Winter 2004  

University of Waterloo

English 348—American Poetry & Poetics  
T Th 10-11:20, DWE 3522A

Instructor: Kevin McGuirk, HH 263, x2419  
Office Hours: T 2:30-4, F 12:45-1:30, and by appointment

Text:
Ramazani et al, eds. The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry  
3rd edition, vols. 1 & 2

The Course:
This course will survey a number of developments in American poetry & poetics  
from Whitman to the present.

Schedule:
* selections from essays and other writings by poets are included at the back  
of each volume of the anthology. Readings indicated as “poetics” below can be  
found among those selections.  
* starting on February 10 we will be reading from volume 2, with the exception  
of the readings by Langston Hughes (February 24-26)

Jan 6, 8 introduction; Whitman: Song of Myself 1-14, and poetics  
Jan 13, 15 remaining poems by Whitman  
Jan 20, 22 Emily Dickinson: poems and poetics  
Jan 27, 29 Ezra Pound: “In a Station of the Metro” and poetics; Gertrude  
Stein: “Tender Buttons” and poetics; Marianne Moore: poems and poetics;  
William Carlos Williams: poems to page 302 and poetics  
Feb 3, 5 Wallace Stevens: poems and poetics  
Feb 10, 12 Charles Olson: “Projective Verse” (in volume 2 poetics); Robert  
Creeley: poems

**reading week**

Feb 24, 26 Langston Hughes (volume 1) & Amiri Baraka: poems and poetics  
Mar 2, 4 Allen Ginsberg: poems and poetics  
Mar 9, 11 Robert Lowell & Sylvia Plath: poems  
Mar 16, 18 Adrienne Rich: poems and poetics; Elizabeth Bishop: poems  
Mar 23, 25 A.R. Ammons: poems; recent developments (TBA)

Mar 30, April 1 recent developments continued

ESSAY DUE MARCH 25

A note on assigned readings and classes: we will keep to the schedule, and the  
skeleton of readings I’ve outlined here. I will indicate poems to which you  
should give special emphasis in your reading as we proceed. However, since we  
have an anthology with a rich selection of poetry, there will be minor  
adjustments as we go, in order to make best use of the resource we have.  
Students should try to read widely. You must bring your anthology to class  
with you.

ASSIGNMENTS:

presentation: 15%

Each student will make a presentation solo or with a partner. Sign up during  
the first or second week of classes. The presentation should take 10-15  
minutes (I will cut you off at 15 minutes-unless you are being really  
interesting). Your task is to explore a word (or perhaps pair of words) chosen
from a poem under study on the day of your presentation and to use whatever knowledge or insight your exploration yields to enhance our sense of the meaning of a passage or work as a whole. Consider the word in terms of any or all of the following: sound, etymology, connotation, peculiarity of usage, cultural resonance. Your mark will be based on clarity of exposition, rhetorical aplomb (how you address your audience), and interpretive zing (invention and insight in analysis). If you use overheads do so sparingly, and only for illustration (the content of your presentation must be delivered orally).

3 brief essays: 15% total
Over the course of the term you will write three brief pieces—analysis, speculation, inquiry—on a word, a line, or a fragment of a poem under study. The essay must be handed in to me, or delivered electronically (kmguirk@watarts.uwaterloo.ca), on the day before the day on which we take up the material you discuss in your essay. Each essay should be a maximum of 300 words. You may submit essays at any time during the term, with this restriction: at least two must be submitted before reading week.

final essay: 35%
Topics will be assigned, but you may develop your own topic in consultation with me. The essay should be at least 2000 words in length (maximum 2500 words) and explore a topic with analytic rigour and stylistic precision. Some use of secondary material will be required. Details will be provided on the assignment sheet. The essay is due on March 25.

final exam: 35%
The final exam will take place during a 2-hour period. It will be composed of two essay questions. A selection of questions will be distributed on the last day of classes, from which you will choose two, so that you can prepare the essays that you will write out during the exam period.

ESSAY POLICIES:
Late essays: extensions of a few days can be negotiated with me. Anything longer must be accompanied by documentation showing clear and compelling justification for late submission.
Plagiarism: it is illegal, it is serious; in the public world it is "actionable," i.e. you can be sued. In the university, it can result in loss of credit or suspension. See the university’s Policy #71 online. It is your responsibility to understand and avoid plagiarism.