

## ENGL 325-01: American Poetry, World War II-Present

Instructor: Dr. Susan B.A. Somers-Willett  
Class information: DI 279, W 5:30-8  
Blackboard site: <http://bb9.montclair.edu>  
Spring 2010

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Office: Dickson Hall 316  
Office hours: M 2-2:30 and 4-5:30 drop-in;  
W 4:30-5:30 by appointment

### COURSE POLICY STATEMENT

#### Course Description

After World War II, American poetry saw a wealth of new schools emerge, many of which abandoned venerated formalist traditions to explore more open poetics and public arts. In the first half of this course, we will study the varied terrain of post-war poetry by examining selected literary poetry movements active through the 1980s, including Projectivism, Confessionalism, the Beats, Black Arts, Feminism, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E. In the second half of the course, we will study more contemporary poetry by reading book-length works by selected authors. As part of the course, you will write weekly responses to the readings and two major papers.

**Satisfies area: 1c, TE 1d, 3 and TE 3b (Poetry), 4b (Minority), 4c (Women)**

#### Required Texts (available at the MSU Bookstore)

*The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 2*, eds. Jahan Ramazani, Richard Ellmann,  
Robert O'Clair (you will need this book immediately)

*Autobiography of Red*, Anne Carson

*leadbelly*, Tychimba Jess

*The City in Which I Love You*, Li-Young Lee

#### Grading

30% Mid-term paper

30% Final paper

25% Weekly responses

15% Attendance and participation

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is defined by the university as “any attempt by a student to submit as his/her own work that which has not been completed by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment, i.e., plagiarism” (please view the entire policy at <http://www.montclair.edu/deanstudents/regulations1.html>). This can include “double-dipping,” or using one piece of writing to satisfy the requirements of more than one course. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this classroom, and students engaging in academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students and punished to the full extent of university policy. A common disciplinary action in such cases is failure of the entire course. Repeat offenders may be expelled from the university.

## Decorum and Conduct

As a college student, you are expected to undertake your education with decorum. Our classroom will be treated as a free-speech zone, which means that all intellectually-informed opinions may be expressed. Keep in mind, however, that you will be held accountable for your views by both the instructor and the other students in the class, and that a college learning environment is designed so that students investigate their beliefs and personal biases. You are expected to behave with maturity and respect for others. If you exhibit behavior that is threatening or that disrupts the learning experience, disciplinary action will be sought according to university policy.

## Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are required in this course, and both will affect your grade. Missing **more than two classes** constitutes missing a significant part of the course and will affect your final grade. Should you miss class, you are responsible for meeting all assignment deadlines, contacting a member of class in order to keep up with readings and assignments, and notifying the instructor in advance of your absence if possible.

## Deadlines

All assignments are due at class time on the date posted. Because assignment deadlines are posted with ample advance notice, **extensions for assignments will not be granted. If you are absent on a day when an assignment is due, you are still responsible for meeting that deadline.** You can accomplish this by either having a classmate turn in your work for you, turning the assignment in on Blackboard, or by e-mailing the assignment to the instructor as a Microsoft Word attachment or PDF.

In the event that extenuating circumstances prevent you from meeting an assignment deadline, students will be penalized one letter grade per class period that the assignment is late. For example, if a paper is due on a Tuesday at class time, a paper turned in between class on Tuesday and class on Thursday would receive a deduction of one letter grade; a paper turned in between class on Thursday and class on Tuesday would receive a deduction of two letter grades. Exceptions to this policy would have to be made *in advance* of an assignment deadline, not after the deadline has passed.

## Information for Students with Disabilities

Both the university and I are committed to keeping this classroom and course material accessible. If you have a learning or physical disability, please inform me at the beginning of the course either after class or in office hours. In the rare case where a class assignment is not accessible, an alternative assignment requiring the exercise of equal skill and knowledge can be arranged.

## Using Blackboard 9

Please note that we will be piloting Blackboard 9 in this course and you will be responsible for completing assignments via this new (and much more versatile!) workspace. **To access this site, you need to type in (or bookmark) the address <http://bb9.montclair.edu> and login using your Web ID.** No content for our course will be posted on the old Blackboard 7 interface, where your other courses reside. It is up to you to remember to access our course via the new interface.

## Weekly Blog Responses

Before we meet for class each week, you should write a 2-4 paragraph response to our readings via our class blog on Blackboard. The method and shape of your response is up to you, and it should arise organically from a query, issue, or opinion brought on by your engagement with that week's texts. Occasionally I will post a question or two to get the juices flowing, although you should not feel obligated to answer those queries if some other topic piques your interest. **These responses should be completed BEFORE we meet for class; responses made after class time will not be counted.**

These responses should not entirely be a summary or review of the text, but instead should reflect an aspect of the text(s) with which you engaged. Although they are brief, they should reflect serious academic thought. I'm looking for independent thinking that shows you can make connections between our texts and scholarly issues. Although you may choose to write about an aspect of the text we discussed in class, be mindful not to regurgitate our class discussions. You should feel free in your response to react to other people's responses in respectful, intelligent, ways (i.e., no flame wars, please). A good rule of thumb is to respond to a classmate as if he or she is sitting next to you in class.

The purposes of these weekly responses are A) to make sure you are keeping up with the reading and B) to serve as a bank of topics that you might pursue later in a longer paper. The responses will be evaluated on a three-point scale of above average (3), average (2), and below average (1). Collectively, these responses will represent 25% of your grade.

