ENG 172g: THE ART OF POETRY
University of Southern California
Dana Gioia
Fall, 2018
Monday / Wednesday, 2:00 – 3:20 p.m.
THH, Room 201

Syllabus

Overview

This course provides an introduction to the pleasures and insights of poetry. Our coursework will be divided into two parts. In the first half, we will systematically explore the key elements of the poetic art (voice, image, suggestion, metaphor, and form) with examples drawn from the high points of English-language poetry. The second part of the course will explore the lives and works of seven major poets in depth: William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, E. A. Robinson, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Langston Hughes.

This course will develop your skill in critical reading and writing—focusing on both what literary language says explicitly and what it suggests. As you will discover, the careful study of poetry will enhance your general mastery of language.

Underlying all of these academic aims, however, is the assumption that poetry is not a remote and specialized art whose mysteries can be appreciated only by a trained intellectual elite. This course rests on the conviction that poetry is one of the irreplaceable human arts whose power and pleasure are open to any alert and intelligent person with an inclination to savor them.

Instructor Information
Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:30-4:30 p.m. or by appointment.
Taper Hall, Room 314
Contact Information: gioia@usc.edu

Teaching Assistants:
Matthew Berger: bergerml@usc.edu
Justin Bortnick: bortnick@usc.edu
Jessica Kim: jhyunahkim@usc.edu

Required Texts

*An Introduction to Poetry. 13th ed.*
Edited by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia.

William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (any edition or print-out with vocabulary notes is fine).
Assignments

READING
The primary work of the course will be reading and studying the assigned poems and introductory prose material in the textbook chapters. The reading assignments will not represent many pages of text, but they need to be read carefully, re-read, and even savored.

VOCABULARY
One test of having read the poems carefully is whether you actually looked up and learned any unfamiliar words the poems contain. This course will not only sharpen your reading skills but also improve your vocabulary.

LITERARY TERMS
At the end of each chapter there is a list of key terms. You are responsible for knowing the terms in every chapter assigned. These terms will appear on your midterm and final exams.

WRITING
There will be three short papers to deepen your understanding of poetry, heighten your sensitivity to language, and to develop your skill at written self-expression.

MEMORIZATION
Each student will be required to memorize at least 36 lines of poetry by the assigned authors. Your first two memorized poems must be done (and will be tested) by the midterm exam. The rest will be tested in the final exam.

Students can earn extra credit by reciting their memorized poems in class. (See the “Grading” section below for details.)

Exams

There will be two exams: a mid-term and a final. The exams will test your familiarity with the readings—including key literary terms—and your ability to analyze short texts from our anthology. Each exam will also require you to write out your memorized poems. The exam dates are indicated on the schedule (October 3 and December 7).

There is also an in-class quiz on August 27 testing your memorization of an 8-10 line poem.


Writing Assignments

Please note that there are three chapters in An Introduction to Poetry that provide advice and examples of critical writing (Chapters 22-24). You should consult them.

1. **Essay #1: Paraphrase and Response (2-3 pages). Due in class September 19.**

   Write a short essay that expresses your personal reactions to any poem in the “Poems for Further Reading” section of An Introduction to Poetry. Begin by providing a short paraphrase of the poem (1 or 2 paragraphs). See pages 6 and 16-18 of Introduction to Poetry as reference. Then discuss your personal reaction to the text. Feel free to state why you like or dislike the work, but talk specifically about what aspects of the poem affect you most deeply, and then try to understand why you react to them as you do. Refer to specific lines, images, situations, or ideas in the poem.

   A good response essay will require you to be candid about your own taste and values as well as be attentive to the poem. You don’t need to say *everything* about the poem or your reaction to it. You only need to explain your central response.

   Your short paper should be well written and clearly argued. Don’t gush or meander. Proofread and spell-check your essay before submitting it.

2. **Essay #2: Explication (4-5 pages). Due in class October 15.**

   Choose any short poem from our reading list and write an explication of its meaning. Analyze it line by line to demonstrate how the author has created its total effect for the reader. Don’t simply paraphrase the meaning—though you will need to do some paraphrasing—but examine and comment on the particular details of imagery, tone, sound, diction, and themes that shape its meaning. Remember to:

   - Start with the poem’s first line and analyze it to the end.
   - Read it closely with attention to the poem’s details.
   - Show how each part of the poem contributes to the meaning of the whole.

