

SYLLABUS
HUMS 620
Graduate Liberal Studies
January 2011 Special Schedule

Required Books

Emerson, *Selections from Emerson*, ed., Stephen Whicher, Riverside Editions

Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days In America* (ISBN110 386 4947)

Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on reality and the Imagination*
Vintage, ISBN039470278-6

Elizabeth Bishop, *The Collected Prose*, Farar, Straus, & Giroux ISBN 9780374518664

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* Beacon Press

Langston Hughes, *Ways of White Folks*, Vintage 9780679728177

_____, *Selected Poems*, Vintage 9780679764083

Lucille Clifton, *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir* BOA editions ISBN0918526590

Maggie Nelson, *Jane: [a murder]*, Soft Skull Press 1932360719

Note: A required course reader will be available after December 16th 2010 at PIP printers, 179 Main St, Middletown.

Here is what PIP says about **how to order** the course reader:

“Do not call PIP. Go to www.pipmid.com Click on the course book icon. On the next screen, click on Wesleyan then Course then Readers One work-day after ordering, you can pick up the reader at PIP, 179 Main Street Middletown. All orders must be paid for with a credit card in advance! Orders are nonrefundable and cannot be canceled.”

A suggestion for how to **schedule your reading**:

This course is a reading course, and more than half is extremely accessible reading.

On the syllabus you will see what to prepare for each of the two and a half weekends (5 days) that the class meets—three authors for each weekend and one for the last day. That is too much reading for the time of the course itself.

But notice that you will have two weeks (12 days) **between** the first weekend and the middle weekend and **no** weekend time to read for the final day, a Saturday. Therefore, I suggest that you read in the following order:

During the second half of December, read Langston Hughes, stories and poems, Elizabeth Bishop, stories, and Maggie Nelson’s *Jane*. All these are excellent sizes and kinds of books to take on planes and read in bed...

If you have all the above read **before January**, you can use the **first week of January** to **prepare for the first weekend of the course**—Emerson and Whitman for Saturday Jan. 8; Stevens for Sunday January 9.

Then, during the 12 day gap mentioned above, you should be able to find time for James Baldwin and the other readings for that middle weekend.

If you read carefully and took notes diligently during your December pre-reading, you will be able to **review easily** in preparation for the second weekend and the last day of the course.

READINGS
Items with an asterisk are in the Course Reader

Weekend Number One

Saturday, January 8

Morning:

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1881)

Four Essays: Self-Reliance, Experience, Fate, The Poet, Circles (optional)

Poems: TBA at class time—no need to read them ahead

Journal entries: You'll find them throughout the Whicher text on Emerson. Find some (maybe 6 or 7) that you find pertinent to one or more of the essays you read, and be able to say or write why you find them pertinent.

Saturday afternoon:

WALT WHITMAN (1819 – 1892)

Specimen Days (See Course Packet for specific readings and maybe study questions)

*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry and any other poems by Whitman in the course packet

Start Stevens for tomorrow

Sunday, January 9

Morning and Afternoon:

“Finish” Whitman?

Start Stevens

WALLACE STEVENS (1879-1955)

*All poems by Stevens in course reader. Read every poem **at least twice**

Three essays from *The Necessary Angel*:

“The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words”

N.B. “A Poet’s words are of things that do not exist without the words”, p. 32—please think about this assertion for class. Bring some notes to class to speak or write from.

“Three Academic Pieces”:

Create a single sentence that points to this essay’s major theme, or thesis. What’s this essay about?

“The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet”:

In this essay Stevens can be said to create a figure or metaphor or fictional character of what a poet is, what a poet is like, what a poet does. Assemble 3 or 4 telling quotations that demonstrate the nature of this “figure” or fictional character. Be sure to supply page #s so you can find them fast when you read your quotations to us. We will discuss at least one of your quotations. Please plan to hand in all of them at the end of the day so that I can look at them. I will return them but without comments.

“Imagination as Value”

See “...my final point”, pp. 153-156: Find one or more passages in this essay that will connect with Stevens’s final point. Be prepared to write or speak on the connection(s) you find.

