

ENGL 125.004: Introduction to Poetry

Drugs, Sex, and Death: Exploring Thresholds

Fall 2015, TR 11:00-12:15pm, Greenlaw Hall 319

Instructor: Adam Engel
Email: ajengel@email.unc.edu
Office: Union 3109A (in the Student Government Suite)
Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-2:30 and by appointment via email
Required Material: Internet access and a charged laptop

Recommended Materials:

1. Frank N. Magill (editor), *Masterplots II: Poetry Series* (vol. 1-6)
 2. Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide*
 3. Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*
 4. James Phillip McAuley, *Versification: A Short Introduction*
 5. Margaret Ferguson (editor), *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (Shorter Edition)
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Course Description

Poetry's capacity for expressing the seemingly ineffable is what distinguishes it as a form of communication. In this course, we will explore poems that express what anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner refer to as the *liminal stage* of rituals. In liminal or "threshold" spaces, ritual participants are disoriented by a temporary absence of social rules. These thresholds are spaces in which participants have abandoned their social role, but haven't yet transitioned to a new one: examples include religious events like pilgrimage and initiation, but also secular rituals like graduation ceremonies, summer camps, or even sex—any temporary period in which identity is in flux. These are times of learning, communion, and transformation, blurring the boundaries of the individual. Our course's title, "Drugs, Sex, and Death," sums up a few of the thematic areas in modern poetry where these thresholds are found: where ordinary language fails to capture shifts in identity caused by psychological, erotic, and violent moments, poetry (sometimes) succeeds. Questions we'll consider include: What are the various ways in which poets express radical changes in identity? What happens in the threshold space, where we move from one identity to another? What does it mean to move from single ego to communal mind, from life to death, from two bodies to one, from youth to maturity? Where are the boundaries between bodies? How do violent or mystical encounters challenge these boundaries? Although modern poets are our focus, we will frequently look back at classical, early modern, Romantic, and Victorian poets with whom they are in dialogue.

Course Goals

1. Close reading and analysis

You'll learn to "close read" a poem or section of a poem, noting the way its various elements come together to make meaning. You will also develop the vocabulary necessary to discuss poetry, including the basics of rhythm, meter, and scansion.

2. Research

You'll learn strategies for crafting a research question, finding appropriate sources using UNC's databases, and inserting your voice into the scholarly conversation surrounding a topic.

3. Logical argument

We'll practice the steps of argumentation--building premises that lead logically to a conclusion--and its use in interpreting poetry.

4. Historical understanding

By exploring themes as they appear in poetry over several centuries, you'll gain an appreciation for the multi-generational conversations that occur between authors.

Grading Policy

Assignment	Percent of semester
Paper 1 (4-5 pp, close reading)	10%
Group Presentation (20 minutes; lead discussion on short poems by a poet not covered in class)	15%
Paper 2 (7-8 pp, response to critical claim)	20%
Midterm Exam (through week 8)	15%
Final Exam (non-cumulative)	15%
Attendance and Participation	25% (25 points)

I will calculate your final grade according to this scale:

95-100%	A	77-79%	C+	0-62%	F
90-94%	A-	73-76%	C		
87-89%	B+	70-72%	C-		
83-86%	B	67-69%	D+		
80-82%	B-	63-66%	D		

Attendance:

Lateness

Class will begin at 11:00 pm. If you arrive after 11:05 pm, you will be considered late. Your first late is excused; each subsequent late is unexcused. Two unexcused lates equal one absence.

Absence

Not showing up to class, or being more than 20 minutes late for class, counts as an absence. Your first absence will be excused with no questions asked. For each subsequent absence, you will lose 2 points from your participation grade. *You may receive an F in this course if you miss seven or more class sessions.*

For any absence (after the first) you wish to be marked as "excused," you will need to submit appropriate documentation (signed medical or athletic notes) promptly. I will make the final decision about whether an absence is excused. For *any* absence, you must make up the work you've missed; speak to me for help with

this. You must provide all notes within three days of your absence. If you can't get a note, come to me and we'll discuss your situation.