   (Please note there is an example of an explication essay on p. 511 of An Introduction to Poetry.)

3. **Essay #3: Explication of a Shakespeare Sonnet (4-8 pages). Due in class Nov. 14.**

   Choose any sonnet by William Shakespeare and write an explication of its meaning. Analyze it line by line to demonstrate how the author has created its total effect for the reader. Also show in what ways the author has used the mythic elements we discussed in class on October 9. Don’t simply paraphrase the meaning—though you will need to do some paraphrasing—but examine and comment on the particular details of imagery, tone, sound, diction, and worldview that help shape its meaning. Remember to:

   - Start with the poem’s first line and analyze it to the end.
   - Read it closely with attention to the poem’s details.
   - Show how each part of the poem contributes to the meaning of the whole.
   - Avoid plagiarism.
Memorization Assignments

There are three memorization assignments. They require a total of at least 36 lines of memorization.

1. Memorize one of the following short poems (each 8-10 lines long). In-class quiz on August 27:
   - Robert Frost, “Nothing Gold Can Stay” (page 242)
   - Emily Dickinson, “I’m Nobody” (page 334)
   - Langston Hughes, “Harlem” (page 355)
   - Omar Khayyam, 2 rubaiyats: “The Moving Finger” and “Ah, Love” (page 285)

2. Memorize any of the assigned sonnets by William Shakespeare (14 lines long). Due for October 3 mid-term.

3. Memorize at least 14 lines by any other poet in the book. This will be tested on your final exam.

4. Extra Credit: Any student who recites a poem from the book in class can raise his or her mid-term grade by 5 points. Students can do this twice in the course of the semester, for a total of 10 extra points.
Grading

Essay #1: Paraphrase Response 10%
Essay #2: Explication 15%
Essay #3: Sonnet Explication 20%
In-Class Quiz: Memorization* 5%
Mid-Term Examination* 25%
Final Examination* 25%

100%

*The exams will require you to write out your memorized poems.

Grade Scale
90 – 100% A
80 – 89% B
70 – 79% C
65 – 69% D
Below 65% F

Extra Credit Opportunities

1. Recitation: If you recite your poem in class (with reasonable accuracy), you will raise your mid-term grade by 5 points. You can do this twice for a total of 10 points.

2. Special Events Attendance: If you attend one of the below off-campus special events, you will raise your mid-term grade by another 15 points.

   1. Saturday, October 6, afternoon: California Laureates Gathering
      5 p.m. McGroarty Arts Center
              7570 McGroarty Terrace
              Tujunga, CA 91042
              mcgroartyartscenter.org

   2. Saturday, November 17, evening: Best American Poetry of 2018
      6 p.m. Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center
              681 Venice Blvd
              Venice CA 90291
              beyondbaroque.org

Please Note:
No laptops, cellphones, or other electronic devices are allowed in class. The only exceptions will be made for medical reasons and will require a written request from a doctor or the USC DSP office.
## Schedule of Topics (See Specific Assigned Readings Below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 20</td>
<td>Introduction: What Is Poetry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 22</td>
<td>How to Experience Poetry / Modes of Poetry (Lyric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 27</td>
<td>Modes of Poetry (Narrative, Dramatic)</td>
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<td><strong>In-class Memorization Quiz</strong></td>
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<td>August 29</td>
<td>Voice in Poetry (Person, Tone, Irony)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Labor Day Holiday/ No Class</td>
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<td>September 5</td>
<td>Word Choice, Denotation and Connotation</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>Imagery</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 12</td>
<td>Metaphor, Simile, and Figures of Speech</td>
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<td>September 17</td>
<td>Rhythm and Meter</td>
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<td>September 19</td>
<td>Rhyme and Stanza</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>The Sonnet</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Other Poetic Forms (Villanelle, Sestina, Ballade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>Free Verse</td>
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<td>October 3</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam</strong></td>
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<td>October 8</td>
<td>Myth and Symbol in Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>William Shakespeare: Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s Sonnets</td>
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<td>October 17</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s Sonnets</td>
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<td>October 22</td>
<td>Emily Dickinson</td>
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<td>October 29</td>
<td>Emily Dickinson</td>
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<td>October 31</td>
<td>Edwin Arlington Robinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>Robert Frost</td>
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<td>November 7</td>
<td>Robert Frost</td>
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<td>November 12</td>
<td>Robert Frost</td>
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<td>November 14</td>
<td>Wallace Stevens</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>Langston Hughes</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 26</td>
<td>Elizabeth Bishop</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 28</td>
<td>Last Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam (2 - 4 p.m.)</strong></td>
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### Two Off Campus Extra Credit Events

