

## English 377/577: Contemporary Poetry, Sec. 1/Spring 2021

Dr. Patricia Gott

Email: [pgott@uwsp.edu](mailto:pgott@uwsp.edu)

Office Hours (Virtual):

--Tuesdays: 3:30-4:15

--Wednesdays: Electronic Office Hour from 11-11:50 (I'm online then)

--Other times by appointment/**Note: These are Zoom OFFICE HOURS**

**Email Policy/Format:** You will be using email regularly this semester as it is the best way to reach me and it's a good way to reach classmates. You will be expected to use proper grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation in your emails, in addition to respectful and appropriate language. **Please use your UWSP account for all correspondence related to this class.** I would also encourage you to exchange emails with the members of the small groups you will be forming.

### Course Description:

In *The Young Poet's Primer*, Pulitzer Prize winner and former poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks writes that poetry is "life distilled." Life, Brooks tells us, is "not always nice or proper or normal or happy or smooth or even-edged." The creation of poetry is unfolding all around us, even as we read this document. Contemporary poetry is a dynamic field, displaying an incredible variety of voices, experiences, vocabularies—or lives, as Brooks would say. Also, poems are both experiences and complex linguistic expressions, "the best words in the best order," as Samuel Taylor Coleridge observes. It is a premise of this course that life and language are intertwined, that the content of the poem is connection to its form and function. As Paul Engle states, "Poetry is ordinary language raised to the nth power. Poetry is boned with ideas, nerved and blooded with emotions, all held together by the delicate, tough skin of words." We will be reading a sampling of great poems written by a diverse group of writers; the assigned poetry will be modern, post-modern, abstract, concrete, and it will reflect the varieties of human experience all of us participate in: happiness, sorrow, ecstasy, ennui, fear and perhaps amazement. One hopes wonder, too.

### Required texts:

--Dungy, Camille. *Black Nature Poetry*. 2009. **PURCHASE TEXT.**

--Erdrich, Heid E. *New Voices of Native Nations*. 2018 Ed. **PURCHASE TEXT.**

--McClatchy, J.D. *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*. 2003 ed. **PURCHASE TEXT.**

--Selected texts available on Canvas, online or distributed in class (see syllabus)

--Supplies: Please bring pen and paper to each class or a notetaking device. Also, you should have a pocket folder to keep handouts that you will be receiving for the course. Finally, try to have a reliable device to write your papers. **\*\*Both the UWSP Library (Albertson Hall Circ Desk) and the Portage Co. Library (Downtown Stevens Point) have laptops you can check out if your computer has issues; also, there are numerous computer labs on campus for your use.**

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**Canvas:** Canvas is the course management software program UWSP uses to create online classrooms. You'll find our online classroom for the semester on Canvas. You can access Canvas by going to the UWSP homepage, finding the "Log-ins" drop-down menu in the top right corner of the screen and hovering over it. When the menu appears, click on Canvas. You'll turn in your intermediate drafts, final drafts, and postings to me via Assignments, I'll post supplementary materials for you to read and view, we'll occasionally have electronic discussions, and you'll find updated scores and grades there.

[\*\*Technology Use in class:\*\* Use of cell phones, except for specific class purposes, IS PROHIBITED and cell phones and other electronic devices should be put away AND turned off during class. Computers should only be used for course assignments and please shut down other tabs and webpages if you do need to use a pc while in the synchronous portion of our class.](#)

**Recording Policy:** Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in a report to the Dean of Students.

**Attendance:** Given the extraordinary nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring you to be in attendance every single class period is problematic (both for in person classes and synchronous online classes like ours). Therefore, for the duration of this health crisis, my attendance policy does not directly link class attendance to your grade. I do record the class so you can access what you missed. Having said that, you CANNOT expect to get credit for the course SIMPLY by watching the recordings. You will need to make up missed classes and keep up with activities by getting notes from a classmate and touching base with me as well as submitting work in addition to watching the recordings. Please make every attempt to attend class if possible barring illness or family emergency.

