

Introduction to Poetry:
The Unification of the Sacred and the Profane

3 credits

Meeting Time MWF 10:00 – 10:50 am
SPRING TERM, 2017

NSH 209

INSTRUCTOR: TIMOTHY BLACK
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CLASS MATERIALS:

TEXT: Mary Oliver, “A Poetry Handbook”
Talking Dirty to the Gods—Yusef Komunyakaa
Neon Vernacular—Komunyakaa (available free on my webpage)

Printed copies of poems from my Moodle site

POETRY ASSIGNMENT MATERIALS: These can be as simple as a three ring binder or as intricate as a photo album. Some students have done wonders with old 12 inch by 12 inch calendars. You might use art materials, photos, old magazines, old receipts, odd & ends, this & that. flotsam & jetsam...

Please also bring a notebook of some kind that you can take notes in and track your thinking.

COURSE INTRODUCTION:

Here are the primary questions we're going to be asking this semester: How does this poem make meaning? How do we discuss poetry to enrich our understanding of poetry, ourselves, and our lives? How does poetry meld two seemingly different ideas and ideals, i.e. the Sacred and the Profane? We'll learn about where poetry has been, where it is at present, and we'll even guess about where it is headed. We'll ask a lot of questions without worrying if they are good questions or if the answers are even close to correct. We'll read, listen to and watch a good deal of poetry in this class and by the end of it we will know more about what poetry is and how we can enjoy it in our lives.

USING COMPUTERS IN THIS CLASS:

You'll see below that we will be using computers not only to access some of the material we'll be studying, but we'll also be turning in a percentage of our work in our Moodle Area. If you have never heard this Moodle word before you will need to visit one of our computer labs on campus and have one of the staff their walk you through the ins and outs of using Moodle. It's really quite easy. Here is a link that should help you:

<http://www.linnbenton.edu/go/computer-resources-and-labs>

COURSE CONTENT:

A. Sound of Poetry

musical devices
rhythm and meter
patterns
music

B. Sense of Poetry

voice
words
images
figures of speech
themes
forms

LITERATURE OUTCOMES:

All literature courses at LBCC strive to achieve common long-range objectives: that our students will:

- 1) Recognize how literature helps in understanding the human condition.
- 2) Interpret literature through critical reading.
- 3) Demonstrate how literature enhances personal awareness and creativity.
- 4) Write and speak confidently about their own and others' ideas.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS:

1. Poetry Anthology Assignment. This assignment is worth about half of your grade in this class. The link will explain all that you need to know about it, including the helpful hint that you should begin taking it seriously during the first week of this course.

2. Weekly response questions to **two** poems:

Each week you will be offered three questions in our class's Moodle Area. You can choose **two** of those questions to answer. Your answers should be thoughtful but not too long. One or two paragraphs should be all it takes to offer a thoughtful response. Remember: These responses are helping you to prepare for the creation of your Poetry Anthology. The questions will ask you to use some of the language that you are encountering in this class and use it to discuss a poem that you have discovered that you like.

Example:

During the first week of our class we are reading **“Reading Poems”** and **“Imitation”** from the Oliver book. The questions that you will encounter in our Moodle Area for the first week are going to relate to the topics covered in those chapters.

On each Monday of the term, you should always visit the Moodle Area of our class. There you will discover the three questions for that week. For week one you will discover these questions:

a. Use the steps outlined in our Poetry Anthology Assignment instructions to discover a new poem on the topic of your choice. After you have found a poem, follow the instructions for how to paraphrase a poem. **Paraphrase** the poem you have discovered. Remember to include the citation information for the poem you have discovered: Title of poem, name of author, journal it was published in and the date it was published.

To answer this question all you would have to do is use a word processor and write a paraphrase of the poem you have discovered.

b. Use the steps outlined in our Poetry Anthology Assignment instructions to discover a new poem on the topic of your choice. Write a paragraph that explores how the poet's use of imagery in that poem affects the emotions of its readers.

c. Write a poem between 6 and 12 lines long. Then, in a few paragraphs, explain what the poem means; any meanings that were unintentional; how you used imagery to enhance your poem; and how this poem reveals an aspect of the human condition.

So, in each week of the class, you will answer only two of the three questions available in the Moodle Area.

3. IMPERSONATING A POET ASSIGNMENT

Each student will deliver an oral interpretation of a favorite poem from our downloaded poems list, the journals, or Etheridge Knight's work. Your delivery of this poem should help us share in the pleasure of this poem and let us know that you have worked with this poem enough to give us a masterful recitation.

