

English 350: Modern Poetry
MW 11:30-12:45, Buttrick 208
Rachel Trousdale
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Buttrick 307, x6209
Office hours MW 2-3, TTh 4-5, and by appointment

“Make it new!”

—Ezra Pound

An intensive study of the beautiful, difficult, and sometimes bizarre poetry of the first half of the twentieth century. Discussions will range from geopolitics to metaphysics and back again, frequently within a single poem. Readings will include Frost, Yeats, Pound, Eliot, HD, Stein, Moore, Williams, Stevens, Hughes, and Auden; major topics will include tradition and canonicity, World War I, nature poetry, and the line between perception and reality. Students will hone their critical skills in seminar discussions and in advanced literary research.

Required texts:

Robert Frost, *Complete Poems*

William Butler Yeats, *Selected Poems and Three Plays*

Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*

T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems*

H.D., *Selected Poems*

William Carlos Williams, *Selected Poems*

Wallace Stevens, *The Palm at the End of the Mind*

Langston Hughes, *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems*

W. H. Auden, *Selected Poems*

Hart Crane, *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*

Additional texts on Moodle.

W, August 24: Introduction: Browning, “The Last Duchess”; cummings, “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r”

M 29: **Frost:** Birches, Mowing, Mending Wall, The Death of the Hired Man, Home Burial, After Apple-Picking, The Wood-Pile, The Road Not Taken, The Oven Bird, A Servant to Servants. Brief biography of Frost on Moodle.

W 31: **Frost:** Out, Out--, Stopping By Woods, The Need of Being Versed in Country Things, The Hill Wife, Never Again Would Bird’s Song Be The Same, Two Tramps, Fire and Ice, In a Disused Graveyard, A Minor Bird, Acquainted with the Night, Good-Bye and Keep Cold, Design, Directive, The Gift Outright

M September 5: Labor Day — no classes.

W 7: **Yeats:** The Stolen Child, To the Rose upon the Rood of Time, The Lake Isle of Innisfree, Who Goes with Fergus?, The Unappeaseable Host, The Song of Wandering Aengus, The Wild Swans at Coole, In Memory of Major Robert Gregory, An Irish Airman Foresees His Death. Brief biography on Moodle. **Meter assignment due.**

M 12: **Yeats:** The Fascination of What's Difficult, Easter, 1916, The Second Coming, A Prayer for My Daughter, A Meditation in Time of War, Sailing to Byzantium, The Tower, Leda and the Swan, Among School Children, Byzantium

W 14: **Yeats:** The Phases of the Moon, Crazy Jane and the Bishop, Crazy Jane Reproved, Crazy Jane and the Day of Judgment, Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman, Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop, Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers, Lapis Lazuli, Why Should Not Old Men be Mad?, Under Ben Bulbin, Cuchulain Comforted, The Circus Animals' Desertion. On Moodle: **Auden:** The Public vs. the Late Mr. William Butler Yeats.

F 16: **Memorization due**

M 19: **Pound:** Cino, The White Stag, Portrait d'une Femme, A Virginal, In a Station of the Metro, Ancient Music, The River-Merchant's Wife, The Seafarer. Brief biography and "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" on Moodle.

W 21: **Pound:** Cantos 1, 9, 13, 45; on Moodle: **Rainey,** excerpt from *Institutions of Modernism*.

F 23: **Paper #1 due**

M 26: **HD:** Sea Rose, Sea Lily, Evening, Sheltered Garden, Sea Poppies, Garden, Sea Violet, Orchard, Sea Gods, Storm, Sea Iris, Hermes of the Ways, Pear Tree, Oread. Brief biography on Moodle.

W 28: **Stein:** Readings and biography on Moodle.

M October 3: **Loy:** Readings and biography on Moodle. **Peppis,** "Schools, Movements, Manifestoes" on Moodle.

W 5: **Eliot:** The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Portrait of a Lady, Gerontion, Sweeney Among the Nightingales. Brief biography on Moodle.

M 10: **Eliot:** *The Waste Land* **Due in class: notification, in writing, of which paper option you are selecting.**

W 12: **Eliot:** *The Waste Land* (please re-read the complete poem).

M 17: **Williams:** Spring and All, To Have Done Nothing, The Rose, The Eyeglasses, The Right of Way, To Elsie, The Red Wheelbarrow, The Sun Bathers, Poem, Nantucket, This is Just to Say, Death. Brief biography on Moodle.

W 19: **Williams:** from Patterson, pp. 259-272 and 293-297.

F 21: **Paper #2 due** for those writing two 8-10-page papers

M 24: **Stevens:** Sunday Morning, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird, Anecdote of the Jar, The Snow Man, The Emperor of Ice Cream, The Idea of Order at Key West. Brief biography on Moodle.

W 26: **Stevens:** Postcard from the Volcano, The Man on the Dump, Of Modern Poetry, The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm, The Auroras of Autumn, The River of Rivers in Connecticut, Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself, Of Mere Being

M 31: **Moore:** The Steeple-Jack, No Swan So Fine, Poetry (final version and long version in notes), England, When I Buy Pictures, An Octopus. Brief biography on Moodle. Also on Moodle: **Holley**, *The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study of Voice and Value*, pp. 66-69; **Miller**, "Marianne Moore and the Women Modernizing New York," pp. 339-347.