In order to post your response, simply click on the "Blog" command on the Blackboard menu, then click on "Course Blog: American Poetry WWII-Present." Read that week's entry prompt and then click "comment" to post your response for the week (you may cut-and-paste from a word processing program if you wish).

## Formatting Papers

Any paper you submit for this class should be typed, double-spaced, and set in a professional 12-point serif typeface such as Times New Roman or Garamond (please no Arial or Courier) with 1-inch margins. You are *always* encouraged to use the first person in your writing for this class.

## Grading Policies

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The purpose of having a full range of grades (A through F) is to represent true levels of academic achievement. Although I'm sure everyone would like to make As or Bs on their class assignments, chances are that not everyone will receive them.

When receiving graded assignments, it may help to keep in mind these descriptions of different levels of student achievement:

- F – Represents failure (or no credit) and means that work was either completed at a level not worthy of credit, or not completed at all.
- D – Achievement worthy of credit, but which does not meet assignment/course requirements fully.
- C – Achievement that meets the assignment/course requirements in every respect and shows adequate understanding and application of the course material.
- B – Achievement *significantly above* the level necessary to meet assignment/course requirements. Such work demonstrates good application of instructional material and makes some successful and original connections beyond it.
- A – achievement that is *outstanding and unique* relative to the assignment/course requirements. Such work demonstrates clear and accurate independent thought and goes well beyond the application of instructional material to make new scholarly connections and understandings. The student's voice is polished and clearly original.

Please remember that a “C” is not a bad grade, merely an average one; that Bs represent good, above-average work; and As represent excellent work that achieves the very best in undergraduate or graduate thinking and writing. Also remember that in paper-writing assignments, length is independent of quality; a long paper does not necessarily indicate a good paper.

I will occasionally retain copies of student writing or exercises to serve as samples in the future. Please be assured that if I choose your paper as a sample, I will remove any identifying information from it and use it for instructional purposes only. If you prefer that your writing not be used for this purpose, simply let me know.

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Key: Items with page numbers are from the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Vol. 2*  
BB=Item on class Blackboard 9 page under "Readings"

### SYLLABUS (subject to change)

#### WEEK 1: Introduction

W 1/20 First-day materials distributed

#### WEEK 2: Black Mountain School/Projective Verse

W 1/27 **\*Bring a laptop computer to class, if you have one**  
Read: Olson, "Projective Verse" (1053-1061), "Sun/Right in My Eye" (14-15);  
Levertov, "The Ache of Marriage" (250); Creely "I Know a Man" (330)  
BB 9 Introduction & review of course policies

#### WEEK 3: Confessional Poetry

W 2/3 **Blog response 1 due**  
Read: Lowell, "Commander Lowell" (127); Plath, bio (593-5), "Morning Song" (598), "Tulips" (600), "Daddy" (606), "Fever 103" (608), "Ariel" (611), "Lady Lazarus" (612), "Edge" (614); Sexton, "Her Kind" (432), "The Truth the Dead Know" (433), "Starry Night" (435), "The Room of My Life" (437); Olds, "The Exact Moment of His Death," (808)

#### WEEK 4

W 2/10 **SNOW DAY—University closed**

#### WEEK 5: Beat Poetry

W 2/17 **Blog response 2 due**  
Read: Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation" (BB); Ginsberg, "Notes on Recording Howl" (1075-1077), Howl (337-44), "A Supermarket in California" (344-5), "Sunflower Sutra" (345-6); "America" (347-349)

#### WEEK 6: Black Arts Poetry

W 2/24 **Blog response 3 due**  
Read: Baraka, "The Myth of Negro Literature" (1077-1081), "A Poem for Black Hearts" (635), "SOS" (BB), "Black Art" (BB); Stewart, "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist" (BB); Giovanni, "For Saundra," "Beautiful Black Men," "Nikki-Rosa" (BB); Brooks, "A Primer for Blacks" (BB)

**WEEK 7: Feminism and Poetry****W 3/3      Blog response 4 due****Mid-term paper assigned**

Read: Rich, “When We Dead Awaken” (1086-1096), “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” (459), “Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law” (459-63), “Diving into the Wreck” (467-69), “Power” (469); Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury” (BB), “Coal” (616), “Now that I Am Forever with Child” (617); Clifton, “homage to my hips” (660), “at the cemetery” (661-662), “to my last period” (663)

**WEEK 8: L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry****W 3/10      Blog response 5 due**

Read: Bernstein, “Semblance” (1112-1114), Hejinian, Selections from *My Life* (789-791), Howe, [Cannot Be] (690) [Gabion] (691); Mullen, selections from *Sleeping with the Dictionary* (BB)

**WEEK 9****W 3/17      NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK****WEEK 10: Field Trip****W 3/24      Mid-term paper due, submit via BB****Field trip to the Bowery Poetry Club, 8pm—details TBA****WEEK 11: Anne Carson****W 3/31      Blog responses 6 and 7 due**Read: Carson, *Autobiography of Red*Introduction to Jess’ *Leadbelly* and the blues**WEEK 12: Take-home assignment****W 4/7      Class does not meet—complete take-home assignment:**

Read Tyehimba Jess, *Leadbelly*. Write a response to the book as well as three questions you’d like to ask the author about the book (**Blog responses 8 and 9**).

**WEEK 13: Tyehimba Jess****W 4/14      Tyehimba Jess reading and class visit—details TBA****Final paper assigned****WEEK 14: Li-Young Lee****W 4/21      Blog response 10**Read: Li-Young Lee, *The City in Which I Love You***WEEK 15: Closing session****W 4/28      Peer review of final paper outlines and drafts****Final papers due Wed. May 5, 5pm, via Blackboard.**