

**Carleton University
Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English**

ENGL 3010A: The Secret Lives of Poems

Prerequisites: third year standing or permission of the department

Monday/Wednesday 11:35-12:55pm

Format: In-person, not suitable for online students

Instructor: Professor Collett Tracey

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*****This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.*****

Course Description:

This course has been designed for anyone and everyone who wants to learn how to read and enjoy poetry. It will introduce you to some extraordinary poems that were written during the 20th century. It will provide you with the skills to engage with and make a poem meaningful to YOU. It will offer you the time and support to approach a text from a variety of perspectives, to understand its context, and know about the individual who wrote it. You will also come to realize that some of these poems were born out of intense joy or disappointment, out of success or failure, out of ecstasy or loneliness or meditation or love or loss. In small group discussions, we will pursue these poems with a view to unravelling their secret lives, and with the goal of making them relevant to us, in our own lives.

Required Texts: (Available at the University bookstore)

Geddes, Gary. Ed. *20th Century Poetry and Poetics*. Oxford UP. Don Mills, ON 2006. (Note: Earlier versions of this text are acceptable so you should feel free to pursue the purchase of a used copy as long as you are willing to find copies of poems that are not included.)

Norris, Ken. *Hotel Montreal*. Vancouver: Talon Books. 2001.

Evaluation:

There will be three forms of evaluation. Given that there is no final examination, a significant percentage of your final grade will be based on attendance and participation. The rest of the grade will be based on a seminar presentation that will take place during the term, and an essay that will be submitted during the final class. Grades for term work will be based on

insightfulness, originality, focus, organization of ideas, clarity of expression, scholarly rigor, correct use of MLA style, spelling and grammar.

Note: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Attendance & Participation: 30%; Seminar Presentation: 30%; Final Essay: 40%

Class Participation/Attendance:

Critical reading, writing and analytical skills cannot be learned from books alone. Asking questions about the readings and contributing to class discussions will help you better understand the material, hone your critical and interpretive skills. Therefore, you are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken on a random basis and absences will be noted. **Students who miss four or more classes per term will not be able to pass the course.** You are also expected to bring the assigned text having read it and being prepared for discussion. If you do have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student. **Unless absolutely necessary due to a disability, cellphones and laptops must be turned off during class time.** To promote active reading, I encourage you, though, to take notes by writing in the margins of your books and poems, and by marking off key passages that stimulate thought or discussion.

Seminars:

You will be divided into small groups to facilitate more in-depth discussions about various texts. For the novels, you will be required to do an in-class seminar in which you share, as a group, your collective understanding and research of a theme or issue. This can be done from a creative or academic point of view. With the understanding that some students are more extroverted or introverted than others, you will be able to participate in a way that is comfortable for you. However, whether you are actually presenting on the day of the seminar, you will be required to attend class and respond to questions from other class members. Each member of the seminar group will be asked to grade their peers on their contributions to the seminar, and themselves. The final grade, assigned by me, will take these evaluations into account.

The Essay:

You will be encouraged to devise your own essay topic in consultation with me. It should reflect ideas and material relevant to the issues that we will be discussing. You can base your essay on the works of a particular writer, which might be an in-depth study of a single text or a thematic exploration across more than one text. The usual essay rules apply: you will be expected to demonstrate a level of engagement and research that goes beyond the content covered in seminars, and the essay must be presented in correct MLA scholarly format. The essay must be typed and paginated and accompanied with a complete cover page. You should always keep a digital copy of your essay.