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## FORMS AND TECHNIQUES OF POETRY

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## Introduction:

The relation between form and content traces the history of modern and contemporary poetry. This class analyses the way this relation is expressed in some of the most important moments in the recent history of American poetry from the XX century, for the most part, and looks at the specific techniques and practices from the past that have informed it.

In this graduate class, we will address the works of several American poets which common trait is not only sharing a time period and a tradition, but a general approach to the development of an aesthetic. With this approach, we will analyze this in class in order to understand the basic principles of composition at the core of their poetic production, with views to apply it to our own work.

We will read contemporary poetry, essays by poets and other texts that will help us identify and discuss the expressive capital that gives a poem its aesthetic singularity. Course readings will

include selections from the work of: T.S Eliot, Ezra Pound, Sylvia Plath, Allen Ginsberg, William

Carlos William, Gertrude Stein, H.D., and others. Students will be required to write and submit five new poems during the semester and write weekly short reports on the readings assigned.

One of the goals of this class is to provide students with the analytical tools to be able to engage contemporary poetry as informed readers of its most immediate tradition, and as writers of poetry. Since American poetry of the second half of the XX century distinguishes itself from previous traditions in the development of open poetic forms (even when in many cases it makes use of closed poetic forms such as the sonnet, etc), the unity of this tradition is given not so much by form as by a shared interest in certain poetic techniques, and the different appropriations and modulations of these techniques by different poets and poetic schools. For this reason, even if in this class we will linger on form when a certain text requires it, the focus of the class will be

devoted to the elements that give this tradition its unity—thus—to technique, and to an understanding of the different sources and cultural elements that have informed it. This will translate in a dialogue between cultural elements, ideas and world views, and poetic techniques. In the context of this dialogue, students will be encouraged to gain a sense of the inextricable link between content/context/ technique in poetry, as well as an awareness of the different ways in

which poetry actively interacts with/in the world in the process of creation of new ways of experiencing it and changing it.

Through the reading of selected literary and theoretical texts, we will explore poetry through open poetics forms. We will study the relationship between poetic

techniques and aesthetic ideas in open patterns such as prose poem and performance poetry, paying attention to the main techniques explored and developed by contemporary American poets, such as montage, train of consciousness, images, etc. The creative writing component of this class consists in the elaboration of a creative writing portfolio based on specific writing exercises that you will be assigned throughout the semester: from imitation of certain poetic forms, to the composition of experimental texts, and the composition of prose, narrative and confessional poems. Course readings will include selections from authors such as Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein, Alan Ginsberg, and others. The students will be asked to write reading responses and engage on the discussion boards every week.

#### Course Objectives:

-Analyze different approaches to the relationship between Form and Content, Technique, Content

and Context, in some of the principal poetic schools in late modern and contemporary American

poetry.

-Develop critical thinking skills through reading and discussion.

-Write a Final Portfolio composed revised versions of all the poems written for class, produced after reading relevant examples from XX and XXI century poetry in English.

#### Grading :

50% Quizzes, workshop and discussion boards. 50% Final Portfolio

#### Grading Scale:

A 90-100%

B 80-89 %

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 59% and below

#### Texts and Materials

All the readings will be provided through blackboard.

#### Guidelines

#### Communication:

If you have any questions, you can always email me. I will get back to you within 24 hours during

weekdays, though it may take longer over the weekend. I am usually away from the computer and working on my own writing from Friday at 5p.m. to Monday at 8a.m. Please, plan accordingly.

#### Late Work Policy & Operating Time Zone:

This is the kind of course where much of the material is generated by your timely participation, I cannot accept late work. If you turn in a poem, an activity, or a discussion posting late, I will not give you credit for it. Take careful note of the due dates of assignments on the Course Calendar. All assignments are due on Mountain Standard Time.

#### Blackboard:

You should prepare your readings according to our class calendar. However, you will also receive

weekly specific instructions regarding how to address the assigned texts and writing prompts for

your weekly reading reports, and so it is your responsibility to check your Blackboard and email for updates.

#### Creative Writing Exercises and Workshops:

During workshops we will read everybody's work, but every student must comment online about at least two pieces (you cannot comment on a poem that already has two comments. If all poems have two comments you can go ahead and comment on any, this way we will make sure everybody gets comments). For your comment you should write a 200 word response. You have a responsibility to your classmates to not only read their work

carefully, but also to make constructive and useful comments. Your grade for this assignment may be reduced for issues such as tardiness or not showing a clear aesthetic claim to the relevant

reading. Participating in giving feedback to your classmates' work will help you read and revise your own work with more fluency and expertise. There is always something to critique; it is your job

as a writer and critic to find it. It is unacceptable to tell a fellow writer that you love or like everything about his/her poem, as this is quite unhelpful to your peers and is non-intuitive to the writing process, which demands revision.

By enrolling in this course, you join a community requiring intellectual integrity. When you write your name on an assignment, you take credit for the work contained, whether that be an entire text or only a sentence. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty demonstrate a disrespect of the community and will not be tolerated. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from an F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, depending on the situation.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e.:

Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section

504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible. If you have

a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, please discuss this

in confidence with me and/ or the director of the Disabled Student Services. Individuals with

disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to

contact the instructor and The Disabled Student Services Office at The University of Texas at El Paso. All discussions and documentation are kept confidential.

## **Unit 1. What is poetry?/Poetry, Poetics, and the ideas behind a Poem.**

Week 1- January 21-26

—Introductions

Week 2.-January 27-February 2

—“The Secret” by Denise Levertov.

—“Paragraph on Poetics” Denise Levertov.

—“Che cos' è la poesia?” Jacques Derrida.

Week 3-February 3-9

—Gertrude Stein. “Picasso Portrait .”

—Gertrude Stein. “What are Master Pieces and Why are there so few of them.”

—Gertrude Stein. If I Told Him.

—Gertrude Stein. Composition as Explanation.

## **Unit 2. Voice, authenticity and impersonation/dramatization**

Week 4-February 10-16

—The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T. S. Eliot.

—Tradition and the individual talent. Eliot.

Week 5-February 17-23

—Sylvia Plath. Selections from Ariel.

—Sylvia Plath. Selections from The Colossus.

—Daddy by Sylvia Plath.

—Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath.

—Anne Sexton. Selection.

Week 6-February 24-March 1

—Ezra Pound. Personae.

— A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste by Ezra Pound.

## **Unit 3. Images in Poetry**

Week 7-March 2-8

—“A Retrospect” and “A Few Don’ts” by Ezra Pound.

—The Chinese Character as a Medium For Poetry. Preface by Haun Saussy.

Week 8-March 9-15

—HD and Adelaide Crapsey. Selections.

Week 9-March 16-22

Spring Break/ No classes at UTEP

Week 10-March 23-29

—WCW Kora in Hell.

—Interviews with WCW.

#### **Unit 4. Montage**

Week 11-March 30-April 5

—Sergei Eisenstein Film Sense.

Week 12-April 6-April 12

—Howl.

Week 13-April 13-19

—Parse and “Fact” by Craig Dworkin.

Week 14-April 20-26

—Human Resources by Rachel Zolf.

Week 15-April 27-May 3

Working on Portfolio (No assignments this week. Students can facetime with Dr. Cucurella, or make appointments for phone meetings. This week will be devoted to the polishing of your portfolio)

Week 16-Final Portfolio

Submit your portfolio from May 4 to May 8.