

## **HONR 206: HONORS SEMINAR POETRY AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE**

Spring 2012

Class: MW 4 – 5:15

Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30 Office: Welles 217B

W 2:30-3:30

Dr. Rob Doggett, Department of English

Classroom: Fraser 104

### **Course Summary:**

This course will focus on a range of questions connected to the study of poetry. Some of these questions will center on aesthetics: Is the goal of poetry the creation of something beautiful? Is it possible to judge poetic beauty? What are the implications (at the levels of gender, race, and social class) of establishing “objective” criteria for evaluating poetic beauty? Other questions will focus more broadly on the study of poetry: What is the role of poetry in the humanities? What aspects of poetry have historically been emphasized in the study of literature? How have things changed recently and where might the study of poetry go in the future? And still other questions will address the different ways in which we read poetry: How have prior critics and poets defined poetic analysis? Does the “meaning” of a poem reside in the text, the reader, or in an interchange between the two? What is at stake, for our own culture, in how poetry is taught and read?

These are difficult questions, so as a starting point for thinking about them we will draw upon the experience of prior critics, on the comments of poets themselves, on philosophers who have written about aesthetics, and on works by contemporary literary theorists. As a way of grounding our discussions, we will also spend a good portion of the semester engaged in detailed analysis of works by a large and varied selection of poets.

Hopefully, when you leave this course, you will have a more than solid footing in poetic analysis, and you will have a strong foundation for thinking about and providing your own answers to questions of poetic beauty, poetic analysis, and the role of poetry / literature in the university and cultural at large. Most important, though, I hope you will come away from this class with a deeper understanding of how and why the study of poetry can serve as a form of intellectual joy that can continue well after you’ve finished your college career.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

1. Formulate thoughtful and critically informed answers to fundamental questions about poetry as listed in the course overview.
2. Understand the basics of poetic analysis.
3. Offer thoughtful readings of poetry that focus in particular on the interconnection between form and content in poetic analysis.

### **Required Texts:**

Eagleton, Terry. *How to Read a Poem*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

Kaplan, Charles and William Davis Anderson, eds. *Criticism: Major Statements*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: St. Martin’s, 2000.

## **Grades**

You will be graded on a 100 point scale, with a number of possible points available for the course components listed below. A total of 94 points is required for an A, a total of 90.5 is required for an A-, 88 for a B+, 84 for a B, 80 for a B-, etc.

Participation	20 possible points
Take Home Exam 1	20 possible points
Take Home Exam 2	20 possible points
Take Home Exam 3	20 possible points
Final Paper	20 possible points