Course Information:
instructor: Kevin McGuirk
meeting time & place: MW 2:30-4:00, HH 336
instructor contact: office HH 263; phone x32419; email kmcguirk@uwaterloo.ca
office hours: MW 4:00-5:00 and by appointment
preferred method of contact: office hours and appointments

Course Description:
A course on poetry and poetics, poems and theories, English 348 will look at poetry that explores American answers (and a few others) to the question what is poetry? In the absence of a native literary tradition, American poetry, at least since Whitman, has been both experimental and theoretical. The question of what poetry is, or what it’s for, is always implicit. American poetry has also been formally adventurous, discursively eclectic, and socially alert. If the poetry is diverse, so must be our methods. Through discussion and writing assignments, we will consider poems variously as formal and material objects; as expressions of biographical and cultural meaning; as personal, social, and rhetorical events; and as investigations of “method” in their own right.
The schedule is divided roughly into three sections. First, we’ll read Emily Dickinson and Anne Carson, women poets and generic innovators writing about traditional lyric themes. Then, we’ll look at three poets who use poetry as a vehicle for exploring American ways of thinking about self, place, and language. We’ll conclude by reading about poetry in performance and the “cultural work” of poetry in connection with American performance of the 1960s and 1970s, the Jamaican poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, and some recent “cowboy” poets.

What I want you to get from the course:
An enriched sense of what poetry is as a material and social phenomenon.
The ability to respond with increased understanding to the formal and rhetorical dimensions of poems.
Increased comfort with difficulty and opacity—that is, with not-knowing—along with the ability to ask clarifying questions.
Knowledge of and appreciation for the basic tendencies and themes of American poetry.
The ability to theorize poetry; in other words, to articulate a complex, interesting answer to the question what is poetry?
The ability to write more effectively and imaginatively about literature in general.

What I want you to do in the course:
Write about and discuss poetry frequently; formally, in brief assignments and homework for the course.
Ask questions in class: participate; listen to your peers.
Read poetry out loud.
Take notes and make sure you grasp the major concerns of the course as well as the distinctive work of each poem and poet; write an exam demonstrating this grasp.
Write an extended essay based on careful reflection, analysis, and revision.

Texts:
Emily Dickinson, The Pocket Emily Dickinson, Shambhala
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, Signet
Wallace Stevens, The Emperor of Ice-Cream, Dover
Elizabeth Bishop, Geography III, FSG
Anne Carson, Autobiography of Red, Vintage
Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mi Revalueshanary Fren, Penguin
coursepack ( [C] on the schedule of readings)
### Approximate Schedule of Readings:

*ALWAYS BRING YOUR TEXT TO CLASS!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
<th>IDEAS &amp; KEYWORDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 4, 9</td>
<td>Introductions; Close reading</td>
<td>Reading on the right hand side of the brain; sound</td>
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<td>January 11, 16</td>
<td>Bernstein, <em>from “Artifice of Absorption”</em></td>
<td>[C 1-6]</td>
<td>Realism, absorption, anti-absorption, difficulty, artifice</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16, 18, 23</td>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>Poems TBA, three letters [C 7-8]</td>
<td>Lyric, artifice, soul, editing history, subjectivity, nature</td>
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<td>February 1, 6, 8</td>
<td>Whitman, poems and “Preface to <em>Leaves of Grass</em>”</td>
<td>Poems TBA, Preface[C 9]</td>
<td>“I”; the line; the body; America</td>
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<td>February 13, 15, 27, 29</td>
<td>Stevens, <em>Emperor &amp; “Adagia</em> [C 10-11], then poems in [C 12-13]</td>
<td>Poems TBA, but browse all.</td>
<td>Sound, song, voice; imagination and the physical world</td>
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<td>March 5, 7, 12</td>
<td>Bishop, <em>Geography III</em></td>
<td>Read all.</td>
<td>Perception/observation, otherness, things, restraint</td>
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<td>March 14</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>March 19, 21</td>
<td>Essays on performance [C 14-24]; dip into Linton Kwesi Johnson</td>
<td>Poetry in Motion (film) scheduled this week outside of class; <em>Dread Beat an’ Blood</em> (film) in class</td>
<td>Orality, performance, politics, audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 26, 28, April 2</td>
<td>Linton Kwesi Johnson, <em>Mi Revalueshanary Fren</em> “cowboy” poetry</td>
<td>pp. 1-41, then 45-61. Bennett and Brathwaite [C 25-28] [C 29-34]</td>
<td>Performance, dialect, politics, community</td>
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### Assignments, Values, and Policies:


1. Participation means: attendance, asking considered questions, sharing impressions and ideas, and responding to other students.
2. The reading for the course is relatively small in volume; on the other hand, some of it is difficult. To complement your reading, I will ask you frequently (about once a week) to write on poetry in some form. In-class writing will be part of the reading process rather than separate from it. All in-class writing must be completed as it is assigned. It will be marked holistically. Individual pieces will receive comments but no mark. Please see me if you have questions about this assignment at any time.
3. The essay is not particularly long but I expect it to be well-written, thoughtful, and based on a thorough reading of the relevant texts and a thorough consideration of your topic. My marking will take into account organization of your discussion, rhetorical skill, written style, use of evidence, insight in analysis, and the validity and interest of your argument. I will distribute topics after reading week. If you want to develop your own topic, see me.

4. The final exam will take place during the final exam period. It will consist of brief essays on unidentified passages from the course reading and a longer essay that you will be able to prepare ahead of time. A prep sheet will be distributed at the last class.

Policies

Submitting papers: Hand in essays to me in class on the due date. Alternatively, leave your essay in the English department drop box on the second floor of Hagey Hall before 4 p.m. on the due date. Print essays on white paper, double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point or similar font. Do not submit your paper in a duo-tang or plastic cover. A cover sheet is not necessary either. Your name and course information along with the date should appear in the top left corner of the first page of your essay. Prospective English majors should get to know MLA style.

Late papers: A paper may be submitted one or two days late when you make a request for an extension before the due date. Longer extensions will be given only in the case of documented incapacitation.

Plagiarism: Outside of the university, plagiarism may be “actionable.” That is, legal action may be taken against you for using the words or ideas of other people without proper attribution. Plagiarism is also an ethical matter. It is your responsibility to understand and avoid plagiarism. See “Notes from the Arts Faculty” below.

Office hours: My office hours are for you. Please do not hesitate to drop by and see me to discuss any aspect of the course. I am often in my office outside of posted hours, and I would be happy to discuss course matters with you whenever you find me in and not too busy.

Laptops: I strongly discourage you from using a laptop in class. It is simply too easy to click to email, facebook, or other sites during class. Anyone would be tempted. And when you do things other than notetaking with your laptop, you’re not the only student mentally checking out: everyone around you will be distracted. Finally, the screen itself is a barrier between you and the class and therefore a barrier to participation. If you choose to use a laptop, I may require you to sit immediately in front of me or, if you appear to be surfing the internet, to close the laptop for the remainder of the course.

NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

Academic Integrity:
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html
Academic Integrity Office (University): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/