San José State University  
Department of English and Comparative Literature  
ENGLISH 151: Twentieth Century Poetry

Instructor: Prof. Alan Soldofsky  
Office Location: FO 106  
Telephone: 408-924-4432  
Email: alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu  
Office Hours: M W 2:30 – 4:00 PM; T 2:30 – 4:00 P.M. ;Th PM by appointment  
Class Days/Time: M W 12:00 – 1:15 PM  
Classroom: Clark Hall 238

Course Content /Goals:
In this course students will read selected works by a diverse group of Modern and Postmodern poets. In a subject as voluminous as twentieth century poetry, it is difficult to choose what poets and poems to include for the course. Given the great number of poets whose work is of significance and worth knowing, I have elected to examine several poets in depth rather than to conduct a survey of the entire field. Such a survey could hardly do justice to the rich poetic heritage we have carried forward from the last century. Students are urged to read as widely as possible, beyond the poets and on the required reading list. By reading more than what is merely required, students will inevitably discover new favorite poets and poems that did not fit the narrow confines of the required list.

In putting the reading list together, I have attempted to include the work of poets whose production influenced all that has been produced since, or whose work has been so innovative that it introduced something new into the canon of modern poetry. Included on the reading list are: W. B. Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Robinson Jeffers, Hart Crane, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Frank O’Hara, Robert Lowell, Adrienne Rich, W.S. Merwin, Yusef Komunyakka, Li-Young Lee, and Lorna Dee Cervantes. The course will take students on a guided tour of some the most significant poetry written in the twentieth century.

Texts:
REQUIRED: 

**RECOMMENDED:**
Alan Soldofsky, *In the Buddha Factory*, paper.
  *(Attached to the syllabus you’ll see a list of recommended poets you might read for a second presentation or for an extra-credit paper).*

**ON-LINE RESOURCES:**
Modern American Poetry Web Site: [www.english.uiuc.edu/maps](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps).
American Academy of Poets Web Site: [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)

**English Department Student Learning Goals**

This course supports several of the English Department’s Student Learning Goals. The Department of English and Comparative Literature seeks to foster the intellectual development of its majors by encouraging study of literature and writing—whether creative, technical, or other professional writing. The Department strives to make its majors familiar with a wide range of works of British, American, and World literature, including folk and popular forms; and with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

**Learning Objectives:**
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

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<tr>
<th>Student Learning Objectives:</th>
<th>Skills/Knowledge Acquired:</th>
<th>Activities:</th>
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<td>SLO 1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.</td>
<td>1. Craft and theory of Modern and Postmodern works of poetry  2. Close reading of works in four genres: fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and drama.  3. Close reading work by writers from a diversity of ethnicities.</td>
<td>1. Class discussions of reading selections in four genres: fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and drama  2. Blogging on required reading assignments.  3. Preparing individual and small team presentations.</td>
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<td>SLO 2. Show familiarity</td>
<td>1. Reading significant works</td>
<td>1. Class discussions of</td>
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| SLO 3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. | 1. Writing formal literary papers in MLA format.  
2. Writing online blog entries explicating poems using conventional literary terms in an appropriate web-friendly MLA-based format. | 1. Complete two literary papers during the semester.  
2. Contribute four postings to the class blog on assigned works during the semester.  
3. Complete a special creative project based on readings assigned in the course. |
| SLO 4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. | 1. Develop skills for writing formal literary paper.  
2. Conduct secondary source research online and in the library. | 1. Write a literary paper based on close reading of a passage from a poem or poems assigned during the semester using MLA format.  
2. Write a literary research paper based on close reading and including use of secondary critical sources sited in the paper using proper MLA format. |
| SLO 5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. | 1. Learn to read works of twentieth and twenty first century in their historical and cultural contexts.  
2. Learn to discuss twentieth and twenty first century poetry using secondary cultural and historical as well as critical sources. | 1. Blogging on required reading assignments.  
2. In-class presentations on selections from readings assigned.  
3. Writing a term paper using secondary critical sources. |

**Class Methods and Procedures:**

The ENGL 151 class will be conducted as a lecture and seminar, including presentations by both undergraduate and graduate students. The course is taught in a “blended” manner—that is a number of course discussions and other activities will take place online via the Canvas learning management system. All class members will closely read poems assigned for each class meeting listed in the weekly Canvas course modules (and in the attached course calendar).
Each class member is required to make an individual seminar presentation on two poems by one of the poets on the required reading list. The seminar presentations may be the basis for one of the two term papers required for the class. Graduate students are required to give two seminar presentations. Extra credit will be given to any student who wishes to give an additional presentation or write an additional paper on a poet listed on the recommended reading list.

