

ENGLISH 647: CONTEMPORARY POETRY
TUESDAY 300-545, AH 202
RICHARD ROBBINS

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the body of poetry created by writers who came to artistic maturity in the years after World War II. Most of these writers still live and publish. As with any course that focuses on an historical period, my aim is to help students understand the diversity of voices and styles within the selected time span under study, to help them recognize unique aspects of the period, and to help them get a sense of this period's continuity with others. This course is one piece of the MFA program's effort to provide students with an intensive grasp of contemporary literature.

TEXTS

from the 1970s

1974—Rich, *Diving into the Wreck* (NBA) 9780393311631

1976—Bishop, *Geography III* (NBCC) 9780374530655

1975/76—Ashbery, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (PP) (NBA) (NBCC) 9780140586688

from the 1980s

1984—Oliver, *American Primitive* (PP) 9780316650045

1984—Olds, *The Dead and the Living* (NBCC) 9780394715636

1987—Dove, *Thomas and Beulah* (PP) 9780887480218

from the 1990s

1993—Glück, *The Wild Iris* (PP) 9780880013345

1995—Levine, *The Simple Truth* (PP) 9780679765844

from the 2000s

2000—Clifton, *Blessing the Boats* (NBA) 9781880238882

2003—Williams, *The Singing* (NBA) 9780374529505

2006—Emerson, *Late Wife* (PP) 9780807130841

2007/08—Hass, *Time and Materials* (PP) (NBA) 9780061350283

Awards:

Pulitzer Prize (PP)

National Book Award (NBA)

National Book Critics Circle Award (NBCC)

Selected web pages as indicated in the syllabus, usually from the Academy of American Poets web site.

COURSE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Keeping up with the reading and participating in in-class discussion and analysis. Providing occasional leadership for discussions.
2. Writing two analyses, each on a topic relating to three of the previously discussed books. Details to follow. The week they are due, you will present them briefly to the rest of the class.

GRADING CRITERIA

60% for preparation and discussion.

40% for analyses and presentation.

Attendance: Missing two classes will probably affect your grade. Missing four will make it difficult for you to pass.

- ❑ **"A" work**, as described in the **Graduate Studies Bulletin**, is of "definitely superior quality." You come to class prepared, you share questions and insights with the group, you help the class in other ways to operate as something larger than the sum of its parts, you turn in thoughtful, well-written assignments.
- ❑ **"B" work** represents "above average" performance. You attempt all of the above, but you show uneven performance across some of the areas.
- ❑ **"C" work** represents "below average" performance. (Note the difference between this standard and that for undergraduate studies.) You try to fly under the radar in most or all areas, but fail at it.
- ❑ **"D" and "F" work** represent "unacceptable performance." You left your pulse at the door.

SCHEDULE

- 8.25 Introduction/Timeline
- 9.1 Rich
- 9.8 Bishop
- 9.15 Ashbery
- 9.22 Oliver
- 9.29 Olds
- 10.6 Dove
- 10.13 Rest and recovery
Analysis #1 due and discussion
- 10.20 Glück
- 10.27 Levine
- 11.3 Clifton
- 11.10 Williams
- 11.17 Emerson
- 11.24 Hass
- 12.1 Mystery book (free to students)
- 12.8 Course evaluation
Analysis #2 due and discussion