

**How to Read (CMLIT 0835)**  
**T/Th 2:30-3:45 (207 Hammond)**

Professor Eric Hayot  
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, noon to 1, and by appointment  
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/>

Texts:

*The Making of a Poem*, eds. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland  
*S/Z*, Roland Barthes  
*The Sounds of Poetry*, Robert Pinsky  
*Dictionary of the Khazars*, Milorad Pavic

A brief note: there are two versions of Pavic's *Dictionary*, the "male" and the "female." You need only buy one of them. Also, Christian Bok's *Eunoia* is listed as required by the bookstore, though it is in fact optional. I recommend you buy it because it's completely wonderful, but I'll give you some excerpts later in the semester in any case. In addition to these books, other readings will be available for download online, in each case at the following URL:

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/downloads.html>. You will need a username and password to access the readings. You are responsible for obtaining these readings, printing them out, and bringing them to class with you.

Course information:

At first this course will seem to be a course about poetry, but it is in truth a course about reading. Poetry will be our first vehicle for this learning, and we will spend ten weeks looking at poems and thinking about ways to read them. We will discuss meter and rhyme; we will learn how to scan a poem; we will articulate differences in tone or color produced by enjambment, caesura, verse form, subject, history. Following the midterm, we will read a short story and a novel in order to extend, via metaphor or translation, the reading of poetry to other things: we will move from "reading poetry" to simply "reading"—the work of the profession of English literature, the basic building block of all literary analysis. We thus begin by reading and end by reading, and reading will—if we let it—make us readers.

Learning will require you to do three different kinds of work. First I expect you to do the reading, and to do it well—when you read for class I expect you to arrive having not simply scanned the material but having thought about it. You should come to class EVERY TIME with at least one question or comment about the text—if I call on you I will expect you to be ready to articulate that question or comment. Secondly, I am asking you to write four short papers—two on the poetry, one each on the other subjects of the course—that address some significant critical question or analyze a text in detail. Finally, there will be a two-day-long in-class midterm exam and a final exam, both of which will include short answer questions, quotation identifications, and short and long essays. I will also ask you to memorize and recite a poem in front of the class—this assignment will not be graded but is required to pass the class. Before you recite your poem, I'll ask you to say a few words about the poet whose work you'll read.

Grading:

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Reading/presentation:	0 percent.
Four short papers:	10 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent, 15 percent (50).
Mid-term exam:	25 percent.
Final exam:	25 percent.

Failure to complete any of these assignments will prevent you from passing the course. On top of this will be your class participation grade, which can either hurt you or help you (up to 1/3 a grade either way). It will be determined by the degree to which you help the class learn, or keep it from learning. I do not penalize students who do not talk in class.

In exceptional circumstances I will consider the granting of a grade of incomplete, but only when all but a minor portion of the course work has been successfully completed.

Lateness and absences:

You get two classes off free. Every absence beginning with your third absence will seriously hurt your final grade (by 1/3). There are no excused absences unless you need to represent the university in some official way (as an athlete, for instance) or it is a religious holiday for you. Don't be late to class.

I don't accept late work unless you talk about it with me in advance. Unexcused late work will receive a grade of 0. If you are not in class when something is due (or when we take an exam), you will receive a grade of 0, unless you have an excused absence.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

If you use someone else's ideas, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase, you need to say so. Use parenthetical references and a works cited list (as explained in the *MLA Style Guide*, available in the library or at the bookstore) to show your reader where your ideas are coming from. *This course will not require you to do external research to write papers, so avoid the temptation to plagiarize by sticking with the materials we're reading in class.*

Dishonesty of any other kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Acts of dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Equal access:

Penn State encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

Daily syllabus. Have everything read before coming to class.

Week 1: Aug 28, 30

“The Red Wheelbarrow” – William Carlos Williams.

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

Th: Villanelle: Elizabeth Bishop, Dylan Thomas

*When reading from the Strand & Boland anthology, I expect you to read the prefatory material on each form as well as the biographical information on individual authors.*

Week 2: Sept 4, 6

T: Sestina: Ezra Pound, Alberto Rios  
Pinsky, introduction, chs. 1 and 4.

Th: Basic scansion: Iambic verse, trochaic and anapestic substitutions, feminine endings.

Pantoum: Carolyn Kizer, John Ashbery, J. D. McClatchy

Week 3: Sept 11, 13

T: Sonnet: Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Hopkins, Cullen, another (tba).  
Pinsky, chs. 2 and 3.

Th: The poetic line. Enjambment. Caesuras.

Open Forms: William Carlos Williams. Heroic couplet: Browning.

Week 4: Sept 18, 20

T: The haiku, the alexandrine (tba)

**T: First paper due.**

Th: Blank verse: Frost. Heroic couplet: Owen.  
Steele, “Rhyme” (pdf)

Week 5: Sept 25, 27

T: Stanza: Herbert, Dickinson, Rukeyser, one more (tba)  
Corn, “Stanza.” (pdf)

Th: The elegy: Auden. Lowell, “For the Union Dead.” (pdf)  
Pinsky, ch. 5.

Week 6: Oct 2, 4

T: The pastoral: Marlowe, Keats, Prospero  
McLaughlin, “Figurative Language” (pdf)

- Th: The ode: Crane, Simic
- Week 7: Oct 9, 11  
 T: Constrained poetry (pdf); concrete and sound poetry (pdf)  
 Th: Mid-term review  
**Th: Second paper due.**
- Week 8: Oct 16, 18  
 Mid-term exam.
- Week 9: Oct 23, 25  
 T: Balzac, "Sarrasine." In *S/Z* pp. 221-254  
 Th: Barthes, *S/Z* intro, 3-16.
- Week 10: Oct 30, Nov 1  
 T: Barthes, *S/Z* 17-54.  
 Th: No class.
- Week 11: Nov 6, 8  
 T: Barthes, 54-107.  
 Th: Barthes, 107-167.
- Week 12: Nov 13, 15  
 T: Barthes, 167-217.  
 Th: No class today.  
**Th: Third paper due, in my mailbox or via email by 5pm**  
*Late drop deadline is November 16. Thanksgiving is November 19-25.*
- Week 13: Nov 27, 29  
 T: Pavic / essay on narratology (pdf)  
 Th: Pavic /
- Week 14: Dec 4, 6  
 T: Pavic / Martin (pdf)  
 Th: Pavic / Genette (pdf)
- Week 15: Dec 11, 13  
 T: Michael Joyce, *Afternoon* (software)  
**T: Draft of fourth paper due (optional)**  
 Th: Conclusions; preparing for the final

**Fourth paper due:** Monday, Dec 17, by 5pm in my office or via email.

**Final exam:** date tba