

ENGL 360 POETRY: 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES
SYLLABUS¹ & READING SCHEDULE

COURSE INFORMATION

Location:	HH 212
Meeting Time & Day:	MWF 10:30 – 11:20 a.m.
Instructor:	J. Angie Johnson
Office:	HH 121
Office Hours:	MW 11:30 – 3:30 p.m. or by appointment (no Fridays)
Best Mode of Contact:	angie.johnson@blc.edu

REQUIRED BOOKS

- 1916 Robert Frost: *The Road Not Taken and Other Poems*
1923 William Carlos Williams: *Spring and All*
1970 Louis Jenkins: *Before You Know It: Prose Poems 1970-2005*
1974 Shel Silverstein: *Where the Sidewalk Ends: Poems and Drawings*
1991 Billy Collins: *Questions About Angels: Poems*
1997 Karen Hesse: *Out of The Dust* (verse novel)
2000 Judy Jordan: *Carolina Ghost Woods*
2001 Sharon Creech: *Love That Dog* (verse novel)
2007 Robert Hass: *Time and Materials: Poems 1997-2005*
2008 Matthew Dickman: *All-American Poem*
2011 Lemon Andersen: *County of Kings* (memoir / verse)
2012 Mary Oliver: *A Thousand Mornings: Poems*

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

According to the online description of ENGL 360 Poetry, this class is a “survey of British and American poetry, including dramatic, narrative, fictional, and lyrical forms.” My course description is different. In this class, we will focus on contemporary American poetry, including dramatic, narrative (or “prose”), fictional (or “novels” written in poetry form), and lyrical forms.

The main objectives of this course are to become better critical readers and communicators, which poetry demands. This course also emphasizes interpretive skills; through hours of discussion and analysis you will become capable of interpreting texts and build important research and critical thinking skills. You will also learn to recognize what is relevant and summarize that information for the use of others. Most importantly, you will come to appreciate a more complex and expansive view of the way literature reveals humankind's nature.

At the end of this course students should be able to:

- a. analyze texts guided by basic rhetorical concepts;
- b. practice critical reading skills, including the ability to identify genre conventions and evaluate the claims, evidence, and reasoning in a variety of texts;

¹ Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus as the curriculum and/or program require(s).

- c. demonstrate effective research processes, including the ability to gather academic and non-academic sources in order to understand any given book's context;
- d. communicate and present a variety of verbal analyses of chosen works.

ASSESSMENT / ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION

Students can earn up to 100 pts. or 100% of the final grade. Here is a breakdown:

Participation	63 pts. or 63% of final grade
Reading Journal	12 pts. or 12% of final grade
Memory Work	15 pts. or 15% of final grade
Good Thunder Events	<u>10 pts. or 10% of final grade</u>
	100 pts. or 100% of final grade

Attendance is *not* graded (sort of). However, attendance *is* taken. **Students who miss six or more class meetings will automatically fail the course.**

Participation is graded. Participation includes (but is not limited to) reading, journal work, memory work, and taking an active role in peer-driven activities and in-class discussions. Participation is worth 63 points or 63% of each student's final grade. We meet forty times. Each class period is worth 1.575 pts. or 1.575% of each student's final grade. If a student misses one class he or she will be docked -1.575 pts. or -1.575% of his or her final grade; if a student misses two classes he or she will be docked -3.15 pts. or -3.15% of his or her final grade; and so on.

Showing up to class is not enough to earn a daily participation point. Showing up to class and sitting in a remote location to stream movies on an iPad (or Tweeting, texting, etc.) will cause a student to lose his or her participation point(s).

The Exception: In order to represent the college, a student who misses class to attend an approved activity will *not* lose his or her participation point(s). For example, a student athlete who attends an away game will not lose credit; a musician who attends a choir tour will not lose credit. These activities are sanctioned by administration and are brought to the attention of faculty via email. Go Vikings!

Grading Scale:

98-100 A+

93-97 A

90-92 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

73-76 C

70-72 C-

60-69 D

59 and below F

GOOD THUNDER READING SERIES – MANDATORY EVENTS

[The Good Thunder Reading Series](#) was established at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) in 1981 by Poet Richard Robbins. It has become the one of the Midwest's most important venues for the collaboration of writers of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

For ENGL 360, you are required to attend two events. **Because each event lands on a Thursday, please mark your calendars now.** If you are in another class during these times/dates, please make arrangements. You either get credit for showing up, or no credit. It's that simple. The events:

H, Oct. 2: Matthew Dickman at MNSU (5 pts.)

