

Carleton University
Winter Term, 2013-2014
Department of English

ENGL 3007A: Reading Poetry

Classes: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00-11:30am
Location: **TBA--Please confirm location on Carleton Central**

Professor Wallace
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30

“Excuses are like poems. They’re for sissies, and no one wants to hear them.”
Ron Stilanovich, Hardball Made Easy

Reading Poetry

This course aims to equip students with technical skills and vocabularies capable of supporting the advanced study of poetry. Course readings will alternate between works by two innovative and technically impressive poets: the English poet Robert Browning (1812-1889) and the American poet Wallace Stevens (1879-1955). Twelve lectures on Browning’s masterpiece, The Ring and the Book (a poem offering a series of perspectives on a seventeenth-century murder), will alternate with eleven lectures on selected poems drawn from the full span of the career of Stevens, one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century.

Lectures and discussion will combine close readings of assigned texts with attention to the ways in which those texts alternately solicit and challenge interpretation. One of the chief goals of the course will be to test the power of Stevens’ assertion that “The poem must resist the intelligence / Almost successfully” (“Many Carrying Thing”).

Required Texts

Robert Browning The Ring and the Book, ed. Thomas J. Collins and Richard D. Altick
(Broadview). [9781551113722]

Wallace Stevens, Collected Poetry and Prose (Library of America, 1997). [9781883011451]

*Books are available at Octopus Books in The Glebe, 116 Third Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1S 2K1, (613) 233-2589.

Assignments

- 10% Short Test (in-class, 30 minutes)
- 25% Test 1 (in-class, 80 minutes)
- 25% Test 2 (in-class, 80 minutes)
- 40% Exam

You must complete all required assignments in order to be eligible to pass this course. Note, too, that all assignments in this course consist of supervised writing. This assignment structure grants me an effective guard against plagiarism. It also enables me to gauge your understanding of course material and your ability to move from close readings of individual passages to larger arguments about the texts and traditions under examination.

You will write one 30-minute in-class test. This short test is designed to meet Carleton University's "early feedback" requirement. [10%]

You will write two 80-minute in-class tests. Each of these tests will be divided into two sections. Part A will require you to identify and establish the significance of a group of literary and historical terms and short quotations. Part B will require you to analyze longer passages and relate them to the dominant themes of the course. These tests will emphasize, without being restricted to, material covered during lectures. [25% and 25%]

You will write a three-hour exam in which you are responsible for all course readings. Expect to write at length on every text on the reading list. The final exam will be divided into two sections. Part A will require you to identify and establish the significance of a group of literary and historical terms and short quotations. Part B will require you to analyze longer passages and relate them to the dominant themes of the course. The exam will be administered during the exam period. It will emphasize, without being restricted to, material covered during lectures. [40%]

Members of the class are expected to attend all meetings and participate fully in discussion. You are also expected to bring your copy of the main text to every class. I do not grade your participation in discussion. I do, however, regard your presence in class as a measure of your ability to continue in the course. If you miss more than three lectures you will not be permitted to write the final exam. As a result, it will be impossible for you to receive a passing grade in the course.

Plagiarism and Instructional Offences

Please see the section on "Instructional Offences" in the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Calendar. The Undergraduate Calendar defines an act of plagiarism as an attempt "to use and pass off as one's own idea or product the work of another without expressly giving credit" to the original

author. Any act of plagiarism will be prosecuted to the full extent of the guidelines set out in the Undergraduate Calendar. Penalties may include expulsion from Carleton University.

The Undergraduate Calendar specifies that the act of submitting “substantially the same piece of work to two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructors from all courses involved” constitutes an Instructional Offence punishable under the guidelines set out in the Undergraduate Calendar. Please note: “Minor modifications and amendments, such as changes of phraseology in an essay or paper, do not constitute a significant and acceptable reworking of an assignment.” No piece of work written for another course will be accepted for credit in this course.

Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Reading Schedule

W 8 January: Introduction

- Course Business and goals
- Browning and Stevens
- On “Reading Poetry”

F 10 January: Browning, The Ring and the Book (i)

W 15 January: Stevens (i):

- “The Snow Man”
- “Le Monocle de Mon Oncle”
- “Nuances of a Theme by Williams”

- “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”
- “Anecdote of the Jar”
- “Gubbinal”
- “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”
- “To the Roaring Wind”
- “Sea Surface Full of Clouds”

F 17 January: Browning, The Ring and the Book (ii)

- In-class test (first 30 minutes of class)

W 22 January: Stevens (ii)

- “Sunday Morning”
- “The Idea of Order at Key West”

F 24 January: Browning, The Ring and the Book (iii)

W 29 January: Stevens (iii)

- The Man with the Blue Guitar

F 31 January: Browning, The Ring and the Book (iv)

W 5 February: In-class test 1 (80 minutes)

F 7 February: Browning, The Ring and the Book (v)

W 12 February: Stevens (v)

- “Poetry is a Destructive Force”
- “Add This to Rhetoric”
- “The Latest Freed Man”
- “A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts”

F 14 February: Browning, The Ring and the Book (vi)

M 17 February - F 21 February: Winter Break, no classes

W 26 February: Stevens (vi)

- Esthétique du Mal
- “Man Carrying Thing”
- Credences of Summer

F 28 February: Browning, The Ring and the Book (vii)

W 5 March: Stevens (vii)

- Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction (It Must Be Abstract)

F 7 March: Browning, The Ring and the Book (viii)

W 12 March: Stevens (viii)

- Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction (It Must Change, It Must Give Pleasure)

F 14 March: Browning, The Ring and the Book (ix)

W 19 March: Stevens (ix)

- The Auroras of Autumn
- “Large Red Man Reading”

F 21 March: In-class test 2 (80 minutes)

W 26 March: Stevens (x)

- An Ordinary Evening in New Haven (11-canto version: I, VI, IX, XI, XII, XVI, XXII, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI, XXIX)

F 28 March: Browning, The Ring and the Book (x and xi)

W 2 April: Stevens (xii)

- “An Old Man Asleep”
- “The Plain Sense of Things”
- “Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour”
- “The Planet on the Table”
- “The River of Rivers in Connecticut”
- “Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself”
- “Presence of an External Master of Knowledge”
- “A Child Asleep in Its Own Life”
- “Of Mere Being”

F 4 April: Browning, The Ring and the Book (xii)

*NB: I will schedule a formal exam review session during the short break between the end of classes and the beginning of exams.