Participation:

If you follow all of the guidelines below consistently, you will score a perfect 25 points, or an A that counts for 25% of your grade, in participation. I will deduct one participation point each time you breach one of these rules:

1. **Complete assignments ON TIME:** Submit all work on time and in the format specified. I will post detailed instructions and deadlines for all graded assignments on Sakai. For **each day** a non-graded assignment (drafts or homework) is late, I will deduct one participation point. For each day a graded assignment is late, I will deduct 10% from that assignment's grade. I will not accept work after the third day past its deadline; such work earns a zero.
2. **“Day” means “calendar day”** (Saturday and Sunday each count as “days”). An absence does not alter due dates or the deadline for late submissions.
3. **Conferences:** Please meet with me at least once during the semester, either by emailing me for an appointment or dropping in to office hours. If you know you're going to miss an appointment, please let me know in advance.
4. **In-Class Participation:** Complete all required reading, print required handouts, and bring whatever materials I have specified—especially your charged laptop! Be respectful to me and to each other: this includes using respectful language, taking each other's ideas seriously, and refraining from distracting behaviors, such as falling asleep, texting, checking email, doing work for other classes, or checking Facebook during class. Turn your cell phone OFF when you come in the room. If you must keep your phone on for urgent personal reasons, please speak to me before class.

University Policies

The Honor Code: As a member of the UNC-Chapel Hill community, one of the leading research institutions in the country, you are required to adhere to the University's Honor Code: <http://honor.unc.edu/>. Section II.B.1 of the Code identifies plagiarism as an unacceptable offense. *The following plagiarism policy applies to drafts as well as final manuscripts:* Any time you quote from, paraphrase, or otherwise borrow text, images, ideas, etc., you are required to document each source correctly according to MLA style (or another applicable citation style). Failure to do so will result in either intentional or unintentional plagiarism and is not acceptable. Should you have questions about whether something needs to be cited or how it should be cited and you have exhausted your resources independently, always check with me before submitting your work. If I suspect you of plagiarizing all or part of a paper, even unintentionally, I am required to report the offense to the Honor Court. If you think you are running into trouble with a paper, PLEASE come and speak with me.

Students with Disabilities: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ensures that no qualified person shall by reason of a disability be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by the University. In compliance with UNC policy and federal law, qualified students with

disabilities are eligible to receive “reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education opportunities, programs, and activities” (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/faculty-policies.html>). If you anticipate such accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Additionally, you may seek out student support services at the Department of Disability Services (DDS) (<http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/>) and through the Learning Center (<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>)

Non-Discrimination Policy: This university does not discriminate against its students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability. In this class we will strive to maintain an open atmosphere with shared respect for all people. Such respect is vital for your success in this classroom and in your professional career.

Resources

The Writing Center: If you need extra help with your writing—aside from coming to see me—I encourage you to make an appointment with The Writing Center. *This is a free service staffed by graduate students, and you can schedule up to two appointments each week.* The Writing Center tutors won’t edit, revise, proofread or write your papers for you. But, tutors will help you organize your writing, think through your ideas, and improve your arguments. You must come prepared with a draft and specific questions. The Writing Center is located in Suite 0127 in the Student & Academic Services Building (SASB), on South Campus near Morrison dormitory. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please visit the Center’s website at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb> or contact them at 919-962-7710. You can also send drafts of papers to the Online Writing Center; tutors usually respond with written comments within 48 hours. Please note, the Writing Center tutors will **not**, under any circumstances, assign nor discuss grades with you.

Reference Librarians: Reference librarians are experts in their chosen fields, and they can help you find reliable sources about your topic in a one-on-one research consultation: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/ask.html>.

The Learning Center (962-3782) is available for students who need help with basic reading problems, students who are good readers but wish to become better, and students who wish to improve their study skills. For more information, visit <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>.

Finally, your success in this class is important to me. If you have any particular circumstance that may have an impact on your work in this class, please contact me early in the semester so that we can work together to meet your needs.

Course Calendar

I will provide links to poems that include line numbers whenever possible. When the version I give lacks numbers, **it is your responsibility to number the lines yourself BEFORE we discuss the poem in class.** You can copy it into a word document, print it and number it by hand, or whatever you prefer, so long as you bring a numbered copy of the poem to class. This will help keep us all on the same page (literally and figuratively).

NOTE: I reserve the right to alter this schedule as necessary, and will always let you know in advance when doing so.