WEEKEND TWO

Saturday January 22

Morning:

JAMES BALDWIN (1934-1987)

Notes of a Native Son (read **all essays except** “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and “Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough”)

*”The Fire Next Time,” including “letter to my nephew on the 100th anniversary...”

Be prepared to write in class: a brief response paper connecting his letter to his nephew(*) with ONE of the essays in *Notes of a Native Son* (or part thereof).

ELIZABETH BISHOP (1911-1979)

*All poems by Bishop in the Course Packet

Optional: Read Introduction by Robert Giroux in *The Collected Prose*. It will orient you in Bishop’s life and work if you don’t know her well.

Read each of the following memoirs and stories:

Memoirs: “Country Mouse,” “A trip to Vigia” “Efforts of Affection.”

Stories: “Gwendolyn,” “Memories of Uncle Neddy,” “In the Village”

P.S. If you can, read one or more of the remaining stories.

1--As you read the memoirs and fiction, notice connections and write some notes about them—Connections between a story and a poem, among several stories, between voices of speakers in poems and voices of speakers in stories, etc.

We will discuss at least one of your connections.

Please plan to hand in all of them at the end of the day so that I can look at them. I will return them but without comments.

2--Also: As you read the memoirs and fiction, ask yourself **how you would characterize the speaker or narrator, the teller**. Is the teller different when a memoir is being told than when a story is?

If so, be able to speak of the difference(s). If not, be able to characterize this teller in some detail and to speak about what this likeness means to you as a reader (and perhaps also as a writer).

Saturday afternoon and tomorrow

Continue Bishop

Start LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

For what to read in L. Hughes, *Selected Poems*, please see the “Contents” photo-copied in your course reader. Read all the poems whose titles are checked.

In *The Ways of White Folks*, read the first SIX stories, plus “Little Dog,” “Mother and Child,” “Father and Son.”

Who tells these stories? Can you create a kind of “figure of the teller” in Langston Hughes’s fiction—What is he like? Has he got a sense of humor? Does he like the people he’s telling about? Is he sentimental, angry, generous, afraid, nimble-minded, serious-minded? And so on.

continued next page

(Langston Hughes continued)

Assemble some quotations, *with page numbers*, to speak from in class and to hand in today. Please plan to hand in all of them at the end of the day so that I can look at them. I will return them but without comments.

Please, ask yourself these same questions about the speakers or tellers in Hughes's poems. Take some notes *to speak from*, including title and page of poem. (You don't have to hand these in.)

Sunday January 23

Morning

"Finish" Hughes or Bishop

LUCILLE CLIFTON (1935-2010)

In *Good Woman*, Read *Generations: A Memoir*. Read all of it. Take careful notes including notes about what you do not understand. Create for yourself a response paper about this memoir—to be written in class, from notes, after we have had some discussion.

Poems to read in *Good Woman*: miss rosie (19) the 1rst (21) running across the lot (22) still (23) good times (24) ca'line's prayer (33), if something should happen (35) tyrone and billy poems (pp. 38-46), pork chops (48) now my first wife never...(49) admonitions (51), the lost baby poem (60) and other poems from "**good news about the earth**," including: apology (62), lately (63) song (69), prayer (70).

In "**some jesus**," read all poems **from** "my boys" (123) **through** "this morning" (129).

In **I agree with the leaves**, read from "lucy one-eye" (145) through "light" (148); also read: in the evenings (153), breaklight (154) some dreams hang in the air (155).

Read all poems in **the light that came to Lucille Clifton**; include the one called "the light that came to L.C on p. 209.

Afternoon

More Lucille Clifton and/or re-visit Langston Hughes

WEEKEND THREE Saturday January 29, **last day**

Morning and/or Afternoon

Maggie Nelson's *Jane*

Is *Jane* prose or poetry or none of the above?

Afternoon or Morning

Leftovers

Questions about the Final Assignment

Final Assignment:

Due: Friday, February 11. If you need the weekend, you can hand it in on Monday February 14 (that would be Valentine's Day). Please don't ask for extensions.

Length: About 15 pages.

Content: To be developed during the course and confirmed and specified in detail today.