- **Saturday, Oct. 6, 5 p.m.** California Laureates Gathering  
  (McGroarty Arts Center, Tujunga)

- **Saturday, Nov. 17, 6 p.m.** Best American Poetry of 2018  
  (Beyond Baroque, Venice)
**Assigned Readings by Class Session:**

August 20:  
Introduction: What Is Poetry?

August 22:  
How to Experience Poetry / Modes of Poetry (Lyric)

Read Chapter 1 in *Intro to Poetry, “Reading a Poem”*: pp. 1-10, with special attention to these poems and prose excerpts:

- **William Butler Yeats**, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*
- **Robert Hayden**, *Those Winter Sundays*
- **Adrienne Rich**, *Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers*
- **William Stafford**, *Ask Me*
- **William Stafford**, *A Paraphrase of “Ask Me”*

August 27:  
**In-class Memorization Quiz**

Modes of Poetry (Narrative, Dramatic)

Read Chapter 1 in *Intro to Poetry, “Reading a Poem,”* pp. 10-16, plus Robinson and Tennyson poems elsewhere in the book.

- **Robert Browning**, *My Last Duchess*

ADDITIONAL POEMS

- **Edwin Arlington Robinson**, *Richard Cory* (p. 128)
- **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**, *Ulysses* (p. 464)

August 29:  
Voice in Poetry (Persona, Tone, Irony)

Read Chapter 2 in *Intro to Poetry, “Listening to a Voice,”* with special attention to these poems:

- **Theodore Roethke**, *My Papa’s Waltz*
- **Weldon Kees**, *For My Daughter*
- **Edwin Arlington Robinson**, *Luke Havergal*
- **W. H. Auden**, *The Unknown Citizen*
- **Erich Fried**, *The Measures Taken*
- **Suji Kwock Kim**, *Monologue for an Onion*

ADDITIONAL POEM

- **Rhina Espaillat**, *Bilingual / Bilingüe* (p. 265)

September 3:  
Labor Day Holiday
Read Chapter 3 in *Intro to Poetry*, “Words,” and Chapter 4, “Saying and Suggesting,” with special attention to these poems and prose excerpts:

**CHAPTER 3**
- **Robert Graves**, Down, Wanton, Down!
- **Anonymous**, Dog Haiku
- **Robert Herrick**, Upon Julia’s Clothes
- **Kay Ryan**, Blandeur
- **Anonymous**, Carnation Milk
- **Gina Valdés**, English con Salsa
- **Lewis Carroll**, Jabberwocky

**Lewis Carroll on Writing**, Humpty Dumpty Explicates “Jabberwocky”

**CHAPTER 4**
- **Wallace Stevens**, Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock
- **Robert Frost**, Fire and Ice
- **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**, Tears, Idle Tears

Read Chapter 5 in *Intro to Poetry*, “Imagery,” with special attention to these poems and prose excerpt:

- **Ezra Pound**, In a Station of the Metro
- **Taniguchi Buson**, The piercing chill I feel
- **T. S. Eliot**, The winter evening settles down
- **Gerard Manley Hopkins**, Pied Beauty

**Haiku**
- **Taniguchi Buson**, On the one-ton temple bell
- **Lee Gurga**, Visitor’s Room
- **Penny Harter**, broken bowl

**Stevie Smith**, Not Waving but Drowning

**Ezra Pound on Writing**, The Image
September 12: Metaphor, Simile, and Figures of Speech

Read Chapter 6 in Intro to Poetry, “Figures of Speech,” with special attention to these poems:

