Christopher Grobe

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**Engl 115: Novels, Plays & Poems**

*(Section 03: Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50am)*

**Course Description:**

Why does a person sit down to write a poem, a play, a novel? What does it matter that his or her thoughts have taken one shape or another? What tools does each form offer an artist interested in thoughtful and passionate expression? And, regardless of form, how do the resulting works of art go about seducing or offending us? How do they shape our experience as readers—and warp our view of the world, once we have finished reading?

In our attempt to answer such questions, we will read broadly in each genre, exploring both classic and contemporary texts. In frequent assignments, you will deepen your acts of reading through reflexive and critical writing.

**Required Texts:** *(All books are available at Amherst Books)*

Seamus Heaney & Ted Hughes (eds.) *The Rattle Bag* (Faber).

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Arden, 3rd Series)

Sarah Ruhl, *The Clean House and Other Plays* (TCG)

E.M. Forster, *Howard’s End* (Penguin Classics)

Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (Anchor)

V.S. Naipaul, *Between Father and Son: Family Letters* (Vintage)

Dean Young, *Fall Higher* (Copper Canyon)

**Course Format & Requirements:**

**Readings:** Any seminar is a group effort. Your job is to take part in the collective process of making sense of these poems, plays, and novels. Read deeply, and be prepared to go wherever the group takes us.

**Writings:** Most writing assignments will be brief (1-2 pages), but toward the end of the semester, a few will be longer (3-5 pages). Due dates for each are listed below. Should it become necessary to alter this assignment schedule, I will give ample notice and consult with the class.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Given the quick pace of this course, any absences will necessarily damage your experience of the course and place your work in it at a disadvantage. Please inform me in cases of emergency, but absent such circumstances your attendance is expected and required.

**Grading:** Your final grade will be based on your written exercises and the quality of your day-to-day involvement in class. All assignments must be completed in order to earn a passing grade.

**Academic Integrity:** Any time you use another person’s words or ideas without giving them credit, that is plagiarism. Plagiarism is not only bad for your personal education; it also fundamentally undermines the process of academic dialogue. Make sure to cite your sources properly, and please ask me if you are unsure whether citation is necessary in a particular circumstance.

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**Course Schedule:** *(All poems from* The Rattle Bag*; audio files will be posted to the course website)*

9/7 D. H. Lawrence, “Lizard”; William Stafford, “At the Bomb Testing Site”; Robert Frost, “Birches”; (in-class handout)

9/12 Anon, “In beauty may I walk”; Christopher Smart, “My Cat, Jeoffrey”; William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence”; Ezra Pound, “And the days are not full enough”; Sylvia Plath, “You’re”; Walt Whitman, “Pensive, on her dead gazing…”

LISTEN TO: Allen Ginsberg, “America”

9/14 Lord Alfred Tennyson, “Break, break, break”; Sylvia Plath, “Crossing Over the Water”; Wordsworth, “Boat Stealing” & “One Christmas-time”; Edward Thomas, “As the team’s head-brass flashed out”; Wallace Stevens, “Ploughing on Sunday”

LISTEN TO (and read): Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night”

PAPER #1

9/19 Morgenstern, “Delayed Action”; Sir Walter Ralegh, “Sir Walter Ralegh to His Son”; William Shakespeare, “There is a willow grows aslant a brook”; Anthony Hecht, “More Light! More Light!”; George Peele, “Bethsabe’s Song”; William Carlos Williams, “The Artist”; Marvell, “Bermudas”

9/21 Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Binsey Poplars” & “As kingfishers catch fire”; Yeats, “At the grey round of the hill”; Shakespeare, “Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises”; e.e. cummings, “anyone lived in a pretty how town”; John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”

LISTEN TO: Gertrude Stein, “If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso”

PAPER #2

9/26 Yeats, “The Collarbone of a Hare”; Hugh MacDiarmid, “Perfect”; Zbigniew Herbert, “A Devil”; Emily Dickinson, “How happy is the little Stone” & “There’s a certain slant of light”; C.P. Cavafy, “As Much As You Can”; Philip Larkin, “Days”; D.H. Lawrence, “Mosquito” & “The Mosquito Knows”

9/28 William Blake, “The Tyger” & “London”; John Webster, “Call for the Robin Redbreast and the Wren”; Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”; John Donne, “The Baite”; W.H. Davies, “A Child’s Pet”; Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

LISTEN TO: Yeats, “Lake Isle of Inisfree” & Frost “Stopping by Woods …”

PAPER #3

10/3 Thomas Nashe, “Adieu, farewell earth’s bliss”; Chidiock Tichborne, “Elegy for Himself”; Orlando Gibbons, “The silver swan, who living had no note”; William Blake, “The Sick Rose”; Robert Lowell, “Alfred Corning Clark”; Norman MacCaig, “After His Death”; W.H. Auden, “Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone”

LISTEN TO: Philip Larkin, “The Old Fools”

10/5 Thomas Hardy, “Afterwards”; Wallace Stevens, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”; William Stafford, “Bifocal”; Elizabeth Bishop, “The Bight” & “Sandpiper”; D.H. Lawrence, “Humming-Bird”; Shakespeare, “All the world’s a stage” & “Our revels now are ended”

PAPER #4

10/10 No class (October break)

10/12 *King Lear*

PAPER #5

10/17 *King Lear*

10/19 *King Lear*

10/24 *King Lear*

PAPER #6

10/26 *Eurydice*

10/31 *Eurydice*

PAPER #7

11/2 *Howard’s End*

11/7 *Howard’s End*

11/9 *Howard’s End*

PAPER #8

11/14 *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

11/16 *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

**11/21 & 11/23 No class (Thanksgiving break)**

11/28 *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

PAPER #9

11/30 *Between Father and Son*

12/5 *Between Father and Son*

PAPER #10

12/7 *Fall Higher*

12/12 *Fall Higher*

12/14 *Fall Higher*

PAPER #11