**Grade Range:** As far as the grade range, a C represents average but satisfactory development of the above criteria, a B represents above average development, and an A representing superior development and effort towards the criteria above. Work that represents below average development will receive a D. D work suggests that a writer is not involved in his or her writing and is unaware of the contexts, format, and stylistic choices that affect that writing. Work that is not submitted will receive an F. **Note: Incompletes can be given only in the case of a medical emergency.** We will discuss the grading rubric in more detail later.

**SCALE:** A = 94-100 %      A- = 90-93%      B+ = 87-89%  
B = 83-86%      B- = 80-82%      C+ = 77-79%      C = 73-76%      C- = 70-72%      D+ = 67-69%  
D = 63-66%      D- = 60-62%      F = 0-59%

**Participation:**

This course will involve a blend of lecture, reflective writing and discussion. It is important that you come prepared to participate in class activities and complete all the reading. This includes reading and marking poetry as well as writing a short comment or question about the work(s) assigned for the day. Discussions are particularly important in literature and writing classes, and students are expected to offer their opinions as both readers and writers. Good participation involves thoughtful responses to the assigned readings and a willingness to share your viewpoint. The participation requirement will not be met if you sit quietly through discussion and don't engage with the material. Sometimes, a probing, thought-provoking question can be more useful than an assertion. The essence of discussion is play, trying out new ideas and seeing how they "work." Art is dynamic, and one line of thinking—even if it seems "wrong" or incomplete—will always lead to something new and potentially beautiful. Art without risk is so often mired down in conventionality; thinking without risk (or, put another way, without play) leads to stagnation.

**Academic Freedom Policy: \***

As we are a 300 course, we will be talking about topics that are potentially controversial and discomforting for some. But as we are a 300-level course, I will expect that you have the maturity and intelligence to grapple with difficult topics such as race, gender, sexuality, mortality, etc. with grace. I will not censor your discussion. However, it is important that we respect one another's divergent opinions.

**Grading:**

Grades will be based on the following:

Major Assignments:

Reader Response Essay	25%
Explication Essay	25%
Presentation (May be taped)	25%
In Class Written and Verbal Participation:	<u>25%</u>
	100%

**Assignment Format: ALL OUT OF CLASS** assignments must be typed on white paper **double-spaced**, in **12 pt. Times New Roman or Calibri**. Use **one-inch margins all around**. Include a title with your essays.

At the top of each assignment, you should type:

Your name

Eng. 377 Section 1

Date

**Late Assignment Policy:** All work is due the day indicated on the syllabus or before the next class period UNLESS illness or a family emergency intervenes. Unless I indicate otherwise, final

drafts of papers will be docked a half of a letter grade each class if they are not handed by the following week they are due and in most cases, I will not accept late assignments two weeks beyond the due date except in the case of a documented illness or family emergency that you have discussed with me. If you do need an extension on a paper, contact me at least 48 hours for approval before the paper is due—do not wait until the last minute. **Please submit all work on Canvas.**

**Presentation: You are required** to do a presentation on an American poet of your choice (preferably one who we don't cover in class—exceptions may be granted in some cases if the poet has an usually large body of work. The presentation will include sample poems and an audio/visual element. You will need to submit to Canvas an outline of your presentation which includes an analysis of one of the poems and discussion of how this poet/poems fit in with the ideas of the course. This will be due finals week (there's no official final for the class). The time allotted for the presentations will depend on how many students stay with the course by the final weeks. NOTE: PRESENTATIONS CAN BE TAPED AHEAD OF THE CLASS PERIOD, but YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE A SHORT INTRO IN THAT CASSE.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is taking credit for work that is not your own. There will be serious consequences if I find that you have stolen another people's work and turned it in as your own. You should use the MLA system of documentation for all citations (see Purdue University's OWL MLA site if you need a refresher course on in-text citations and Works Cited page formatting). **(Also, here's A MINI REFRESHER ON DOCUMENTATION):**

Writers generally borrow from others in two ways:

1. Paraphrasing, quoting directly, or using a combination of paraphrasing and direct quotation. Please use the MLA citation guidelines to properly cite the types of borrowing outlined above. We will discuss the MLA guidelines in class.
2. Deliberately placing your name on someone else's written work--using file papers, copying and pasting from the internet without citation, letting friends or hired professionals write your papers, etc. This type of "borrowing" will be treated in accordance with the University policy on Academic Misconduct.

