

English 120
Why Read? (WIC)
Spring 2010
M,W 12:00-1:20
Hoover 205

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Lightness and Weight

If every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. It is a terrifying prospect. In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make. . . . If eternal return is the heaviest of burdens, then our lives can stand out against it in all their splendid lightness. But is heaviness truly deplorable and lightness splendid? The heaviest of burdens crushes us, we sink beneath it, it pins us to the ground. But . . . the heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become.

Conversely, the absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, to soar to the heights, take leave of the earth and his earthly being, and become only half real, his movements as free as they are insignificant.

What then shall we choose? Weight or lightness?

Parmenides posed this very question in the sixth century before Christ. He . . . responded: lightness is positive, weight negative.

Was he correct or not? That is the question. The only certainty is: the lightness/weight opposition is the most mysterious, most ambiguous of all.

(Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 5-6)

A Word From Your Preceptor

Hi Everyone! My name is Katy Simonian, and I have been given the honor of serving as your Preceptor for English 120: Why Read? I would like to take this opportunity to tell you all a bit about myself. I am a senior, currently at the start of my last semester here at Whittier College. I am an English major with a minor in Political Science and Religious Studies. I am planning on pursuing a Master's Degree upon graduating, and possibly going on to attain my Ph.D. and teach as a Professor in English. Like many of you, I took my Why Read? course as a freshman, and found that the experience helped me immensely in other courses through my years at Whittier.

Having the ability to do a close reading of a text and clearly and creatively articulate ideas is a passion for me--and a skill that I promise you will have a better understanding of by the end of this course. This is the second time I have served as a Preceptor and I am absolutely thrilled to work with Professor Furman-Adams. I have taken several classes with her, and I can tell you from experience that her encyclopedic knowledge of all things English is matched only by her ability to share that knowledge and passion with her students. Throughout the semester, I will be attending class, assisting in lectures, and holding office hours to provide you with feedback on your papers. Remember that I too am a student, and the advice I give is based on my own experiences. My ultimate goal is to provide you with support and to learn from you during our time together. I look forward to meeting and getting to know all of you in the coming weeks. In closing, I want to thank you for this tremendous opportunity, and I hope we will have a fun and productive semester.

Thank You!

Required Texts:

Thomas R. Arp, ed. *Perrine's Story and Structure*, eleventh ed. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Bertolt Brecht. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. Eric Bentley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, eds. *Sophocles I*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

R.S. Gwynn. *Poetry* (A Longman Pocket Anthology), Fifth ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

Milan Kundera. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*, ed. William Farnham. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1970.

A Handbook for Writers. (Any handbook you were required to buy for your College Writing Seminar is acceptable.)

Required Work:

(1) Reading assignments to be completed *before* the dates for which they are assigned (i.e. in time for class discussion).

(2) Prompt and regular attendance at all class sessions, *including two tutorials, two plays, one film, and two on-campus literary events* (some dates TBA). If you *must* miss a class, you should get class notes from another student and include them in your notebook with proper acknowledgment. (Roll will be taken, and final grades dropped one step--e.g. from a B to a C-- for each absence after the first two. Thus six absences will be regarded as grounds for failure of the course.)

(3) A *portfolio* of polished, out-of-class writing, to be submitted on the dates due as listed on the syllabus and *resubmitted at the end of the semester*. This final portfolio must be submitted in an appropriate (pocketed) folder, and will contain:

(a) **Two papers** (between 1,000 and 2,000 words): one on a lyric poem or small group of poems not discussed in class; one on a short story not discussed in class. Both papers will have a research as well as an interpretive component, and will be drafted in stages in consultation with the professor.

(b) **Five short reviews** (about 2 pages): (1) of the film version of *Hamlet*; (2) of *one* Whittier College Theater production (dates to be announced); (3-4) of *two* poetry or fiction readings of your choice; and (5) of any on-campus cultural event, including the Whittier College Choir Home Concert. *All reviews are due within one week of the event.*

(c) **A letter of self-appraisal**, in which you analyze the written work you have submitted for the course and assess your areas of improvement and areas that need further work. *Note that this is not an evaluation of the course, but rather of your written work in the course.*

(4) **Two exams** with both identification and essay questions: a midterm (covering poetry and drama) and a comprehensive final.

