

POETRY AND THE SELF (EL 48K)

Spring 2024, Dr. Cihan Yurdaün, cihan.yurdaun@boun.edu.tr,
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Class Days & Hours: Monday 16:00-17:00, Wednesday 11:00-13:00

Office Hours: Monday 15:00-16:00, Wednesday 14:00-15:00

Course Description & Goals

The speaker or the narrative voice in a poem is one of the fundamental elements of poetry. Many poets and critics have claimed that the degree of difference between the poet's self and the speaker/persona in a poem often directly affects a poem's potency and expressional capability.

In a poetry reading, Robert Lowell remarks: "The poems I'm going to read have this peculiarity that they're all in the first person and the first person is me, not an imaginary me, though you always lie a bit and invent" underlining the autobiographical character of his poems and that the speaker in them is genuine Robert Lowell. The entire remark hinges on the assumption that there is a subject authentic, coherent, and in control to the degree that he can distinguish fact and fiction about himself. Moreover, this subject expresses himself by adhering to certain aesthetic principles so that the end product of that peculiar expression turns into a work of art.

With his concept of Negative Capability, John Keats suggests that the true poet should assume an objective stance and refrain from expressing "the self" directly. The poet might also create a persona similar to characters in a drama, distinct from the poet's self, such as Alfred Prufrock in Eliot's "The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock" and the Duke in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess."

In this course, through close readings of poems and relative theory to broaden our perspective, we will study various speakers that enable a poet to take different stances concerning the "self" of the poet. By examining the concept of the "self" of the poet in poetry through speakers, we will also touch upon subjectivity as a concept and assess its impact on the aesthetic quality of an artwork.

PLEASE TAKE THIS COURSE IF YOU'RE ONLY INTERESTED IN POETRY!!!

Course Requirements:

- There is going to be a **course pack**. Since we cannot study entire books of poetry and theory, you'll have a **selection of poems, excerpts, and articles**. Still, I am going to upload some (if not all) of the books **to Moodle**.
- The minimum requirement is that you **read all the poems and the theory assigned for each week**. If you choose to, you can read the entire book by the poet we focus on, not just the selection I will provide. Poetry books are usually concise, and it would prepare you for the assignments. All the texts and extra materials will be **available on Moodle**.
- I'm going to lecture on relevant theory almost every other week, perhaps for a class hour. You are also expected to **participate in class discussions** as we will analyze the poems together. **Participation might earn you 1-3 % extra points** for your final grade.
- Assignments will stem from the **discussions we have in class**. **One of the poems** you'll deal with in the assignments will always be one we have already discussed in class. So, please attend!
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) software/website use for assignments is strictly prohibited. If detected, you'll fail the class as well.
- You must write four papers worth **22 points** each. You **cannot skip** any of these. A paper **cannot be shorter than 1500 words**. Assignments should be uploaded to **Turnitin.com before the deadline**.
- There is **no midterm or final**. Yet, if you would like to improve your grade, you can write an extra paper to replace your lowest assignment at the end of the semester.
- You need to **attend %80 of the classes** in order to get a passing grade. You'll automatically fail regardless of your assignment grades if you can't make it.
- You'll have **three poem/poetry writing assignments** over the semester mimicking the different styles and voices of the poets we'll study. Each poem will be worth **4% of your final grade**. The poem assignments will be judged according to your **use of voice and understanding of the poet's style**.

Grading Information:

- **Letter Grade Layout: AA** (100-90), **BA** (89-85), **BB** (84-80), **CB** (79-75), **CC** (74-70), **DC** (69-65), **DD** (64-60), (fail) **F** (59-0)
- **Four papers %88** of the final grade
- **Three short poetry writing assignments %12** of the final grade
- Participation extra **1-3%**

Out-of-Class Communication Policy:

- If you have questions about any aspect of class, you can always email me; please do not hesitate. You can also visit me during my office hours.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 - February 12, 14

Introduction, Poetry Analysis, Dramatic Monologue
Ralph Rader, "The Dramatic Monologue and Related Lyric Forms"
Robert Browning, Selected poems

Week 2 - February 19, 21

T.S. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry"
Robert Browning, Selected poems

Week 3 - February 26, 28

Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"
Carol Anne Duffy, Selected poems from *World's Wife*

Week 4 - March 4, 6

Carol Anne Duffy, Selected poems from *World's Wife*
Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics - Excerpts*

Week 5 - March 11, 13

(First Paper Due, March 11)

Negative Capability, Keats - Excerpts from his Letters
Edgar Lee Masters, Selected poems from *Spoon River Anthology*

Week 6 - March 18, 20

(First Poem Assignment, March 17)

Louise Glück, Selected poems from *The Wild Iris*

Week 7 - March 25, 27

Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology - Excerpts*

Louise Glück, Selected poems from *The Wild Iris*
William Carlos Williams, Selected poems

Week 8 - April 1, 3

(Second Paper Due, April 1)

William Carlos Williams, Selected poems
Shklovsky, Victor "Art as Device"
Craig Raine, Selected poems from *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*

Week 9- Spring Break (April 8-14)

Week 10 - April 15, 17

(Second Poem Assignment, April 14)

Craig Raine - *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*
Negative Theology & Poetry – Excerpts

Week 11 – April 22, 24

(Third Paper Due, April 22)

Mark Strand, Selected poems from *Reasons for Moving, The Dark Hour*

Week 12 – April 29, May 1st (Holiday)

Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation* – Excerpts

Robert Lowell, Selected poems from *Life Studies*

Week 13 – May 6, 8

Allen Ginsberg, Selected Poems

R. Silliman, C. Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, S. Benson, B. Perelman and Barrett
Watten, “Aesthetic Tendency and the Politics of Poetry: A Manifesto”

Week 14 – May 13, 15

(Third Poem Assignment May 12)

Lyn Hejinian, Selected poems from *My Life*

(Fourth Paper Due, May 20, 2024)

* Underlined texts are compulsory theoretical readings.