\*For an extended discussion of plagiarism, see the UWSP Handbook, Chapter 14 available at <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/UWSP14-Final2019.pdf> (Sec. 1,3 are most helpful).

**NOTE:** One paper that you write will most likely include outside sources; the explication paper will ask you to rely on your abilities to interpret a poem and provide a close reading and discussion of it.

**Resources:** The Writing Lab consultants are successful UWSP students who can discuss any type of writing at any stage of the drafting process; including brainstorming, outlining, and research or citations. They work with experienced writers as well as struggling writers; we believe that everyone benefits from discussions about their writing.

**\*\*Writing Lab are currently being held virtually via Zoom**

**\*\*Meetings by appointment or short notice times available**

**\*\*All services in the Writing Lab are free**

If you have questions or would like to make an appointment, please contact the TLC via email ([tlctutor@uwsp.edu](mailto:tlctutor@uwsp.edu)) or phone (715-346-3568).

**Students with learning differences** may want to visit UWSP's DATC (Disability and Assistive Technology Center ([715-346-3365](tel:715-346-3365) or email [datctr@uwsp.edu](mailto:datctr@uwsp.edu)) to work with that office.

### Help Resources AT THE TIP OF YOUR FINGERS

Tutoring	Advising	Safety and General Support	Health
Tutoring and Learning Center helps with Study Skills, Writing, Technology, Math, & Science. 018 Albertson Hall, ext. 3568	Academic and Career Advising Center, 320 Albertson Hall, ext. 3226	Dean of Students Office, 212 Old Main, ext. 2611	Counseling Center, Delzell Hall, ext. 3553. Health Care, Delzell Hall, ext. 4646

## **English 377/577 List of Readings, Major Due Dates Spring 2021**

**IMPORTANT:** Make sure you complete the assigned reading for each class period **BEFORE** you come to class. **Also bring the texts to class that relate to that day's reading(s).**

*\*Page numbers are taken from **Vintage Book of Contemporary Poetry** (in the first ½ of the class), **New Poets of Native Nations (NN)**, **Black Nature Poets (BNP)**, or **Canvas**. Some poems may be found online as well as ample biographical and critical info about poets.*

*\*\*Note that it's highly likely that we may not get to all poems each night, so some may be struck and also others may be added. In effect, changes may be made to this syllabus and we will need to be flexible. I will try to email you changes, but **STAY IN TOUCH!***

- Week 1: W, 1/27** Introduction to the course, one another and the syllabus/Discuss What is the Purpose of Art?/Fill out Writing Profile/Class ends at 6:50 to attend optional Minnesota Prison Writers Zoom Workshop with Heid Erdrich and other Native American writers (link sent to you via email)
- Week 2: W, 2/3** Discussion of Canon//Begin Discussion of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (Read all Whitman Leaves)/Read "What is a Poem?" (Canvas) and "The Line/The Form/The Music" (Baker/Townsend Canvas) /Before class, pick a few lines from several stanzas that you want to discuss in class and write a few notes about those lines
- Week 3: W, 2/10** Lecture on Modernism/Where contemporary poetry is situated/Selections from *Vintage*—(let me know if you don't have your book): Bishop(28, 34-38): "Shampoo," "In the Waiting Room," "One Art"; Roethke (44-46): "The Waking," "I Knew a Woman," "The Dark Time" Berryman: (48-53) Excerpts from "The Dream Songs" stanzas 1, 4, 5, 14, 29, 46, 76, 77 Jarrell 58, 60-62): "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," "The Next Day"
- Week 4: W, 2/17** Moving into the Modern: Hayden (85-90): "Middle Passage"; Swenson (99-100): "Staying at Ed's Place," "Strawberrying; Dickey (155-158): "The Heaven of Animals," "The Hospital Window," "Cherrylog Road" (ONLINE) Poetryfoundation.org)  
**\*\*PRINT UP A CONTEMPORARY POEM YOU HAVE A REACTION TO OR ARE PARTIAL TO \*\*CHOOSE SELECTIONS FROM POETS.ORG, or POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG (You can search by author, title, theme, poem of the day, etc.) Ginsberg (225-233):** Excerpt from "A Supermarket in California," (ONLINE-poetryfoundation.org/Consider why he mentions Walt Whitman) "Howl," "Sunflower Sutra," "My Sad Self"; Confessional Poetry: Plath: "Morning

