biddle Hall; telephone 814.269-7163; e-mail, [csox@pitt.edu](mailto:csox@pitt.edu)

#### Class Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topic/Activity</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
W 1/6	Introduction to course	
M 1/11	The elements of poetry; Frost's "Stopping by Woods"	
W 1/13	Beatty, "My Father Teaches Me"; first round of presentations assigned	

M 1/18	UPJ Holiday -- MLK	
W 1/20	Frost, "The Road Not Taken"	Begin presentations #1
M 1/25	Frost, "Acquainted with the Night"	
W 1/27	Housman, "To an Athlete Dying Young"	
M 2/1	Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle"	
W 2/3	Alvarez, "Sometimes the Words"	
M 2/8	Unit wrap-up written exercise	In-class exercise #1
W 2/10	Figurative language; Dickinson, "I Dwell," Whitman, "When I Heard"	
M 2/15	Shakespeare, "Shall I Compare Thee?"; pres #2 assigned	
W 2/17	Dickinson, "Because I Could Not Stop"	Begin presentations #2
M 2/22	Plath, "Mirror"	
W 2/24	Jarrell, "Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"	
M 2/29	Paz, "The Street"	
W 3/2	Williams, "Red Wheelbarrow" & "Just To Say"	
M 3/7	UPJ Holiday -- Spring Break	
W 3/9	UPJ Holiday -- Spring Break	
M 3/14	Unit wrap-up written exercise	In-class exercise #2
W 3/16	Critical writing & literary research; project assigned	
M 3/21	Confer on project ideas	
W 3/23	Confer on project work	
M 3/28	Optional make-up day (Easter Monday)	
W 3/30	Class will not meet today (CEA faculty conference)	
M 4/4	Confer on project work	
W 4/6	Project presentations	Begin project presentations
M 4/11	Presentations	
W 4/13	Presentations	
M 4/18	Presentations	
W 4/20	EngLit 0316 concludes	

**Note:** EngLit 0316 is not a difficult course. It will, however, require a commitment of time and effort on your part, and a willingness to think and to learn. If you choose to make reading, speaking, and writing a chore, then you will find the course boring and frustrating; if, on the other hand, you choose to give the course the time and effort that it deserves, then you will probably find the course interesting, challenging, and rewarding. The choice is yours.