Honors College Core Offerings

Honors Course Number, Title, and Credit Hours:

HON 121 – Honors Core in Understanding Individual and Society and Understanding Creative Arts, 3 hours

Department(s) and College(s) Offering Instruction

a.) English, LAS

b.)

Instructor(s): Chris Glomski

Term Offered: Spring 2016

Section Title: Poetics of Dissent

1. Please give a brief description of this course:

   Dissent is a form of saying “no.” One thing to realize is that dissent is a process and not a final and objective state, some dictate of truth from on high. I want to engage the materials of the culture, derange them as they have deranged me, sound them out, as they sound me out.”

   FROM “AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES BERNSTEIN”

In this course, we will engage with works by poets that somehow enact a poetics ("poetics" here refers to the theory and practice of the art of poetry) of dissent. Keeping in mind that dissent is a form of saying “no,” together we will attempt to calculate how those works give voice to some kind of negative response. In so doing, we may discover that “dissent” can be expressed not only in terms of overtly political statements (though it often is), but also in terms of the formal maneuvers or strictures a writer commits to. In the course of our inquiry, we may also find ourselves raising questions such as, “How might the formal commitments or aesthetic choices—or notions of beauty—a writer makes qualify as political gestures?”; “Is there a point at which expressions of dissent tend to invert themselves into affirmations of something else?”; “In what ways might poetry help one trace a private self among the material impingements of our globalized world?” Supplemen廷 our readings of poetry from the early 20th century to the present will be a variety of critical texts to orient our understanding the poetics of dissent through such critical lenses as formalism, feminism, racial politics, and economics. As a popular on-line dictionary points out, the word "dissent" is liable to be confused with its homophones “descent” and “decent.” Perhaps that is an apt reminder, as we seek to trace lines of descent among dissenting poets in pursuit of what is decent.

2. List under major and minor headings the principal topics of this section. Please provide as full an outline as possible.
1) Peter Weiss “Aesthetics of Resistance” (6 hours)
   This work is actually a historical novel that dramatizes anti-fascist resistance in
   1930’s and WWII-era Europe in the context of the rise and fall of proletarian political
   parties. It will serve to orient and ground course inquiry into the poetics of dissent.

2) Poetics of Documentation (6 hours)
   a) Muriel Rukeyser’s “Book of the Dead”
   b) Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl”
   This unit will examine to mid-twentieth century works of American poetry whose
dissent is grounded in documentation. Rukeyser’s work documents the “Hawk’s Nest Incident,” an industrial disaster in which hundreds of miners died of silicosis. Ginsberg’s “Howl” documents the persecution of left-wing artists and intellectuals in McCarthy-era America.

3) New Social Movements in American Poetry (9 hours)
   a) Amiri Baraka, Diane DiPrima and Black Nationalism
   b) Jayne Cortez and the Black Arts Movement
   c) Adrienne Rich and the New Left
   This unit will examine the work of three poets whose work aligned with New Social Movements that emerged in the 1960’s and 70’s: Black Nationalism, Black Arts Movement, and Feminist / Queer politics.

4) Materialism and the Poetic Function of Language Poetry (6 hours)
   a) The Ascendancy of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetics
   b) Readings in Language Poetry
   This unit will serve as an introduction to and analysis of the formalism of the Language Writing movement that gained ascendancy in American poetry of the 1980’s.

5) Poetry, the University and the Culture of Distraction (6 hours)
   a) Ann Lauterbach, selected poems
   b) Rosmarie Waldrop, selected poems
   c) Harryette Mullen, selected poems
   This unit will expand and broaden the preceding one through examination of the uneasy triangulation of poetry, the academy, and popular culture.

6) Conceptual Poetics (6 hours)
   a) A Brief History of Dada and Conceptual Art
   b) Fitterman and Place: “Notes on Conceptualisms”
   c) Goldman: “Re-Thinking ‘Non-Retinal Literature’”
   d) Fitterman: “Rob the Plagiarist”
   e) Goldsmith: “The Body of Michael Brown”
   This unit will serve as an introduction to and critique of conceptual poetics, a current and controversial movement that constructs “poetic” texts mostly from found or appropriated material, ranging from the banal (Internet chatrooms, radio weather reports, etc.) to the deliberately provocative (racial politics, leaked or infringed on documents, etc.).

7) Poetry and Globalization (6 hours)
   a) Arrighi: “The End of the Long 20th Century”
   b) Clover: “Red Epic”
   c) Clover and Spahr: “#Misanthropocene”
   This final unit will examine poetry that responds to globalization, the economic crisis of 2008, the various “Occupy” movements, and the uncertainty of the 21st century.
3. List required texts. In all instances give author, title, and the latest date of publication, and indicate by an asterisk those books and journals that are in the UIC libraries.

