Texas A&M University-Texarkana  
Seminar in Poetry: Dickinson, Frost, and Bishop  
Course Syllabus  
Fall 20012

Instructor: Doris Davis, Ph.D.  
Office: 221  
Office Hours: Monday: 9:30-11:00 and 1:00-2:00; Tuesday: 1:00-4:00 and 5:30-6:00; Wednesday: 9:30-11:00 and 1:00-2:00; Thursday: 1:00-4:00  
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Course Number: English 580  
Course Title: Seminar in Poetry: Dickinson, Frost, Stevens, and Bishop

Course Description: This course offers a study of poetic form with an emphasis on the poetry of Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, and Elizabeth Bishop.

Required Texts:  
Primary texts of Poetry:  

Secondary texts of Literary Criticism:  
Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art, Lloyd Schwartz and Sybil P. Estess, eds., 1983.

Course Objectives:  
1. Define and identify the basic properties of poetry, including tone, persona, irony, diction, imagery, figures of speech, alliteration, assonance and consonance, and types of rhyme and rhythm.
2. Understand poetic form (open or closed) in application to the four poets studied.
3. Understand the style and techniques of the four poets studied.
4. Evaluate the best work of each of the four poets studied.
5. Understand the relationship of these four poets to the genre of poetry, including their influences from and on other writers.

**Student Learner Outcomes:**

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:
1. Articulate informed written responses to the poetry of these four poets by writing explications and an analytical paper.
2. Understand and articulate the basic properties of poetry by writing explications and an analytical paper.
3. Understand and apply various critical approaches in writing about poetry as measured by explications, summaries, and analytical paper.
4. Achieve an appreciation of the aesthetic principles that inform the work of the four poets studied.
5. Articulate informed responses to poetry as measured by class discussions.
6. Articulate the relationship of these four poets to the genre of poetry, including their influences from and on other poets.
7. Understand and articulate major critical views concerning these four poets by reading and summarizing analytical articles.

**Requirements:**

1. Reading the texts as listed on the syllabus.

2. Summaries of assigned essays. Each week you will select one essay to read and summarize. The summaries should be double-spaced and two to two-and-a-half typed pages. **Due dates: these summaries are due during the class meeting they’re discussed.** If you must be absent, be sure to hand in your summaries ahead of time. (Send them to me in an attachment.) Be prepared to share your overview of the essay with class members.

3. Explications of four poems listed on the syllabus, one by each of the four poets studied in this course. Explications should be between 750 and 1000 words. Secondary sources may be used, but are not required. **Due dates: Dickinson: September 18; Frost: October 9; Bishop: November 6; Stevens: November 27.** If you must be absent, be sure to submit your
explication ahead of time. Be prepared to share your explication with class members.

4. One analytical paper of at least 15 typed pages, double spaced, plus the Works Cited page. The paper should include appropriate secondary sources and adhere to MLA style. The topic/thesis for the paper must be approved. You should include both books and articles in your secondary sources. Papers must be submitted to Turnitin.com. The password is eng580 and the course ID is 5385961. Submitting papers is a course requirement. You will not receive credit for the course unless you do so. **Due date: December 4**

5. Oral presentation to the class of your paper; **due date: December 4.**

6. **Final exam: December 11.**

7. Class attendance and participation. You are expected to attend class each week and to contribute to the class discussions. (Your grade may be lowered one letter grade for each class you miss after the second.)

**Final grade:** An average of grades as follows:
- Analytical Paper-30%
- Explications 10%
- Final -25%
- Class participation-10%
- Summaries-25%

**Class Schedule:**

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<th>Date</th>
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| August 28     | Introduction to class
                | View film “Voices and Visions: Emily Dickinson”                          |
| September 4-18| Focus on the poetry of Dickinson with reading assignments from *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays.* |
| September 25 - Oct. 9 | View film “Voices and Visions: Robert Frost”                  |
                | Begin the study of Frost with reading assignments from his poems and analytical |
Essays from The Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost.

October 16-Nov. 6 View film “Voices and Visions: Elizabeth Bishop.” Focus on the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop with reading assignments from Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art.

Nov. 13-27 View film “Voices and Visions: Wallace Stevens.” Begin the study of Stevens with reading assignments from his poems and analytical essays from Wallace Stevens: Words Chosen Out of Desire.

December 4 Presentation of papers on Dickinson, Frost, Bishop and Stevens

December 11 Final Exam

Reading List of Works by and about Dickinson
(Numbers refer to poem numbers (not page numbers) in Franklin and Johnson text)

September 4
Franklin Text Johnson Text
39 49
112 67
122 130
123 131
124 216
146 148
161 106
194 1072
195 690
202 185
207 214
225 199
236 324
238 187
Essays on Dickinson from *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*

Read: “Introduction,” by Judith Farr, p. 1

(Read ONE of the following and summarize it.)

“The Wayward Nun beneath the Hill: Emily Dickinson and the Mysteries of Womanhood,” by Sandra M Gilbert, p. 20

“Emily Dickinson’s Books and Reading,” by Richard B. Sewall, p. 40

“Dickinson’s Experimental Grammar: Nouns and Verbs,” by Christianne Miller, p. 173

**September 11**

347 348
348 505
353 508
355 510
356 511
359 328
365 338
372 341
373 501
378 503
Essays about Dickinson: (Read ONE of the following and summarize it.)

