



centuries before the Internet, and now we lament the time we spend distracted, the shorthand of text messaging and tweeting. In this course, we have the privilege and pleasure of savoring poetry, contemplating it, discovering it anew.

We will do all we can to make this class a conversation about poetry—how it works, how its forms have changed, how to read it, how to write it and write about it. In lecture, we will cover important poets, movements, forms, theories, and larger questions about poetry’s relevance, its connections to and comments about the world. Our job is to get you more interested in what poetry is and what it does; your job, in the words of the contemporary American poet Mary Oliver, “is to pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.” We will ask for your engagement; you need to read our material, to think about it, and to come to lecture and section prepared to discuss it, to read it out loud, and to try to interpret it. **We don’t “read into” poetry; we read out from it.** Poetry is beautiful; it can be disturbing; it is almost always instructive. This course will help you understand it more fully and with more depth and, maybe, passion.

In your discussion sections, your instructors will elaborate on lecture material, and they will also pursue some of their own passions about poetry. Each of them has chosen one collection of poetry which you’ll be working on for the first two-thirds of the term; then we will all work together on poetry by Kate Daniels to wrap up the course. You will also have ample opportunity to write poems in section and as part of your essays.

**TRIGGER WARNING:** As the poet Lucille Clifton once said in an interview, “You cannot play for safety and make art.” As you know, poetry often confronts very complex issues. Please be aware that you should SKIP any poem and step away from any discussion as needed this semester, in lecture or section, no questions asks. We can’t always give the TW in advance as it’s impossible to know what might trigger someone, but we will try to give a general sense of what’s coming on these issues.

**We expect each of you to attend and to engage with the lectures and the discussion sections fully. Attendance is mandatory; we will warn you if you are in danger, but the expectation is for attendance. If you are symptomatic of COVID, do not come; let us know. If possible and if it’s available, watch the recordings of class before the next meeting and send your TA a paragraph or so about what you missed.**

**EXPECTATIONS AND WORKLOAD:** You are expected to attend lectures and discussion sections; to participate by reading, commenting, and asking questions; and you will of course do a reasonable amount of reading and writing. Likely assignments/responsibilities: write short to medium length essays about poetry (analysis); do some creative writing and reflection; complete a take-home final exam assignment; attend at least one poetry reading event, and write a short response paper (this will take the place of one section of your final exam); and do your part to participate in discussion, both in section and in lecture.

**ZOOM Recordings/Intellectual Property and Privacy/Ownership: SCampus Section 11.12(B), as applicable**

***Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).***

**GE CATEGORY B/HUMANITIES LEARNING GOALS:** You will leave this course having confronted complex literary texts which deal with many important and controversial issues of our times; you will have participated in discussions about those texts; you will have written about them, honing your skills as a critical thinker and writer. Your professor and teaching assistant will work in conjunction to ensure that the wide range of readings and topics introduce you to the art and craft of poetry and to the ways in which poetic narratives help shape our world and our understanding of it.

**HOT SEAT:** There are six discussion sections which are part of this course. Beginning week three, individual sections will be in the hot seat, per the schedule below in the daily breakdown of our work. Each group will be in the Hot Seat four times. Lecture will begin each day with a focus on conversation with the students in the hot seat; once we have established that they've done their work and made substantial contributions, the conversation will open up to everyone else. If you miss a hot seat day, you should coordinate with your TA to sit in on another day. Your participation in hot seat will make up a significant part of your class participation grade; your active attendance in lecture and section will also factor heavily into that part of your final grade. Hot Seat groups will sit in front and center in our lecture hall.

**LITERARY EVENT:** If you attend an approved literary event (virtual or in person) and write a 500-750 word response to it (within a week or two of attending/watching), you'll receive full credit for one part of the final exam. We will announce events from time to time in lecture and section. In addition to USC sponsored events, you can also check ALOUD LA, the downtown public library event series, and local bookstores (Skylight Books in Los Feliz; Book Soup in West Hollywood; Vroman's in Pasadena; The Last Bookstore in Downtown LA). In April, near the end of the term, USC will host the *LA Times* Festival of Books; it will be filled with poets! Ask your TA for event approval if you have any doubt about whether it will count. Virtual events can be worldwide; let's share information on options.

## ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

Essay one: Short response paper/getting to know you exercise (500-750 words; due week three or four): 15%

Essay two (1000-1200 words; due week seven or eight): 25%

Essay three (1200-1500 words; due week eleven or twelve): 25%

Final exam (take home, due before 4pm PT on May 12, to your TA): 25%

Class Participation/Attendance (lecture & section; this means attending lecture and section, completing work in a timely, quality fashion, and participating in discussion beyond just hot seat days and in section): 10%

A: 930-1000; A-: 929-895; B+: 894-870; B: 869-830; B-: 829-795; C+: 794-770, etc.