Unit 1: Beginning to analyze poetry

Week 1

Tue, Aug 18: Introductions and syllabus overview; WWI poster exercise (Sakai); Sappho, [“Fragment 31”](#)

Thu, Aug 20: Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between” (Sakai); Ted Hughes, [“Wodwo”](#); Billy Collins, [“Introduction to Poetry”](#)

Week 2

Tue, Aug 25: The technical stuff, day 1: Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry* ch. I-III (Sakai);

transcendentalism: Ralph Waldo Emerson, [“Brahma”](#); Margaret Fuller, [“Dryad Song”](#)

Thu, Aug 27: The technical stuff, day 2: Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry* ch. IV-V (Sakai); Henry David Thoreau, [“The Moon”](#)

Unit 2: DEATH (dissolution of the personal, historical, or spiritual self)

Week 3

Tue, Sep 1: Discuss Paper 1; logical argument; Charles Baudelaire, [“The Seven Old Men”](#); Matthew Arnold, [“Dover Beach”](#)

Thu, Sep 3: T. S. Eliot, [“Rhapsody on a Windy Night,”](#) [“Sweeney Among the Nightingales”](#)

Week 4

Tue, Sep 8: T. S. Eliot, [The Waste Land](#) (whole poem, including Eliot’s notes)

Thu, Sep 10: T. S. Eliot, [The Waste Land](#) (continued), [“Tradition and the Individual Talent”](#)

Week 5

Tue, Sep 15: William Butler Yeats, [“Adam’s Curse,”](#) [“Easter, 1916,”](#) [“The Second Coming”](#)

Thu, Sep 17: Paper 1 Draft DUE, in-class draft workshop; William Butler Yeats (continued)

Week 6

Tue, Sep 22: Paul Fussell, excerpt from “The Great War and Modern Memory” (Sakai), Wilfred Owen, [“Dulce Et Decorum Est,”](#) [“Strange Meeting”](#); Charlotte Mew, [“Ken”](#)

Thu, Sep 24: Discuss Midterm format; Sylvia Plath, [“Tulips,”](#) [“Lady Lazarus,”](#) [“The Rabbit Catcher”](#)

Week 7

Tue, Sep 29: Ted Hughes, [“The Rabbit Catcher,”](#) [“Pike,”](#) [“The Hawk in the Rain”](#); Gerard Manley Hopkins, [“The Windhover”](#)

Thu, Oct 1: Paper 1 DUE, Ted Hughes, *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* (selections on Sakai)

Unit 3: DRUGS (alteration of one’s sense of self; time and timelessness)

Week 8

Tue, Oct 6: R. A. Durr, *Poetic Vision and the Psychedelic Experience* (excerpt on Sakai); Wallace Stevens, [“The Snow Man,”](#) [“The Emperor of Ice-Cream,”](#)

Thu, Oct 8: Wallace Stevens, [“Sunday Morning,”](#) [“A High-Toned Old Christian Woman,”](#) [“The Idea of Order at Key West”](#); John Keats, [“To Autumn,”](#) [“Ode to a Nightingale”](#)

Week 9

Tue, Oct 13: Midterm Exam

Thu, Oct 15: Fall Break (no class)

Week 10

Tue, Oct 20: Discuss Group Presentation; Allen Ginsberg, [“The Lion For Real”](#); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, [“Kubla Khan”](#)

Thu, Oct 22: Allen Watts, *Does it Matter?* (excerpt on Sakai); Allen Ginsberg, [“Sunflower Sutra”](#)

Week 11

Tue, Oct 27: Jazz poetry: Jayne Cortez, “Rose Solitude” (Sakai), video, and song; Bob Kaufman, [“Bagel Shop Jazz”](#); Lawrence Ferlinghetti, [“Sometime During Eternity...”](#)

Thu, Oct 29: Jazz poetry (continued); Amiri Baraka, [“As Agony. As Now”](#); discuss Paper 2; research strategies

Unit 3: SEX (merging of bodies or identities)

Week 12

Tue, Nov 3: Group presentations

Thu, Nov 5: Group presentations (continued)

Week 13

Tue, Nov 10: Group presentations (continued)

Thu, Nov 12: Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, ch. 1 (Sakai); John Donne, [“The Ecstasy”](#); W. H. Auden, [“Lullaby,”](#) [“As I Walked Out One Evening”](#)

Week 14

Tue, Nov 17: Paper 2 Draft DUE, in-class draft workshop; Thom Gunn, [“Touch,”](#) [“On the Move”](#)

Thu, Nov 19: Walt Whitman, [“I Sing the Body Electric”](#); Thom Gunn, [“The Man with Night Sweats”](#)

Week 15

Tue, Nov 24: Discuss Final Exam format; Christina Rossetti, [“Goblin Market”](#); **Evaluations**

Thu, Nov 26: **Thanksgiving Break (no class)**

Week 16

Tue, Dec 1: Paper 2 DUE; review and debriefing; **Last day of class**

*****Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 10, 12:00PM to 3:00PM, Greenlaw 319*****