Song, "Daddy" (370); **Sexton**: "Her Kind"(307), "Music Swims Back to Me" (307); **Olds**: "You Kindly" (497)/**Discussion of Explication/First Essay Distributed**

**Week 5: W, 2/24**

**Wright**: "Lying in a Hammock" (290), "A Blessing" (291); **Snyder**: **Read ALL**, study most closely "Riprap" (360) and "I Went into the Maverick Bar" (365). Poems by Olivia Gatwood ("Ode to my Bitch Face" and other Button poetry poets)\*\***Discussion of some of the poems you submitted on 9/23).**

**Week 6: W, 3/3**

**Kizer**: "A Muse of Water" 192, "Pro Femina (195); **Rich**: "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" (345), "Diving into the Wreck" (on poets.org) **Levertov**: "Intrusion" "Seeing for a Moment" (180), "Prisoners" (181), **Wright**: Read **ALL** (392-401) **Lorde**: Read **ALL** (402-408)/Begin BLACK NATURE POETRY

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**Week 7: W, 3/10**

**Readings from *Black Nature* anthology (Possible speaker?)/Handouts**  
**\*\*\*Explication PAPER DUE ON CANVAS/ June Jordan**: "Letters to the Local Police"  
**Others TBD (To Be Determined)**

**Week 8: W, 3/17**

**Readings from *Black Nature Poetry* TBD (To Be Determined)**

**Week 9: W, 3/24**

**NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK!!**

**Week 10: W, 3/31**

**Readings from *New Poets of Native Nations*: Read Introduction. Poems by Noodin and Pico (Selections TBD)**  
**Readings from *New Poets of Native Nations*: Atsitty, Long Soldier(TBD) Also Harjo (from poetry.org)**

**Week 10: W, 4/7**

**Readings from *NPNN* Long Soldier and Diaz (all of their work) Also Joy Harjo's "Eagle Poem" (from poetry.org) Readings from *NPNN*: Forester: "Leaving**

Tulsa”(77) “Birthmark” (82); Da: “Haskell Marching Band” (58), “Passive Voice” (59); Opkik: “Dog Moon Night” (128), “She Tracks” (129).

**Week 11: W, 4/14**

**Back to Vintage: Dove: ALL (577-560); Komunyaka: ALL (535-539)  
Doty: “Brilliance” (563); “A Display of Mackerel” (565);  
ALL of WS Merwin: (256-264); Harper: “Dear John, Dear Coltrane” (439)**

**Week 12: W, 4/21**

**OPTIONAL Conferences on Presentations this week--NO CLASS  
SIGN UP FOR A DOODLE POLL if YOU WOULD LIKE ONE**

**Week 13: W, 4/28**

**Paper 2 Due to CANVAS/Presentations begin (on expanded version of Paper 2)**

**Week 14: W, 5/5**

**Presentations (on expanded version of Paper 2)**

**Week 15: W, 5/12**

**Presentation (on expanded version of Paper 2)**

**Finals WEEK:**

**WRITE-UP & HANDOUT for Presentation: DUE Finals Week—Date To be Determined (Most likely by Friday of Finals Week, 5/21)**