**Course Requirements:**
- Read all the poems listed (and hyperlinked) on the weekly assignment modules in the Canvas course site.
- Read supplementary critical articles on the Canvas course site.
- Give one 5 to 10-minute seminar presentations on one or more of the poems listed for discussion in class, (should be the basis of one of your a term paper projects).
- Write two term papers (6 to 8 pages each--a minimum of 1,500 words per paper).
- Take four (two first half of the semester; two second half of the semester) quizzes.

**Due Dates:**
- Quiz 1: February 16
- Quiz 2: March 23
- First term paper: March 23
- Quiz 3: April 20
- Quiz 4: May 16
- Creative Project: May 16
- Second term paper: May 23

**Seminar Presentations / Term-Papers**

Each seminar presentation and term paper you complete should be considered two parts of a single project. Undergraduates will complete two term papers and one seminar presentation project (based on a term-paper) during the semester; graduate students will complete two term papers and two presentations. Each student is required to give a 5 to 10-minute presentation in which you present material that will be included in your term paper. Before you begin work on each of your presentations and papers, be sure to submit a one paragraph abstract for approval by the instructor. You will not allowed to submit your paper unless you have submitted your abstract for the project in advance. The seminar presentations will be scheduled to coincide with the poet or topic to which they are most closely related.

**First Presentation / Term Paper (1,500 – 2,000 words)**
An investigation and close reading of two poems by one of the poets on the required reading list. The guiding question is: “How do the poems you’ve chosen to discuss participate in—or resist—some aspect of literary Modernism. Read the poems in-depth, provide biographical information if and where necessary. Document any source material you use (MLA format), although secondary sources are not required for this project.

**Second Presentation / Term Paper**
An investigation and close reading of two poems by a single poet who appears on the required or recommended reading list. The guiding question is: “How do the poems you chosen to discuss exemplify the poetic practice of this poet?” Read the poems in-depth, provide biographical and or historical information if and where necessary. Use secondary source materials, and document (MLA format) to support your arguments.

**Graduate Students (required) / Extra Credit**

Give a presentation on work by a poet on the recommended reading list. The guiding question is: “How does the poem(s) you’ve chosen to discuss exemplify the poetic practice of this poet? And of what significance to the poet’s reputation and/or legacy is this work? Use secondary source materials, and document (MLA format) to support your arguments. Turn in your notes or script when you give the presentation.

**Late Paper Policy:**
Except in extraordinary circumstances, late papers will be penalized as follows: papers turned in over a week late will be marked down one full letter grade (e.g. B to C); beyond one week papers will not be accepted. Any paper not turned in directly to me must be time-stamped by the English Department staff. (Do not put a paper under my door, in my mailbox, etc.) NO INCOMPLETES except in true emergencies.

**Discussion Blog Posts**

You are required to write a minimum of four posts in weekly Discussion Blog on Canvas over the semester. When it’s appropriate, you may include details from the poets’ biographies or secondary source references to scholarship on a poem that helped you to better read the poet’s text. In the Discussion Blog entries you post, I am looking for the clarity of your close reading and that you read the poems for their literary features that you find on the page.

**Creative Assignment:** (length negotiable)

Write a poem in the style and on subjects or themes you find central to the work of a poet on the required reading list. Then analyze the poem you’ve written, comparing it to a poem or poems by the poet whose work you’ve emulated. If you use supporting quotes from secondary sources, document the materials following MLA format.

**Grading**

Blog Discussion grade and Creative Assignment (10%)
Seminar presentation (20%)
Second presentation (required for graduate students) (10%)
Term papers—two (40%)
Quizzes – four (20%)
Class participation (including use of the Canvas class site) (10%)
*Graduate Students Only*

Graduate Students must give two seminar presentations in class. Or can be appointed instructional assistants in the class. Undergraduates may request to complete an extra paper or give a second presentation for extra credit, with the instructor’s permission.