REQUIRED READINGS (selected chapters):

Fitterman, Robert and Vanessa Place. *Notes on Conceptualisms.* (2008)
*Ginsberg, Allen. *Howl and Other Poems.* (1959)
Monroe, Jonathan. *Poetry, the University, and the Culture of Distraction.* (1996)
*Silliman, Ron, ed. *In the American Tree.* (1986)
*Weiss, Peter. *Aesthetics of Resistance.* (1975)

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Clover, Johua and Juliana Spahr. *#Misanthropocene: 24 Theses.* (2014)
Goldman, Judith. *Re-Thinking “Non-Retinal Literature”: Citation, “Radical Mimesis,” and Phenomenologies of Reading in Conceptual Writing.* (2011)

4. List additional section notes, if required:

5. General Education Criteria

Understanding Individual and Society

- Examine how literature, history, ethical systems, scientific inquiry, or communicative practice shape our knowledge and perception of individuals and social structure.

**Justification for General Education Category:**

Works by poets of dissent are forms and voices of protest against the ailment of aspects of society that should be changed, whether such disagreements are made through explicit overt political statements or more implicit formal maneuvers writers have committed to. In addition, by examining voices revealed through critical texts from the early 20th century to the present that instigate arguments about social and cultural discord, students will cultivate critical thinking concerning what would make a “better” society, as that may be fashioned through successive rendition of disagreements on issues such as gender and racial politics, and economics and globalization.
Understanding the Creative Arts

- Questions of poetics. How do the traditions of genres and forms, materials and means of production, and philosophies and theories influence individual literary and artistic works and their interpretation?
- Questions of cultural and historical context. How do creative works relate to the societies in which they are produced and received? How do cultural roles of creative products, definitions of art, institutions, markets and patronage affect the creation of works of architecture, art, music, literature, and other media?

**Justification for General Education Category:**
In this class, students will explore a range of texts by poets in giving voice to negative responses on various fronts. Students will learn not only how more overt political statements can be made, but how writers’ aesthetic choices may also become dissenting gestures, especially when the boundaries between expressions of dissent and affirmation, and between private self and globalization, become embedded within one another. In addition, by engaging critical texts produced by formalism, feminism, racial politics, and economics, students will come to understand how the poetics of dissent is grounded in concerns such as gender/racial inequality; power of the government; the uneasy relationship between the academy and popular culture; problematics of economy; and fear and welcoming of technological advances in the new century—all give rise to specific artistic/literary creations in expressing opposing opinions.

6. Assessment

Students will be assessed by means of 1) conducting at least one presentation on course readings; 2) three 3-5 page brief papers; 3) a student written poem “of dissent” 4) a mid-term exam and 5) a final exam.

1) Presentations will be conducted in groups of two or three on work chosen from the course reading list by the presenting students. Presenters will collaborate within small, randomly assigned groups. The presentations are informal and will invite participation and response from instructor and non-presenting students. The main goal of these presentations will be to orient and initiate a larger class discussion of assigned readings. In addition to providing historical or political context for works under discussion, student presentations may focus on inherent difficulties and/or interpretive possibilities suggested by their readings of the texts. For example, presenting groups may solicit responses from the wider class to difficult or apparently obscure passages in the text they are presenting. Presenting groups will also be encouraged to share helpful information gleaned from research. Such information might consist of pertinent details from the author’s biography or supplemental information useful in understanding allusions or references featured in the text (e.g. historical events or persons referenced in the work under consideration). Essentially, presenting groups are tasked with leading/initiating wider class discussion of a particular work. I will act as an unofficial extra member of each presenting group by engaging in dialogue with their ideas and encouraging the rest of the class to share additional ideas and insights.

2) The brief papers will allow students to demonstrate their abilities to engage with course readings on interpretive, rhetorical, and critical levels. The papers will constitute analytical-explicative critiques of poetic texts under review, and students will be encouraged to make use of theoretical and critical readings from the syllabus in constructing their critiques. Papers would be 3-5 pages in length, one occurring in the first half of the semester and the other two after mid-term.

3) Students will write a poem of dissent to present to the rest of the class.
4) A mid-term exam will assess students’ facility in recognizing and defining various rhetorical tropes, literary concepts, and poetic trends as presented during the first half of the course. The mid-term will consist of a combination of definition, identification, and short response.

5) The final exam will be structured similarly to the mid-term while taking a comprehensive form. A long essay question will assess students’ cumulative knowledge of core concepts and their facility to engage with them.

APPROVALS:
Department Approval: ___________________________ Date

College Approval: ___________________________ Date

Department Approval: ___________________________ Date

College Approval: ___________________________ Date

Honors College Approval: ___________________________ Date

Office of Academic Affairs Approval: ___________________________ Date