William Shakespeare, Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
William Blake, To see a world in a grain of sand
Sylvia Plath, Metaphors
Jill Alexander Essbaum, The Heart
Margaret Atwood, You fit into me
Carl Sandburg, Fog
A.R. Ammons, Coward
Robinson Jeffers, Hands
Kay Ryan, Turtle

September 17: Rhythm and Meter

Read Chapter 9 in Intro to Poetry, “Rhythm,” with special attention to these poems and excerpt:

Gwendolyn Brooks, We Real Cool
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Break, Break, Break
Dorothy Parker, Résumé
A. E. Housman, When I was one-and-twenty
Walt Whitman, Beat! Beat! Drums!
David Mason, Song of the Powers
Langston Hughes, Dream Boogie

Gwendolyn Brooks on Writing, Hearing “We Real Cool”

Additional Poem (Review):
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Ulysses (p. 464)
September 19  Rhyme and Stanza

Read pp. 149-159 in Chapter 8 of *Intro to Poetry*, “Sound,” and pp. 183-189 in Chapter 10, “Closed Form,” plus Blake’s and Yeats’s poems on pp. 400 and 474, with special attention to:

**CHAPTER 8**
- John Updike, Recital
- James Joyce, All day I hear
- William Cole, On my boat on Lake Cayuga
- Hilaire Belloc, The Hippopotamus
- Ogden Nash, The Panther
- Gerard Manley Hopkins, God’s Grandeur

**CHAPTER 10**
- Epigrams (pp. 195-197)
  - Alexander Pope, Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog
  - Sir John Harrington, Treason
  - Anonymous, Epitaph on a dentist
  - Hilaire Belloc, Fatigue
  - Wendy Cope, Variation on Belloc’s “Fatigue”

**ADDITIONAL POEMS**
- William Blake, The Tyger (p. 400)
- William Butler Yeats, When You Are Old (p. 477)

September 24: The Sonnet

Read the Sonnet section on pp. 190-195 in *Intro to Poetry*, plus 3 sonnets on pg. 266, 314, and 403, with special attention to these poems:

- William Shakespeare, Let me not to the marriage of true minds
- Michael Drayton, Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part
- Edna St. Vincent Millay, What lips my lips have kissed…
- Kim Addonizio, First Poem for You
- A. E. Stallings, Sine Qua Non
- R. S. Gwynn, Shakespearean Sonnet

**ADDITIONAL SONNETS**
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, How Do I Love Thee? (p. 403)
- Claude McKay, America (p. 266)
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ozymandias (p. 314)
September 26: Other Forms (Ballade, Villanelle, Sestina, Rondeau, Rubaiyat)

Read pp. 130-33 in Chapter 7 (on the ballad) and then pp. 195-201 in Intro to Poetry, from Chapter 10, “Closed Form,” with special attention to these poems and ballads:

- Anonymous, Bonny Barbara Allan (p. 130)
- Dudley Randall, Ballad of Birmingham (p. 133)
- W. H. Auden, As I Walked Out One Evening (p. 395)
- Bob Dylan, The Times They are a-Changing (p. 138)

Other Forms
- Dylan Thomas, Do not go gentle into that good night
- Wendy Cope, Lonely Hearts (p. 61)
- Robert Bridges, Triolet
- Paul Laurence Dunbar, We Wear the Mask (p. 322)

Additional Poems (pp. 284-285)
- Omar Khayyam, Rubai XII (p. 284)
- Omar Khayyam, trans. by E. FitzGerald, Rubaiyat (p. 285)

October 1: Free Verse

Read Chapter 11 in Intro to Poetry, “Open Form” (with special attention to the excerpt from Walt Whitman and Psalm 150 on p. 206), and the following texts:

- E. E. Cummings, Buffalo Bill’s
- E. E. Cummings, in Just-
- William Carlos Williams, The Dance
- Stephen Crane, In the Desert
- A. E. Stallings, First Love: A Quiz
- Carole Satyamurti, I Shall Paint My Nails Red

Additional Poems
- Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Learning to love America (p. 274)
- Walt Whitman, I Hear America Singing (p. 470)
- Robinson Jeffers, To the Stone-cutters (p. 431)