Please use your budding research skills to find out a little something about the poet that you can tell us. Some poets will have had Wikipedia articles written about them. Try to share a small detail about the poet. How many poems has the poet published? What state does he or she live in? Who are the poets that this poet loves? Anything that you might discover will enhance our understanding.

Your purpose in this assignment is to bring the poem to life as you recite it. Make us share your enthusiasm.

Your recitation of the poem will be graded on the following:

- How well have you memorized the poem?
- Is your enunciation clear? Can we understand every single word?
- Are you consistently holding eye contact with the class?
- How enthusiastic is the reader? Does this sound like something he just forced himself to remember or was learning this poem a labor of love because the student created a genuine connection with the poem that he wants to share?
- Information about or question for the poet?

MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPERSONATING A POET ASSIGNMENT: IMPERSONATING A POET

This assignment invites you to explore the life of any poet that you encounter in our textbook, the literary journals, or any other printed book of poems.

You will offer the class an oral presentation in which you will impersonate this poet by sharing some biographical information about “your” life (the poet’s life). To do well on this assignment, you will need to learn about the poet’s life, choosing interesting biographical moments to discuss from the poet’s perspective. You can make guesses about how the poet’s life has affected his or her poetry. Remember, you are acting as if you are the poet. You should conclude your presentation by reciting, from memory, a specific poem from that poet that you really enjoy.

You are encouraged to dress up as the poet or at least bring in a prop that you can discuss a little bit from the poet’s perspective.

Your grade will be based on how smoothly your impersonation of the poet flows, on how well you have connected some facts of the poet’s life with his or her poetry, and of course on how well you have memorized and delivered the poem. This is an assignment that should not be left to the last moment. You are invited to prepare early and practice this presentation a few times before you attempt to deliver it to the class. If your poet is alive, it might be a good idea to see if you can use Youtube to find videos of your poet reading, so you can get a feel for what this poet is like. Interviews, printed, audio, or in video, will also be helpful places to turn to learn more about your poet.

On the day of your presentation, you will hand me a printout of the poem you will be reciting, and a bibliography that lets me know where you discovered the information that you have learned about this poet.

4. Midterm exam (week 5) and final exam will cover “Terms For Review.” There will also be an essay question on the final exam.

POINTS POSSIBLE:

1. Poetry Anthology Assignment. 300 points.
2. 6 TPCASTT Sheets. 200 points.
3. Komunyakaa Analysis 50 points.
4. Midterm (Workshop) and Final points 100

5. 6 Original Poems. 150 points

Approximate total: 770 points

You will be able to track all of your scores in the Moodle Area.

GRADING SCALE:

A = 90-100%
80-90%

C = 70-80% B =
D = 60-70% **SPECIAL**

NEEDS:

Students who have emergency medical information or who might need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, or students with documented disabilities who have special needs, should consult with the instructor no later than the first week of the term. If additional assistance is required, the student should contact LBCC's Office of Disability Services at 917-4789. **PLAGIARISM:**

Using another person's work as your own or using information or ideas without proper citations can lead to your failing the assignment or class. Use in-text citations and a Works Cited list whenever you use outside sources. Please come to my office hours for one on one instruction about how to cite your sources if you are worried about unintentional plagiarism.

MAKING UP WORK:

The weekly response questions cannot be made up. Students may submit their answers for the weekly response questions anytime from Monday to Friday. If you miss that five day window it will be recorded as a zero in the grade book. Missing one will not hurt too much, but you don't want to miss more than one. Remember that the effort that you apply to the weekly response questions pays off not only for that week's assignment but also on your Poetry Anthology Assignment, as you'll need to be collecting the good poems you find to place them in your anthology.

Please make sure to be there for the midterm and final.

ATTENDANCE:

Missing a fourth session of this class will cause you to lose a letter grade. Missing five classes will cause your grade to drop by another letter grade.

Each class after missing five classes will also lead to the lowering of your grade by a letter.

Disability Statement:

You should meet with your instructor during the first week of class if

- You have a documented disability and need accommodations,
- Your instructor needs to know medical information about you, or
- You need special arrangements in the event of an emergency.

If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.

Nondiscrimination Statement:

LBCC prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, ethnicity, use of native language, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, veteran status, age, or any other status protected under applicable federal, state, or local laws.