- Craft Talk in CSU Ostrander Auditorium at 3:00 p.m. (one hour)
- Reading in CSU 245 at 7:30 p.m. (one hour)

Note: If you want Dickman to sign your book, please bring it.

H, Oct. 30: Robert Hass at MNSU (5 pts.)

- Craft Talk in CSU Ostrander Auditorium at 3:00 p.m. (one hour)
- Reading in CSU 245 at 7:30 p.m. (one hour)

Note: If you want Hass to sign your book, please bring it.

Good Thunder Details & Instructions:

- Each event is free to the public. Feel free to bring a friend.
- I drive a Prius. Besides the driver, it seats (uncomfortably) four. I am happy to provide transportation, and / or lead the way to the events.
- If you choose to go separately, [click here for directions and parking](#) to the Good Thunder Reading Series events. You may need to pay for parking, so be prepared. Take cash.
- You get to sit with me! To receive credit, please find me at each event, have a seat, and enjoy.
- Class is cancelled on the following Friday of each Thursday event. It's only fair.

READING JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Materials Needed:

- Notebook, college ruled
- Pen or pencil

For each book that you read, please keep a journal that explores the following:

1. **Who is the author?** What did he or she study in college? Did he or she attend college? Where did he or she grow up, etc. In other words, try to paint a picture of the author and what may or may not impact his or her writing. Research!
2. **Personal Response.** Did you like the work, dislike it, feel Luke-warm about it? Why? Try to be specific. Did something peak your interest? Did something turn you off and make you want to quit reading? What and why?
3. **Elements of Poetry.** Choose two “Elements of Poetry” (below) to explore through freewriting, note-taking, clustering, or listing. Try to go as in-depth as you can.

Elements of Poetry²

- **Voice:** Who is speaking? – the author or “the speaker” (meaning someone else)? Does the same voice appear across the entire text? Are there different voices or Points of View (POV)? Is there development in the voice or voices in the poem and/or throughout the collection? (Think about how a child’s voice will evolve as she matures.)
- **Image and metaphor:** What images or metaphors stand out, and what is the significance / meaning? Are there repeating images (obsessions), what are they, and what significance can you derive? Is the poetry image-driven (vs. sound driven)? Explain.
- **Diction and syntax:** What kind of language is used (i.e. elevated or simple), and what is the significance? Are phrases/clauses, sentences, or entire works grammatically correct, or do they break rules, and why? Do certain words stick out?
- **Rhythm and music:** Sound! Rhyme, slant rhyme, alliteration, and so forth. What words contain hard syllables (cramming, creeks, slap); wet syllables (shower, sleeve, lace); light syllables (feather, fume, flame) – and how do these word choices add to meaning?
- **Form and line:** Is the poem “easy on the eye” or does it look intimidating? How many stanzas? Where does the author break his or her lines, and why? What is the purpose of each stanza – what does each reveal? How many “chapters” or “parts” are there in the collection (content), how many poems in each “chapter” or “part,” and how many poems total? Does this affect your reading?
- **Modes (i.e. narrative, lyric, dramatic):** What kind of poem is this, and how does its mode express meaning? Does the collection stick to one mode, or does it shift?
- **Setting / Place:** Where is the poem located (setting)? Is the setting imaginary or real? Where is the poem physically located in the collection, and why (opening work or middle)? Where does this poem locate you when reading, and why?
- **Thematic development:** What theme or themes are threaded throughout this work, and does it lend itself to a kind of narrative arc? That is, does this collection “tell a story?” Compare the first, middle, and final poems. Is the theme consistent, and why? If not, explore.

Final Note: I am not looking for beautiful prose. I am not going to comment in your journal. Your reading journal is just that: *your* reading journal. Your journal can be a *mess*. It is primarily for you to explore your ideas, no matter how sloppy, while at the same time identifying intelligent points to discuss during class, so relax.

² Adapted from the University of Minnesota, Mankato, *MFA Comprehensive Exam Guidelines*, 2008-11.

MEMORY WORK ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Rather than write essays, I would like you to memorize three poems from any of the assigned readings. For example, you might choose to memorize one poem by Robert Frost, another by Louis Jenkins, and another by Mary Oliver; or you might choose to memorize one poem by William Carlos Williams, a passage from *Out of The Dust*, and a poem by Matthew Dickman; or you might choose to memorize three poems in Judy Jordan's collection. The choice is yours – you can mix it up any way you like.

