

Close Reading (CMLIT 501/597a)
M 2:30-5:30 (430 Burrowes), Aug 23 – Sept 20

Professor Eric Hayot
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Office hours: By appointment; I'm on campus daily.
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/>

Books

Close Reading: A Reader, Lentricchia and DuBois, eds. (978-0822330394)
The Making of a Poem, eds. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland (978-0393321784)
Mythologies, Roland Barthes (978-0374521509)
S/Z, Roland Barthes (978-0374521677)
The Sounds of Poetry, Robert Pinsky (978-0374526177)

In addition to these we will cover a few other sources, all of which will be available for download as PDF files from my website, at the following URL:
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/downloads.html>. You will need a username (space) and password (elevator) to access the readings. You are responsible for obtaining them, printing them out, and bringing them to class with you.

Course information:

In this first five-week unit of the yearlong course in methods and professions, we will study the critical practice that dominated literary criticism in the United States from the 1950s through the 1990s: close reading. Beginning with poetry, and using giants as our guides, we will learn the basic language of the critical analysis of poetic form, including scansion. Moving beyond poetry, we will develop vocabularies of formal and informal interpretation that touch on genre, mode, medium, and other major categories of aesthetic emergence. We will close with narrative and cultural analysis.

Work and grading:

Assignments will include short papers, snap judgments, and presentations. At least half of your grade will be based on your gameness as we make up in-class exercises, work in interpretive groups, or prepare micro-presentations and other exercises.

As for grades, I take an A- to be acceptable, normal work done by a graduate student of your stage (this standard is different, therefore, for first- and second-year students). As are given for superior work, B+s for work that is not up to that standard. Bs indicate serious problems.

Graduate Audit policy:

It is devoutly hoped that auditors will do the reading and show up to class. Beyond that, no expectations. Auditors who wish to do the written work should speak to me about it.

Lateness and absences:

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.

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 class.

Aug 23: *What is Close Reading?*

- ❖ L&D: Brooks, Krieger, Vendler
- ❖ S&B, all the sections on form, and the following poems: Pound, Rios (Sestina); Kizer, Ashbery (Pantoum); Bishop (Villanelle).

Aug 30: *Skills: Poetry*

- ❖ Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry*
- ❖ S&B, the following poems: Williams (Open Forms/the line); Browning (Heroic Couplet); Dickinson, Rukeyser (stanza); Crane (ode); Lowell (elegy; PDF); Shakespeare (sonnet).
- ❖ The haiku, the tanka, the renga; the ghazal; jintishi; tanci, ruba'i, sijo (PDF/online)

Sept 6: *Exercises: Mythology*

- ❖ Barthes, *Mythologies*
- ❖ Balzac, "Sarrasine." In *S/Z* pp. 221-254; also *S/Z* 3-16.

Sept 13: *Close Reading Beyond Form*

- ❖ L&D: De Man (deconstruction), Jameson (Marxism); Greenblatt (new historicism), Sedgwick (psychoanalysis)

Sept 20: *Exercises: Narrative*

- ❖ Barthes, *S/Z*