

ENG 247.PP1 Poetry and Drama Syllabus
Fall 2015, 5:30-8:30 pm, Tuesdays

Instructor: Martha Petry

Course Texts: *Poetry: An Introduction, 7th Edition, by Michael Meyer (ISBN: 978-1-4576-0730-1)*
The Compact Bedford Introduction to Drama, 7th Edition, by Lee Jacobus (ISBN: 978-1-4576-0633-5)

Course Description: "Students are introduced to lyric and dramatic genres. This course emphasizes understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of poetry and theater as language performances and literary forms. Selections for study are chosen from English and American literature as well as literatures in translation."
Prerequisite: ENG 131.

Course Design: This discussion-based course will find us reading, discussion, and writing about a rich variety of poetry and drama. You will get the most out of this class when you come to class prepared and when you actively participate in class discussions.

What a strange course this is: Poetry and Drama.... as though these two kinds of literature somehow belonged together--like the course Short Story and Novel are linked by their fictional elements. Perhaps we will discover connections between these two genres, ways that poets speak to playwrights and playwrights to poets and to us. But, at the start of this class, what I most want us to work with is how plays work and what makes a really fine play and later how poetry works and what makes a really fine poem. We will learn to listen to a variety of characters and scenes and conflicts and thus to listen to our own characters and conflicts. We will begin to understand what it means to make a poem or a play and what it is to write about a particular time and place. Some of the writers that we will encounter will be part of the "canon"--those biggies that everyone studies; others will be at the edges of some of our cultural experiences, offering us stories and experiences of individual locale, of individual and communal struggles to find a place, a home, without boundaries, nomadic wanderers, carving new frontiers.

The question of gender--the nature of difference, the "proper spheres" of women and men, the experience of racial violence, the forms of affirmation and negation, of doubt and belief, what it means to love and to live and to die and to love again, surrendering and surviving --these will be some of the issues and ideas that will arise through our readings and, I'm sure, others will emerge. What our readings will lead us to are a new consideration of how poems and plays resound and resonate, affirm and resist our own experience. Some reading may be difficult; we might find other writers' visions more comfortable and familiar, particularly if they correspond to our own. Nonetheless, all of the chosen writers, will--I believe--challenge our own assumptions and perceptions about drama and about poetry.

The following course objectives reinforce JCC's Associate Degree Outcomes. The Board of Trustees has determined that all JC graduates should develop or enhance certain essential skills while enrolled in the college. Several of these Associate Degree Outcomes are addressed in this class, including communicating clearly, concisely, and intelligibly using both written and oral communication skills, ADO #1 and #2; working collaboratively with others, ADO #9, and understanding aesthetic experience and artistic creativity, ADO #6.

These course objectives mirror the Skills and Behaviors, described in ADO 6—Aesthetics, ADO 1—Writing, and ADO 9—Collaborative Work)

1. Meaning/Understanding—Understands the historical, cultural, and social contexts of literary poems and plays;
2. Analysis and Interpretation—Applies methods of analysis and interpretation via writing and speaking. Confidently and fluently uses discipline-specific language to support critical reflection
3. Engagement—Initiates and sustains discussions about poets' and playwrights' work and is able to discuss the creative choices made by the authors
4. Evaluation— Articulates a personal critique of poets' and playwrights' works, based upon aesthetic standards
5. Appreciation— Approaches a work of creative expression with openness and interest; appreciates the world of the creative imagination as a form of knowledge expressed in formal discussion or writing
6. Exhibits through writing an Awareness of Purpose and Audience, Organizational and Development Skills, Meaning and Understanding;
7. Works productively with other students in gaining understanding of poetry and drama through participation, interaction, and completion of small group projects;

[A Mini-Manifesto] or [Why I teach literature] or [The Inside Scoop -- or What happens here matters more than a grade] I believe that literature helps us grow, both personally and intellectually because it can help us connect ourselves to the broader cultural, philosophic, and religious world of which we are a part; it can enable us to recognize human dreams and struggles in different times and places that we would never otherwise know. I believe that literature helps us develop mature sensibility and compassion for the condition of all living things; it gives us knowledge and perception needed to appreciate the beauty of order and arrangement; it provides a comparative basis from which we can see worthiness in the aims of all people, and it therefore helps us see beauty in the world around us. It also exercises our emotions through interest, concern, tension, excitement, hope, fear, regret, laughter, and sympathy, and sometimes through hate. Through cumulative experience in reading, literature can and does shape our goals and values (if we let it) by helping us clarify our own identities, both positively, through acceptance of the admirable in human beings, and negatively, through rejection of the sinister. It helps us shape our judgments through the comparison of the good and bad, the sacred and the profane, and the gray areas in-between. Literature, in short, can help make us human; it can and should open us to the complexity and mystery of our own and others' experiences.

Because I believe all that, then, we will consider in this course the stuff of literature, or more specifically of poetry and drama, what these two genres are, and how they work. In order to understand literature, we need to understand how it presents itself, how it coheres, how the "text" unfolds. Thus the elements of drama and of poetry will be explored in order to come to a better and more thorough understanding of a particular writer's craft, of how words and dialogue, image and symbol, sound and suggestion are used to unfold meaning(s).

Your responsibilities include: Participation. Be here, ready to discuss, think about and respond to the literature (*which means reading it before arriving in class*). Because the focus of this course is your response to the writers we read, the most important thing I expect is that you do the readings as assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them. I'd like you to share your questions and concerns about a writer's ideas, styles, characters, images, and the meanings that unfold. I hope and expect that you will be actively engaged.

Questions. Often students have told me that they feel that they have to have the right answer (which, of course, often means the teacher's answer) in order to succeed in a class. What I want to do is affirm your right as readers to ask questions. I believe that question making is a viable and meaningful way to own and validate what we know and are on-the-edge of knowing about a particular text, poem, symbol, conflict, etc.

Class-to-Class-Journal. You will keep a journal of your reflective and intellectual encounters with the reading assignments. These journal entries do not have to be finished critical assessments, but they should embrace one's whole self. Journal keeping, also called reflective response writing, demands a form for one's thought and demands, of course, one's active, engaged thinking about the "text" at hand. Usually, a journal is kept in a spiral bound notebook and handed in periodically. However, I'd like you to think of your journal as an initial reading, questioning, responding to a "text," that you will turn in at the start of class. Turning in a journal response late tells me you were unready to discuss the work at hand, thus late journal entries are not accepted.

Projects. You will also participate by collaboratively working and writing in small groups. These projects will be given in-class time to complete.

Papers. Two papers will be written during the course, the first about drama, the second about poetry. Models and examples for these papers will be presented as we progress through the semester. For now, you should know that your essays/papers will consist of two phases: a draft and a final, revised version.

Evaluation. To determine your final grade for this course I will average these: your active participation including class discussion, small group work and your collaborative projects (20%); your reflective writings (20%); your two papers (20% each); your Mid-term exam (10%) and your final exam (10%).

COLLEGE ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Academic honesty is expected of all students. It is the ethical behavior that includes producing their own work and not representing others' work as their own, either by plagiarism, by cheating, or by helping others to do so. Plagiarism is the failure to give credit for the use of material from outside sources. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to: Using data, quotations, or paraphrases from other sources without adequate documentation; submitting others' work as your own, and, exhibiting other behaviors generally considered unethical.

Please let me know what I can do to help you with your learning in this class.