“Sumptuous Destitution,” by Richard Wilbur, p. 53

“Thirst and Starvation in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry,” by Vivian R. Pollak, p. 62

“Emily Dickinson and the Calvinist Sacramental Tradition,” by Jane Eberwein, p. 89.

“Emily Dickinson’s Volcanic Punctuation,” by Kamilla Denman, p. 187

September 18
623   437
627   593
648   547
656   520
697   462
706   640
750   726
760   650
Essays about Dickinson. Read ONE of the following and summarize.

“A Musical Aesthetic,” by Judy Jo Small, p. 206

“[Im]pertinent Constructions of Body and Self: Dickinson’s Use of the Romantic Grotesque,” by Cynthia Griffin Wolff, p. 119

“Strangely Abstracted Images,” by David Porter, p. 141
Reading List for Frost

September 25

Poems from *A Boy’s Will* (1913): “Into My Own,” “To the Thawing Wind,” “Flower-Gathering,” “The Vantage Point,” “Mowing,” “The Tuft of Flowers,” “In Hardwood Groves,” “October,” and “Reluctance.”

**Essays about Frost. Choose ONE to read and summarize.**

“Frost and the Ancient Muses,” by Helen Bacon, p. 75

“Frost as a New England Poet,” by Lawrence Buell, p. 101

“‘Stay Unassuming’: the Lives of Robert Frost,” by Donald G. Sheehy, p. 7

October 2


**Essays about Frost: Choose ONE to read and summarize.**

“Frost and the Questions of Pastoral,” by Robert Faggen, p. 49
Oct. 9

Poems from *A Further Range* (1936): “A Lone Striker,” “Two Tramps in Mud Time,” “Departmental,” “The Figure in the Doorway,” “Desert Places,” “Leaves Compared with Flowers,” “On Taking from the Top to Broaden the Base,” “Moon Compasses,” “Neither out Far nor in Deep,” ”Design,” “On a Bird Singing in its Sleep,” “Unharvested,” “There are Roughly Zones,” “Provide, Provide,” and “The Bearer of Evil Tidings,”


Poems from *In the Clearing* (1962): “Pod of the Milkweed,” “One More Brevity,” “Peril of Hope,” and “[In Winter in the Woods . . .]”

**Essays about Frost. Choose ONE to read and summarize.**
“Frost and the Meditative Lyric,” by Blanford Parker, p. 179

“Frost’s Poetics of Control,” by Mark Richardson, p. 197


**Reading Schedule for Works by and about Elizabeth Bishop**

Oct. 16  **Film on Bishop**

**Poems: North & South** (pp. 3-52)
Essays about Bishop. Choose one to read and summarize.
“Elizabeth Bishop: Questions of Memory, Questions of Travel” by David Kalstone, p. 3
“Domestication, Domesticity, and the Otherworldly” by Helen Vendler, p. 32
“The Idiom of a Self: Elizabeth Bishop and Wordsworth” by Robert Pinsky, p. 49

Oct. 23

Poems: A Cold Spring (pp. 55-84) and Questions of Travel, Brazil (pp. 89-118)

Essays about Bishop. Choose one to read and summarize.
“In Prison”: A Paradox Regained” by David Lehman, p. 61
“‘Old Correspondences’: Prosodic Transformations in Elizabeth Bishop,” p. 75

Oct. 30

Poems: Questions of Travel, Elsewhere (pp. 121-135) and Geography III (pp. 159-181)

Essays about Bishop. Choose one to read and summarize.
“A Cold Spring: The Poet of Feeling” by Alan Williamson, p. 96
“The Impersonal and the Interrogative in the Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop” by Bonnie Costello, p. 109

Nov. 6

Poems: Uncollected Work (pp. 139-154)

“Elizabeth Bishop’s ‘Natural Heroism’” by Willard Spiegelman, p. 154

Reading List for Works by and about Wallace Stevens

Nov. 13

Film on Stevens

Read and summarize “Introduction” and Chapter I from *Words Chosen Out of Desire*.

Nov. 20


Read and summarize Chapters 2 and 3 from *Words Chosen Out of Desire*.

Nov. 27


Poem from *The Auroras of Autumn*: “The Auroras of Autumn”

Poems from *The Rock*: “The Plain Sense of Things,” “Prologues to What Is Possible,” “The World as Meditation,” “Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour,” “The Rock”—read only “Seventy Years Later”—“The Planet on the Table,” “The River of Rivers in Connecticut,” and “Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself.”

Read and summarize Chapter 4 from *Words Chosen Out of Desire*.

December 4

Analytical Paper due; In class: Presentations of Papers

December 11

Final
Other Information:
Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of ‘F’ in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date (see semester calendar), a student must complete the Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University website http://tamut.edu/Registrar/droppingwithdrawing-from-classes.html) or obtained in the Registrar’s Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an “approval” to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar’s office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar’s Office for processing. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.