October 3 Mid-Term Exam

Saturday, October 6  First Extra Credit Event: California Laureates Gathering
Featured Reading: Al Young, Robin Coste Lewis, Carol Muske-Dukes, Dana Gioia
5 p.m.  McGroarty Arts Center
         7570 McGroarty Terrace, Tujunga, CA 91042
October 8  Myth and Symbol in Shakespeare
Read the following sonnets by William Shakespeare
Sonnets 1, 2, 15, 18, 19

October 10  William Shakespeare
Read the following sonnets by William Shakespeare:
Sonnets 20, 23, 27, 29, 30, 135

October 15  Shakespeare’s Sonnets
Read the following sonnets by William Shakespeare:
Sonnets 42, 53, 55, 57, 73, 87, 94

October 17  Shakespeare’s Sonnets
Read the following sonnets by William Shakespeare:
Sonnets 109, 116, 129, 130, 138, 144, 146

October 22  Emily Dickinson
Read the following from Chapter 19 in Intro to Poetry:
Biographical note on Emily Dickinson, p. 332
Poems:
Success is counted sweetest
Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
There’s a certain Slant of light
I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain
I’m Nobody! Who are you?
The Soul selects her own Society
Some keep the Sabbath going to Church

October 24  Emily Dickinson (cont.)
Read the remaining selections in Chapter 19:
After great pain, a formal feeling comes
Much Madness is divinest Sense
This is my letter to the World
I heard a Fly buzz – when I died
I started Early – Took my Dog
Because I could not stop for Death
The Bustle in a House
Tell all the Truth but tell it slant

Emily Dickinson on Emily Dickinson
Recognizing Poetry
Self-Description
October 29

**Emily Dickinson (cont.)**

Reread and review Dickinson selections

October 31

**Edwin Arlington Robinson**

Read the following from *Intro to Poetry*:

- Richard Cory (p. 128)
- Luke Havergal (p. 26)
- Miniver Cheevy (p. 455)
- Mr. Flood’s Party (hand-out)
- Horace to Leuconoe (translation, p. 282)

November 5

**Robert Frost**

Read (or re-read) these poems by Robert Frost:

- Acquainted with the Night (p. 192)
- Desert Places (p. 157)
- Design (p. 503)
- Fire and Ice (p. 77)
- Nothing Gold Can Stay (p. 242)
- The Road Not Taken (p. 233)
- The Secret Sits (p. 119)
- The Silken Tent (p. 118)
- Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (p. 418)

November 7:

**Robert Frost (continued)**

- Birches (p. 416)
- Mending Wall (p. 417)
  - “Out, Out—” (p. 12) previously assigned/ reread

  **Robert Frost on Writing**, The Importance of Poetic Metaphor (p. 121)

November 12:

**Robert Frost (continued)**

Reread and review Frost selections

November 14

**Wallace Stevens**

- Anecdote of the Jar (p. 236)
- Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock (p. 76)
- Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird (p. 212)
- The Snow Man (p. 236)
- The Emperor of Ice-Cream (p. 463)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 17</td>
<td><strong>Second Extra Credit Event: Best American Poetry of 2018</strong>&lt;br&gt;6 p.m.</td>
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<td>Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center&lt;br&gt;681 N. Venice Blvd, Venice, CA 90291</td>
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</tbody>
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November 19: **Langston Hughes**

Read pp. 348-366 from Chapter 19 in *Intro to Poetry* with special attention to these poems and prose excerpts:

**Biographical note on Langston Hughes, p. 348**

- The Negro Speaks of Rivers
- My People
- Mother to Son
- I, Too
- The Weary Blues
- Song for a Dark Girl
- Ballad of the Landlord
- Theme for English B
- Harlem [Dream Deferred]

**Langston Hughes on writing,** The Harlem Renaissance

November 21: Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class

November 26: **Elizabeth Bishop**

- One Art (p. 315)
- Sestina (p. 199)
- The Filling Station (p. 399)
- The Fish (p. 87)

November 28: Last Class: Poetry & Life

December 7: **Final Exam** (2 - 4 p.m.)
REQUIRED UNIVERSITY ADDENDA

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems
Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards (see https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct (at http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity (see http://equity.usc.edu) or to the Department of Public Safety (see http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support (see http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm), and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources (see sarc@usc.edu).

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students (see http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali). The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. See:http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology (see http://emergency.usc.edu/).