

**ENL 337: 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Poetry**  
**Summer 2008 7-week Session Online**  
**Prof. Jen Riley**

*We go to poetry because we believe it has something to do with us. We also go to poetry to receive the experience of the **not me**, to enter a field of vision we could not otherwise apprehend.*

--Adrienne Rich, *What is Found There: Notebook on Poetry and Politics* (1993)

**Course Description:** A student of major American poets of this century from Frost to Richard Wilbur.

**Note:** This course satisfies the literature distribution requirement. The course also meets requirements for the major in English with a concentration in Literature & Criticism in the historical category. The course also meets the English Literature & Criticism historical course requirement for the Liberal Arts major.

**Detailed Course Description:** What do poets try to do? Why do we read poetry? Do we find things in poetry that we can't find elsewhere? How does poetry explain who we are? How does poetry explain our country? In what ways can poetry influence our future? These questions, and more, will be answered as we read and discuss a selection of contemporary American poets. We will begin with a look at Robert Pinsky's the *Favorite Poem Project*. Pinsky, our former Poet Laureate, developed a database of poems that American people love. He believes that the project "tells us something about who we are, as a people and a nation, and it will tell future generations something about who we were." From Pinsky's project, we will turn to our own ideas about poetry and how it tells us about who we are as both a nation and a people. In doing so, we will read a great deal of poetry as well as a number of critical essays discussing the role of the poet and poetry in our society. Our final class project will be hosting a "Favorite Poem" reading like the ones Pinsky's project has initiated all across the country.

**Course Objectives:** The course objectives are to provide an exploration of 20<sup>th</sup> century American poetry. At the same time, the course works to provide practice and guidance in the skills of a literary critic, including close reading and analysis, using outside sources (print and electronic), quoting and documenting sources, writing short responses and essays, and discussing poetry. By the end of the semester, successful students will be able to:

- understand the works of several contemporary American poets
- understand the concepts, strategies, and theories that underlie the work of contemporary American poets;
- read a single text in a number of different ways;
- use library resources effectively (electronic and print) to develop writing assignments;
- write well-developed, coherent essays that use outside sources to interpret a text;
- use outside sources (both primary and secondary) effectively, correctly following MLA guidelines;
- edit and critique one's own work.

We will work toward these objectives through assigned readings, various writing assignments, class and group discussion, and research.

**Course Texts (subject to change):**

Poulin, A (editor). *Contemporary American Poetry*, 8/E. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.  
Microphone for use in online classroom (purchased at an office store like Staples for \$20 or less)

**The course assignments include:**

- 8-10 discussion board activities (discussion board activities involve each student responding to prompts provided by the instructor and then engaging with classmate postings)
- 2 Response Papers or comparable assignments (i.e. literary criticism presentation)
- American Poet Presentation (via a Wiki page)
- Favorite Poem podcast
- Final Paper (5-7 pages in length)
  - Note: the actual assignments might change but not the amount of work.

**REQUIRED COURSE MEETINGS**

In addition, we will hold **required** “virtual” face to face classes just as if we were holding our class face to face in a university classroom. What does this mean? We’ll meet in an online room where you will be able to talk to me with a microphone, which is required for the course (you can purchase one for less than \$20 at a store like Staples). You will also hear me talking to you. In this way, we will live class sessions and make sure we’re all on the same page as we move very quickly during the summer session to complete a 15 week class in 7 weeks!

Everyone is expected to attend at least two of the three sessions.

**We will arrange the live online sessions to fit everyone’s schedule once the class begins. Plan to commit two 60-MINUTE online sessions for the course (and a 3<sup>rd</sup> if you want). There will be plenty of opportunities to attend the required online sessions without disrupting your summer work schedules.**

**Note:** I’m aware that some of you may be taking an additional summer course or working during the summer; I will post possible times for the sessions and have a sign up sheet so you can choose the session times that fit your schedule.

Have questions? Email me: [j1riley@umassd.edu](mailto:j1riley@umassd.edu)

**Course Computer Requirements:**

Operating System

- Windows 2000 or XP, Mac OSX 10.2+
- Java: Windows - J2SE(TM) Runtime Environment 5.0, Macintosh - Java for Mac OS X (free download)

- Virus Scan and all Windows or Mac software updates installed (recommended)

#### Hardware

- 128 MB RAM (256 MB recommended)
- Sound Card
- Speakers
- Microphone (recommended, but not required)

#### Web Browser

- Windows: Microsoft Internet Explorer (5.5- SP2, 6.0), Netscape (7.0 – 7.2), AOL (8.0, 9.0), Mozilla (1.5, 1.7), Firefox (1.0, 1.5).
- Macintosh: Microsoft Internet Explorer (5.1 OS X 10.1), Netscape (7.0 – 7.2 OS X), AOL (OS X), Mozilla (1.5, 1.7 OS X), Firefox (1.0 OS X), Safari (1.2, 1.3.1+)
- Macromedia Flash Plug-in (free download)

Internet access at 56k or above