

English 120: Reading Literature

Fall 2006

Ms. Dobbs

Office: Mears 213, ext. 3108

Office Hours: TTh 3-4, W 4-5, or by appointment, if you have class during these times

Description

An introduction to the use of language in literature through the study of poetry and short stories. We focus especially on learning how to read closely and explicate literary texts, but we take a look at other critical approaches in the second half of the semester.

Texts

X.J. Kennedy & Dana Gioia *An Introduction to Poetry*, 11th ed (Longman, 2005) (K&G)
Richard Bausch & R.V. Cassill, *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, Shorter Seventh Edition (Norton, 2006) (B&C)

Schedule

For your assigned readings in K&G, consider **all** the poems included in an assignment or section, but concentrate on those in the exercises. Be prepared to **present** each exercise in class. I suggest that you have **written notes** from which you can speak, but I will not collect these. As you read through chapters, creating a "**glossary**" of the terms of literary analysis is a good idea. "Writer's Perspective" and "Writing Critically" appear at the end of each chapter, and I've included them in the assignments to encourage you to look at them, but for class preparation, you need only skim these sections. Finally, although I have not assigned Chapter 13, "Myth and Narrative," or Chapter 14, "Poetry and Personal Identity," I also encourage you to read both. Keep your eye out for five poems you'd like us to analyze completely.

For each of the short stories in B&C before Week 14, be prepared to present an analysis (explication) of the particular narrative element (e.g. plot) on which we're focused that day. But allot some preparation time as well to the way the other narrative elements in the story work. When B&C have additional material related to a story, be sure to read it.

Week Assignment

8/25 Introduction to course

Kennedy and Gioia

- 1 a) Preface, xxxi-xxxiv
Reading a Poem (Subject & Theme; Kinds of Poems), 5-20
Exercise: Be prepared to discuss everything you notice about Piercy's "September Afternoon at Four O'Clock" (in this packet).
- b) Tone, 21-27
Exercise: Analyze the subject, theme, and tone in Whitman's "To a Locomotive in Winter" (24) and Dickinson's "I like to see it lap the miles" (25) individually; then compare and contrast them in all three categories.
- c) The Person in the Poem (Persona/Voice), 27-35
Irony (Kinds), 35-52
Exercise: Analyze the kind of irony in Betjeman's "In Westminster Abbey" (39). How and when is the irony revealed?
Look carefully at the "Example Paragraph" on page 10 in this packet. Analyze the paragraph and be prepared to describe the features you think characterize it.

Literal Language

- 2 a) Words: Literal Meaning, 53-57; Saying and Suggesting, 80-93
Exercise: Analyze word patterns in Larkin's "Cut Grass" (in this packet) That is, into what groups (patterns), according to literal meaning (denotation or connotation), do the words of the poem fall? What relations do you find between pairs of groups?
Assignment of poem for Argument 1.
- b) More on word patterns; structure in a poem
Exercise: Analyze word patterns in Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" (489)
- c) **First argument due (paragraph of 200-250 words)**
- 3 a) Etymology, 58-60, Allusion, 60-62
Exercise: Do the exercises on 61-62. Try your hand at the analysis of a possible structure (what are its parts?) of Wilbur's "In the Elegy Season" (in this packet).

Imagery

- b) Imagery, 94-117
Exercise: List all the examples of imagery, according to **kind**, that you find in Keats' "To Autumn" (505). What is the structure of this poem?
- c) More on imagery & word patterns (Word Choice & Word Order, 62-79)
Exercise: Analyze the structure, the **kinds** and **use** of imagery, and the word patterns in Roethke's "Root Cellar" (96). What is the most important line in this poem?
Assignment of poem for Argument 2

Figurative Language

- 4 a) Figures of Speech (Metaphor and Simile), 118-28
Exercise: Analyze the structure of the poem and the **kinds** and **use** of figures in Plath's "Metaphors" (124). Think also about word groups.
Assignment for Argument 2
- b) More on figures
Exercise: Analyze the **kinds** and **use** of figures and of imagery in Shakespeare's "That Time of Year" (542). Think also about word patterns, structure, subject, and theme .
- c) **Second argument due (500-550 words)**
- 5 a) Symbol and Allegory, 259-68
Exercise: Do a complete analysis of Herbert's poem "The World" (264).

Poetry as Sound

- b) Song and Sound, 141-87
Exercise: Identify the **kinds** and **use** of sound devices in Thomas's "Fern Hill" (556).
- c) Rhythm 188-96; introduction to meter
Exercise: Do a complete analysis, including the **kinds** and **use** of sound patterns, of

Frost's "Desert Places" (180).

- 6 a) Meter, 196-211
Exercise: Scan 1 & 2 (204).
- b) Exercise: Scan 3 & 4 (205).
- c) Closed Form, Open Form, 212-58
Sight-scanning
- 7 a) More on form
Exercise: Do a complete analysis of Williams's "The Dance" (243).
List of five poems you'd like to explicate due **in class**
- b) Do a complete analysis of Rich's "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" (11).
- c) Midsemester examination

Fall Break

From now on, we'll do a mixture of things: on five days, we'll discuss complete explications of the poems we've selected; we'll spend a couple of classes discussing critical theories; and we'll turn to the elements of narrative and begin to analyze short stories. For the readings in critical theory, come to class prepared to discuss your initial understanding both of each theory, its assumptions, its possible limitations, and its similarities and differences in comparison to other theories. Think particularly about assumptions related to meaning (where does it "exist"? how is it created?). Use K&G's examples of the application of theories to fill out your understanding.

- 9 a) Poem 1
- b) Poem 2
- c) Critical Theory (K&G, 658):
"Formalist Criticism" (659-60), "Biographical Criticism" (663-664), "Historical Criticism" (666-67), "Psychological Criticism" (670-71), and "Mythological Criticism" (672-73)

Short Fiction

- 10 a) Introduction to narrative and fiction
Writing [and thinking] about Fiction (xv-xxiii)
- Plot**
- b) Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" (661)
- c) Malamud's "Angel Levine" (459)
- 11 a) O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" (627)

Character

- b) Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (262)
Assignment of poem for Argument 3
- c) Critical Theory (K&G):
"Sociological Criticism" (675-76), "Gender Criticism" (678), "Reader-Response Criticism"

(680-81), "Deconstructionist Criticism" (684-85) "Cultural Studies" (687-89)

12 a) Joyce's "Araby" (351)

Narrator

b) Poem 3

Third argument due (750-800 words)

c) **Thanksgiving**

13) a) Ellison's "King of the Bingo Game" (228)

Setting

b) O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation" (639)

c) Poem 4

Complete Explications (for each of these last two short stories, choose the narrative element on which you concentrate)

14 a) Mansfield's "The Garden Party" (handout)

b) Poem 5

c) Woolf's "Kew Gardens" (819)

Final examination at 2 PM on Tuesday, December 12.