Requirements:

- **Memory Work #1:** Print off enough copies of the poem you have chosen to memorize and distribute them to class. Next, recite your poem for class. When you are done, please intelligently discuss *why* you have chosen this poem to memorize. Why do you want it lodged into your brain? – what's special about it? Please note: Responding with, "The poem was short and easy to memorize," is not an adequate answer, nor is, "I liked it." Dig deeper.
- **Memory Work #2:** Print off enough copies of the first and second poems you have chosen to memorize and distribute them to class. Next, recite *both* poems for class. When you are done, please intelligently discuss *why* you have chosen poem #2 to memorize. Why do you want it lodged into your brain? – what's special about it? Please note: Responding with, "The poem was short and easy to memorize," is not an adequate answer, nor is, "I liked it." Dig deeper.
- **Memory Work #3:** Print off enough copies of the first, second, and third poems you have chosen to memorize and distribute them to class. Next, recite *each* poem for class. When you are done, please intelligently discuss *why* you have chosen poem #3 to memorize. Why do you want it lodged into your brain? – what's special about it? Please note: Responding with, "The poem was short and easy to memorize," is not an adequate answer, nor is, "I liked it." Dig deeper.

READING / HOMEWORK SCHEDULE

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

	Date	ENGL 360 Poetry Homework Due BEFORE Class
1	Aug. 27	
	Aug. 29	Reading: "Poetry: Who Needs It?" by William Logan, MyBLC > Bookmarks Reading: "Poetry Makes You Weird" by Eric G. Wilson, MyBLC > Bookmarks Reading: "Why We Should Read Poetry" by Amy Lowell, MyBLC > Handouts Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please print these essays, read them, and annotate important passages and / or personal thoughts concerning the topics and / or issues. I also recommend that you Google each author to find out who they are (scribble notes into your marginalia). - Last: Compose two intelligent discussion prompts for each reading. For example, you might ask, "What does Wilson mean when he says that poetry makes people weird, and is it true?"
2	Sept. 1	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
	Sept. 3	Robert Frost: <i>The Road Not Taken and Other Poems</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Sept. 5	
3	Sept. 8	William Carlos Williams: <i>Spring and All</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Sept. 10	
	Sept. 12	
4	Sept. 15	Louis Jenkins: <i>Before You Know It: Prose Poems 1970-2005</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Sept. 17	
	Sept. 19	
5	Sept. 22	Shel Silverstein: <i>Where the Sidewalk Ends: Poems and Drawings</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Sept. 24	
	Sept. 26	
6	Sept. 29	Matthew Dickman: <i>All-American Poem</i> (we're reading this one out of order to accommodate his MNSU visit) Reading Journal due after class
	Oct. 1	
	H, Oct. 2	Matthew Dickman at MNSU – no class on Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Craft Talk in CSU Ostrander Auditorium at 3:00 p.m. - Reading in CSU 245 at 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 3	NO CLASS
7	Oct. 6	Billy Collins: <i>Questions About Angels: Poems</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Oct. 8	
	Oct. 10	
8	Oct. 13	
	Oct. 15	Memory Work #1

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	Date	ENGL 360 Poetry Homework Due <u>BEFORE</u> Class
	Oct. 17	NO CLASS / Mid-Term Break
9	Oct. 20	Robert Hass: <i>Time and Materials: Poems 1997-2005</i> (we're reading this one out of order to accommodate his MNSU visit) Reading Journal due after class
	Oct. 22	
	Oct. 24	
10	Oct. 27	Hass Cont.
	Oct. 29	NO CLASS / Advising Day
	H, Oct. 30	Robert Hass at MNSU – no class on Friday - Craft Talk in CSU Ostrander Auditorium at 3:00 p.m. - Reading in CSU 245 at 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 31	NO CLASS
11	Nov. 3	Karen Hesse: <i>Out of The Dust</i> (verse novel) Reading Journal due after class
	Nov. 5	
	Nov. 7	
12	Nov. 10	Judy Jordan: <i>Carolina Ghost Woods</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Nov. 12	
	Nov. 14	
13	Nov. 17	Sharon Creech: <i>Love That Dog</i> (verse novel) Reading Journal due after class
	Nov. 19	
	Nov. 21	
14	Nov. 24	Memory Work #2
	Nov. 26	NO CLASS / Personal
	Nov. 28	NO CLASS / Thanksgiving Break
15	Dec. 1	Lemon Andersen: <i>County of Kings</i> (memoir / verse) Reading Journal due after class
	Dec. 3	
	Dec. 5	
16	Dec. 8	Mary Oliver: <i>A Thousand Mornings: Poems</i> Reading Journal due after class
	Dec. 10	
	Dec. 12	Memory Work #3 – last day of class
17	Dec. 15	NO CLASS FINALS: Monday, December 15 from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.