

SYLLABUS—Information page

HUM 633 **Poetry and Insight**

Prof. Gertrude Hughes ghughes@wesleyan.edu or 860-346-3675 (before 9 pm. please!)

SPECIAL TWO-WEEKEND SCHEDULE: Saturday-Monday January 17-19;
Saturday & Sunday Jan 31 & Feb1; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day

READING

Please buy all the books, including the Course Book, *some weeks before our first day*, Saturday January 17.

Because of our special schedule, students will need to prepare all the readings listed on the syllabus before the first day! Take plenty of time, enjoy the articles, essays, and poems. Use the *Study Guides at the end of the Course Book* to help you. By reading ahead of time, you will enjoy the course much more. Take notes as you read, do the preparatory thinking, as indicated in the dated syllabus. Then you will find it quite easy to get ready for each day's activities and discussions. Before you even start reading, however, read through this whole syllabus to see what we'll be working on each day. Note: Readings in the Course Book are marked in the syllabus with **.

CLASSWORK will consist of discussion, prepared as per syllabus; concentration exercises and other attention exercises, including some outdoors, weather permitting; and some writing—journal style—which will **not** be collected. Please **bring all texts** scheduled for discussion that day to class, including the Course Book.

GRADING: You will be graded on your classroom work and your written final project

ATTENDANCE on all five days is expected.

WRITTEN WORK: In addition to writing in class (see above) you will be responsible for writing a piece of prose, either a single essay, or a group of substantial “fragments” related to one another or not. Your essay or set of fragments should

- a—use course material and course ideas in some detail to demonstrate your understanding and appreciation of the texts and ideas considered in the course
- b—be as well written as you can make it: clear, engaged, carefully constructed and organized

c—be typed in 12 point type double spaced (not 1.5 spacing for instance)

d—be **from 8-12 pages long**. The goal for length is: Think More Write Less.

Note: I strongly suggest that you incorporate some of your in-class writing and preparatory notes into your final paper. Re-visiting and re-working such material may take time, but it will make your final paper **more vivid and precise**, less stuck in generalizations and abstractions.

Due: BY TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10. Please send **electronic and hard copy** (or hard copy only) Hard copy should be **postmarked** no later than FEBRUARY 10, '09.

N.B. I do not read late work, so hand in your work by the date above; ***I do not give extensions*** unless asked to by the dean's office in an individual case.

My post address is: Prof G R Hughes, Wasch Center for Retired Faculty,
Wesleyan University, Middletown CT 06459

Poetry and Insight, Humanities 633
SYLLABUS—Schedule of Assigned Readings

REQUIRED TEXTS to purchase for this course:

(these editions are recommended and preferred, but others may be substituted):

Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass*, His Original Edition, ed., Malcolm Cowley, Penguin ISBN 0-14-142-199-8

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*. Harper Perennial ISBN 0-06-093174-4

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Spiritual Emerson*, ed., J.Needleman ISBN 978-1-58542-642-3

Course Book: Available after November 12, '08. Buy the Course Book on line from Pip Printing www.PIPMID.com Find the Wesleyan icon, find our course, fill out order form (You will need credit card. Cost will be about \$20.00). Pick up Course Book at PIP Printing, 179 Main Street, Middletown 24 hours later. If you want to arrange for UPS delivery (@ about \$5.00), you can do so by calling PIP Printing 860-344-9001 to arrange for UPS delivery once you have ordered the Course Book on line. They'll need to get your credit card number for the UPS charge. Ask for "Roger." He is familiar with their course book service.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

SATURDAY JANUARY 17, 2009

Negative Capability and Subtle realities: Cultivating Active Receptivity

Major readings:

Wordsworth, "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey," **

The Prelude (1799 version; parts I and II) **

Rudolf Steiner, On the Mood of Meditation; On Sleep and Meditation** (from *Esoteric Science: An Outline*)

Paul Davies, "The Metaphysical Conversation" ** (*Romanticism and Esoteric Tradition*)

Tarnas, Rick "On Romanticism"; "On Feminism" (each is a single page)

More poems from our course packet**--to be selected during class time

--Overview of Course; Introductory activities: riddles, attention exercises

SUNDAY JANUARY 18, 2009

Poetry as a Kind of Consciousness & How Selfhood is related to such consciousness.