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A+/A/A- = excellent; B+/B/B- = above average; C+/C/C- = average; D+/D/D- = below average; F = failure. Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

“Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs.” The policy on academic integrity can be found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html)

**University Policies**

**Academic integrity**

**Avoiding Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of somebody else’s words or ideas and is considered an instance of academic dishonesty that instructors must report. Repeated instances of plagiarism will result in a student’s expulsion from the University. You commit plagiarism by:

1. Buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper or creative work;
2. Hiring someone to write a paper or creative work;
3. Building on someone’s ideas without providing a citation;
4. Or copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing.

In other words, submit only your own work. To learn how to cite sources accurately and forthrightly, consult your handbook.

The instructor reserves the right to revise the requirements and to notify students of such revision in a timely manner, e.g., “subject to change, announced at least one class meeting in advance.

Students should know that the University’s [Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html). Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit)
will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

**More University Policies**
The link below contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as additional information on academic integrity, accommodations, etc.

[http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/)
Recommended Poets for Extra Credit Paper (and second required graduate student presentation)
(Works by these poets are contained in *The Oxford Anthology of Modern American Poetry, Vol. 1* and *The Oxford Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry, Vol. 2.*)

Kim Addonizio
A. R. Ammons
Sherman Alexie
John Ashbery
Jimmy Santiago Baca
Imiri Baraka (Leroy Jones)
Charles Bernstein
John Berryman
Louise Bogan
Gwendolyn Brooks
Sterling Brown
Jayne Cortez
Robert Creeley
e. e. cummings
H. D. (Hilda Doolittle)
Carolyn Forche
Louise Gluck
Robert Hass
Robert Hayden
Lyn Hejinian
Langston Hughes
Galway Kinnell
Denise Levertov
Philip Levine
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Mary Oliver
Sharon Olds
George Oppen
Robert Pinsky
Claudia Rankine
Ishmael Reed
Theodore Roethke
Muriel Rukeyser
Patricia Smith
Gary Snyder
Alan Soldofsky
Jean Toomer
Derek Walcott
C. D. Wright
James Wright
Course Calendar:

(The works assigned will be read and discussed in class on the date they are listed. It’s important to read the work before the class meeting. You will get much more from the discussion that way. Make notes in your reading journal that you can bring to class. We will add to these notes using Wikis and other collaborative software in class. The assigned reading schedule may be adjusted to better accommodate class discussion or because of other scheduling changes.)

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Feb. 2</td>
<td>In-class video: William Carlos Williams from the <em>Voices and Visions</em> Series. William Carlos Williams poems in <em>Modern American Poetry Vol. 1</em>: “The Young Housewife,” 210; “To Elsie;” 213 – 215; The Red Wheel Barrow,” 215 – 216; “This Is Just to Say,” 191 – 192; “. (These poems are discussed on the video.) Discuss Williams’ Imagist poems. Web Resources: [W.C.W. Reads To Elsie]; Notes from MAP on “The Young Housewife”; Notes from MAP on “To Elsie”</td>
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**Web Resources:**

- [Notes on “The Yachts”](#) from the MAP Web site
- [Notes on “The Descent”](#) from the MAP Web site
- [Notes on “Asphodel That Greeny Flower”](#) from MAP Web site.
- Williams on the common American, poverty, and the local subject

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March 27 – 31  **SPRING BREAK**


April 13: *Allen Ginsberg* and the Beat Generation. Ginsberg poems in *CAP Vol.2*: “Howl,” 266 – 857; “Footnote to Howl” (online only); “A Supermarket In California,” 266 – 267; “Father Death Blues,” 271 – 272; *Ginsberg reads Howl Pt. I and II.* ONLINE: “In Back of the Real,” “America” (online only); *Ginsberg reads “America”:* Ginsberg reads “Father Death Blues.”

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<td>May 3:</td>
<td><strong>SJSU Legacy of Poetry Day Festival</strong> Readings at Hammer Theater Center, 5:00 – 9:00 p.m. Keynote poetry reading: Maxine Hong Kingston with Arlene Biala, Barbara Jane Reyes, Ginny Lim, Al Young, and others.</td>
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**May 23:**  **FINAL MEETING  9:45 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.** Second term paper due. Final Quiz Due. Make-up student seminar presentations.