## TEXTS

**For lecture, everyone should acquire these texts (ebook or paper copies):**

Susan Holbrook, *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry*, second edition. Broadview Press, 2022 (ISBN: 9781554815104)

Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*. Mariner/Harcourt Brace, 1994. (ISBN: 978-0156724005)

Kate Daniels, *The Niobe Poems*. Pittsburgh, 1988. (available as unlimited download via USC Libraries: <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy1.usc.edu/stable/j.ctt5hjpzf> (search the title at [usc.edu/libraries](http://usc.edu/libraries))

Kate Daniels, *In the Months of My Son's Recovery* (LSU, 2019; Kindle edition also available and check USC Library website too)

and please sign up for this free service:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/poem-of-the-day>

**And you need to buy ONE book for your section:**

Tuesday sections with Piotr Florczyk: Ciaran Carson, *From There to Here: Selected Poems and Translations* (WFU, 2019)

Wednesday sections with Nicholas Brodie: Ross Gay, *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* (Pittsburgh, 2015)

Thursday sections with Carrie Guss: Safia Elhillo, *The January Children* (Nebraska, 2017)

## **LECTURE SCHEDULE (subject to revision as pacing of the course necessitates)**

Week One (January 11 & 13): Understanding and working with poetry

Tuesday: Introduction to the course, including some poems from Mary Oliver and Kate Daniels; Maya Angelou, “On the Pulse of the Morning”

Thursday: Amanda Gorman, interview and inaugural poem; clarification of Hot Seat and other details

Week Two (January 18 & 20)

Tuesday: Holbrook, Introduction and a few sonnets from Shakespeare (pp. 1-16); discuss “Getting to Know You”

Thursday: Oliver, 1-18; poems by Robert Hayden, Lucille Clifton, and Elizabeth Bishop

Week Three (January 25 & 27)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 2pm; Holbrook, 17-24—poetry and the Harlem Renaissance; Oliver, 19-28 (sound); Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods”

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 3pm; Oliver, 29-34 (sound); Frost, “Home Burial”; **getting to know you assignment due to your TA this week or next; 2/28 is last day of drop/add and last day to switch to P/NP**

Week Four (February 1 & 3)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Nick 10am; Holbrook, 25-32

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Nick 11am; Oliver, “The Line” (35-57) and Holbrook, 117-28 on meter; Theodore Roethke, “My Papa’s Waltz”

Week Five (February 8 & 10)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Carrie, 2pm; Holbrook, color plates and 33-43; William Carlos Williams, “The Great Figure”; W.H. Auden, “Musee des Beaux Arts”; Jane Flanders, “The Cloud Painter”; Natasha Trethewey, “History Lesson” (Ekphrastic poetry/poetry and art)

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Carrie, 3pm; Oliver, 58-75; Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art” and “Sestina”; Marilyn Hacker, “The Art of Losing”; discuss prompts for next essay in section this week (due week seven or eight); **in section, skim the last part of Holbrook, “How to Write about Poetry” and discuss briefly**

Week Six (February 15 & 17)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Nick 11am; Holbrook, 45-56; Oliver, 76-91 (Tone, Diction, Voice)

Thursday: TA Craft Talk: Piotr (no hot seat)

Week Seven (February 22 & 24)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Nick 10am; Holbrook, 57-68; Gertude Stein, “If I Had Told Him”; Oliver, 92-108; Wordsworth, “I wandered lonely as a cloud”

Thursday: TA Craft Talk: Nick (no hot seat); **Essay due (1000-1200 words) this week or next; 2/25: last W day without consequences**

Weeks Eight (March 1 & 3)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 3 pm; Holbrook, 69-76; James Merrill, “Christmas Tree”; John Hollander, “Soda Pop”; Oliver, 109-22

Thursday: TA Craft Talk: Carrie (no hot seat)

Week Nine (March 8 & 10)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 2pm; Holbrook, 77-93; **discuss prompts for essay two in section**

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Carrie 2pm; select poems from Mary Oliver to wrap up that discussion (Blackboard)

SPRING BREAK

Week Ten (March 22 & 24)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Carrie 3pm; Holbrook, 95-102; more on Gwendolyn Brooks

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 3pm; finish Holbrook, 103-16 and wrap up

**PART TWO: Featured Poet: Kate Daniels**

Week Eleven (March 29 & 31)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Nick 10am; *Niobe Poems* ix-9

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Nick 11am; *Niobe Poems* 13-30

Week Twelve (April 5 & 7)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Carrie 3pm; *Niobe Poems* 31-41

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Carrie 2pm: finish *Niobe Poems* 45-60; **essay due this week or next in section; last W day**

Week Thirteen (April 12 & 14)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 2pm; *In the Months of My Son’s Recovery* i. Her

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Carrie, 3pm; *Recovery* ii. The Addict’s Mother, 31-49

Week Fourteen (April 19 & 21)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 3pm; *Recovery* ii. continued, 50-61; **discuss final exam assignment in section this week**

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Carrie, 2pm; *Recovery* iii. Him

*LA Times* Festival of Books, April 23 & 24; please try to attend at least one poetry session and submit your response to your TA before April 28

Week Fifteen (April 26 & 28)

Tuesday: HOT SEAT: Piotr 2pm; *Recovery* iv. Us 77-93

Thursday: HOT SEAT: Nick, both sections; finish *Recovery* and wrap up the course; on line class evaluations

**FINAL EXAM due to your TA by 4pm PT on Wednesday, May 11**

## Definition of Excellence in Teaching

### USC Department of English

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students' responses. We expect our students to:

- o understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- o organize and interpret evidence;
- o feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
- o understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- o grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- o see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- o attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- o assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- o adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC's corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the "USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching."

Approved September 18, 2018  
Undergraduate Studies Committee  
Department of English

## 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* <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, <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* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <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* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### 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* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.