W November 2: **Moore:** The Pangolin, The Paper Nautilus, The Wood-Weasel, A Carriage from Sweden, Armor's Undermining Modesty, I May, I Might, I Must

M 7: **Hughes:** The Negro Speaks of Rivers, Negro, Danse Africaine, I, Too, The Weary Blues, Midnight Dancer, Daybreak in Alabama, Note on Commercial Theatre. Biography on Moodle. Also on Moodle: **Du Bois**, "Criteria of Negro Art"; **Hughes**, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"

W 9: **Hughes:** Mulatto, Song for a Dark Girl, Ku Klux, Cross, Pennsylvania Station, Let America Be America Again, Postcard From Spain, Seven Moments of Love. On Moodle: Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria, The Colored Soldier,

M 14: **Brown and Cullen:** Readings and biographies on Moodle.

W 16: **Crane:** To Brooklyn Bridge, The Harbor Dawn, Cutty Sark, Cape Hatteras. Biography on Moodle.

M 21: **Auden:** O What is that Sound, A Summer Night ("Out on the lawn I lie in bed"), Lay Your Sleeping Head My Love, Spain, As I Walked Out One Evening, Musée des Beaux Arts, In Memory of W. B. Yeats, September 1, 1939. Biography and essay on Light Verse, both on Moodle. **Prospectus and bibliography due in class** for those writing one sixteen-to-twenty-page paper.

W 23: Thanksgiving Break

M 28: **Auden**: In Memory of Sigmund Freud, Lady, Weeping at the Crossroads, Song for Saint Cecilia's Day, Ten Songs, In Praise of Limestone, The Shield of Achilles. **Homer**: Excerpt from *The Iliad*; **Keats**: Ode to a Grecian Urn, both on Moodle.

W 30: **Perloff**, " 'Pound/Stevens: Whose Era?' Revisited" on Moodle. Look over poems we've read this semester — and any others you'd like to add — and come to class with evidence for at least one working definition of modernism.

M December 5: Inheritors of Modernism. Packet of poems on Moodle.

T 6: Final paper due by 3:00

Course requirements:

Students will memorize a poem, and write a short exercise in meter, one five-page paper, and either two 8-10 page papers or one 16-20 page paper.

Reading questions:

Bring a question about the reading with you to every class. These questions will be the basis for class discussions and paper topics.

Notes on the reading assignments:

Despite the long list of titles for each day, reading assignments for this course are often short, especially on days when there are no essays assigned. Please read the poems for each day carefully and thoroughly. You are of course encouraged to explore the books beyond the assigned reading.

Please bring hard copies of all reading assignments with you to class. If you're looking to save money on coursebooks, note that other editions may be acceptable, but that online versions of poems are frequently unreliable. All books should be available in the library.

When reading any poetry seriously, it's a good idea to have a dictionary handy. For modernist poetry, it can also be useful to have a good reference guide to Greek and Roman mythology. Bullfinch's *Mythology*, available at <http://www.bartleby.com/>, is one useful resource.

If you get stuck on a difficult poem, try reading it out loud. You'll find it easier to catch both the poem's meaning and its beauty.

Attendance policy:

This class centers around discussion. If you don't participate in discussions, whether by contributing or listening to your peers, you haven't really taken the class. You will be allowed three absences over the course of the semester, but after that, your final grade will be penalized by one third of a letter grade for each absence. Since there can be no way to make up discussions, this policy applies even in cases where students have

medical or other legitimate excuses. Excessive lateness will also result in a reduced grade. Participation grades do not reflect absences; rather, they reflect your performance once you've shown up.

Late paper policy:

You may have a three-day extension (i.e., from Friday to Monday) on any one assignment, no questions asked. Beyond that, all late papers will incur a penalty of one third of a grade per day past deadline. Failure to hand in any one of the papers will result in failure of the class.

Honor Code:

Students are expected to abide by the Agnes Scott College Honor Code. Plagiarism is a very serious offence. Be scrupulous in your documentation, and always make clear the difference between your own ideas and those of others. In addition to any penalties imposed by Honor Court, any student who is found responsible for plagiarism in the class will automatically fail the class.

Many students who choose to plagiarize seem to do so because they are afraid to turn in papers late; please remember that a late penalty is by far the lesser of two evils in this situation. If you're in over your head, contact me and we'll figure something out.

Accommodations:

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see Kelly Deasy in the Office of Academic Advising to register for services. If you receive an accommodation checklist, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Grading:

Participation and reading questions: 10%

Memorization: 5%

Meter exercise: 5%

Paper 1: 20%

Ten-page papers: 30% each; or 20-page paper: 60%

Office hours and how to reach me:

I will hold walk-in office hours MW 2-3, TTh 4-5, and will be glad to schedule extra appointments. Come to discuss paper topics, to ask questions about the class, to argue about a text, to get help with a confusing poem, etc. To make an appointment, or for any other contact, it's best to e-mail me at rtrousdale@agnesscott.edu.

Course evaluations:

At the end of the semester, you will receive an e-mail asking you to submit online course evaluations. Please fill them out! I pay very careful attention to them. I want to know what you thought so that I can improve this course in the future. Course evaluations are also used by the college during faculty performance reviews.