Major readings:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance, Fate, Spiritual Laws, Circles

Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition)

"Preface to the 1855 edition" of *Leaves of Grass* ** (excerpt)

Emily Dickinson, all poems in our course packet **

Wallace Stevens, all poems in our course packet** (omit "Sunday Morning" if you must)

Activities: attention exercises (paradox of concentration)

Walking meditation

MONDAY JANUARY 19, 2009 (Martin Luther King Day)

Encounter: An Implicit and Explicit Event in Poems

Major readings:

continue Whitman, "Song of Myself" ADD Malcolm Cowley on "Song..."

Martin Buber, "I and Thou" excerpt in course packet**

Adrienne Rich, "Three Conversations" (optional but very useful for feminism and power)

Rudolf Steiner, "6 Exercises" (ask yourself what if anything they all have in common)**

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*:

A Street in Bronzeville---kitchenette building, the mother, hunchback girl, a song in the front yard, the ballad of chocolate mabbie, sadie and maud, the vacant lot, Negro Hero

Annie Allen—read all of these poems, especially:

--"Notes from the Childhood and the Girlhood" (33-37). Be able to describe Annie's personality and character.

--The *Anniad*, p. 38ff. This is a story of Annie's adulthood, especially courtship and marriage. Be able to describe (and perhaps account for) what you think is a (the?) major theme of this part of Annie's life as Brooks's poem tells it.

--Appendix to the *Anniad* (50-51)— re-read this after you've read The Womanhood poems and ask yourself, "What makes these three an appendix? Why aren't they part of The Womanhood?"

--The Womanhood—read all and be prepared to choose some to illustrate one or two political, psychological, cultural facts or ideas that characterize the womanhood Annie has achieved. Questions of race and of gender intersect in many of these poems. Consider how these intersections function in the poem, what perspective(s) these intersections bring to the poem as a whole.

For January 19 or postponed to January 31:

More poems from Brooks, *Selected Poems* as follows (or for January 31 if not for today) from "Bean Eaters": In Honor of David Anderson... The Bean Eaters, We Real Cool, Old Mary, A Bronzeville Mother Loiters,..., The Last Quatrain of ... Emmett Till, Mrs. Small, Jessie Mitchell's Mother, the Lovers of the Poor, the Crazy Woman, A Lovely Love, A Penitent..., Bronzeville Woman in a Red Hat, The Ballad of...,

And from "New Poems" read: The Empty Woman, To be in love, "Of Robert Frost," "Langston Hughes," A Catch of Shy Fish (especially garbageman (124), old people working (125) weaponed woman (125) Big Bessie (127).

Saturday January 31 and Sunday February 1

Wholeness in poems and in reading, writing, and thinking about them

Major readings:

Henri Bortoft, "Authentic and Counterfeit Wholes"***

The reading from Paul Davies** (review)

Rudolf Steiner, "6 Exercises"*** from *Esoteric Science, an Outline*

Postponed poems by Gwendolyn Brooks if any (see Jan. 19, above)

Wordsworth, "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey"***

Elizabeth Bishop, "In the Village" ** (autobiographical short story)

Elizabeth Bishop—all poems** Consider our theme of “encounter” in Bishop’s work and consider how the Davies reading pertains to her poems. (You may omit “Filling Station” and “Five Flights Up”; they were copied for a different class.)

Langston Hughes—all poems** Consider our theme of “encounter” in these poems and consider how the Davies reading pertains to his poems.

If you can, please bring to class some **written fragments** on the above considerations concerning Bishop and/or L. Hughes on Sunday, but good to have on Saturday too.

Review Wordsworth *Prelude* and/or Whitman *Song of Myself* with the goal of finding **passages** in either or both **that illustrate wholeness as Bortoft describes it**

Discussion of Steiner’s “6 exercises”: Be prepared to say or write a response to the question, What does each exercise have to do with the “precious portents of our powers” (Stevens), meaning the “powers” with which one reads or writes poems?

In-class **work on writing** literary criticism.

“Study Hall” time to work on your final writing projects, including one-on-one consultation with me if desired.