Factors in Final Grade:

1. Regular, intelligent, informed class participation and class notebook	15
2. Cultural event reviews (5% each)	25
3. Papers	30
4. Midterm exam	10
6. Final exam	<u>20</u>
	100%

Grading Options:

- (1) A - F
- (2) Credit/No-credit

Note: *All work must be turned in, and of a passing quality (even if it is turned in so late as to have fallen--theoretically--to an F), and resubmitted in your final portfolio, in order to result in a passing grade in the course.*

Work will be regarded as "on time" if it is handed in at the beginning of class or appears in my mailbox by 5:00 on the day it is due. *Late work will be accepted, but will be marked down one third of a grade* (e.g. from a B to a B-) for each *school day* (not class day) after the due date. It is much better, however, to turn in a paper a bit late than to miss a class or arrive late in order to complete it.

Extensions without penalty are occasionally considered--provided (1) that I am consulted *in advance* and (2) that the circumstances seem serious enough to warrant such an extension. (A

documented illness or three papers due on the same day are examples of such circumstances.) No penalty-free extensions will be granted after the fact or even at the last minute (e.g. by e-mail the night before). The point is to anticipate difficulties and make plans in advance to address them. This includes seeking help on papers (which I strongly encourage!) beyond initial tutorials, but near the beginning of each assignment period.

Manuscript Style:

Papers are to be typed double-space in a 12-point font (this syllabus is typed in 12-point Times), and printed on a laser-quality printer. They should be handed in on separate sheets of 8 1/2 X 11 paper, *stapled* in the upper left-hand corner. *Margins* should be one inch; *paragraphs* are to be indented one normal tab. Spaces should not be skipped between paragraphs. Any notes or bibliography must follow MLA Style, details of which are available in the library--as well as on its Web page. (The style is also described in most standard handbooks, such as the one you were required to purchase for your college writing seminar.)

Note: Hard copies are required. *No electronic submissions will be accepted* except under special circumstances--and then only with prior permission.

Always keep hard-copies of all your work. Documents can get lost--both from my desk and from your disk. Should this occur, you are expected to produce a copy *immediately*; otherwise, I will be forced to count the paper as late beginning with the day it was due. (See above for general policy on late papers.)

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism occurs whenever the true author of a piece of prose, of an idea, or of a line of thought is not the person who claims to be the author. Plagiarism can occur in varying degrees, and will be penalized--in this class as in all others at the College--in proportion to its severity. *Papers in which plagiarism is sufficiently serious will receive an F, and student's name will be turned in to the Dean of Students. A repeated act of plagiarism will result in an automatic F in the entire course, in addition to any action taken by the Office of Student Life (which can include suspension from the College).* A number of such serious sanctions have been imposed in recent years.

Please be aware that faculty have the tools to identify any work unfairly borrowed from the Web, as well as other sources.

If you are in doubt about the need for documentation of borrowed material, please feel free to consult me or any other professor on campus. Also be sure that you have mastered the material in the 2009-2011 *College Catalog*, 28-30. Ignorance of this material will not be regarded as an excuse.

Classroom Policies and Etiquette:

Preparation and Participation: Our class meetings are only as good as your preparation and your willingness to engage in mature, enthusiastic, and intelligent discussions about these challenging texts. You are expected to read all the materials for class, *to have your annotated text with you*, to have your own questions prepared, and to use class discussion as an opportunity to deepen your own understanding and that of others. While it is often valuable to express personal insights and opinions, those insights and opinions, in order to be of genuine use, *must be grounded in a close and careful reading of the text at hand*. If you have not done the reading, and done so carefully, you will serve the community better with your silence than with your speech.

Punctuality and Maturity: It is also essential to arrive to class *on time* and *to remain in the classroom until the end of the session*. Nothing is less conducive to concentration than people wandering in and out of class to check text messages, grab a bite, use the restroom, etc. Adults are generally capable of sitting in one place for ninety minutes. If this is not possible for you (barring a sudden case of food poisoning or something else of that magnitude and rarity), please speak to us in advance.

Food and Drink: Feel free to bring water or another non-alcoholic beverage to class; if bringing food is the only way you can both have lunch and attend class, please sit near the back and keep chewing and paper crumpling as quiet as possible.

Electronic Devices: *The use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronic equipment will not be tolerated*. Leave these items at home or turn them off and stow them entirely out of sight in the classroom. With the help of Disability Services, exceptions can be negotiated for students who require technology for help with learning or other disabilities. But these negotiations need to take place in advance of any classroom use.

Office Hours and E-mail: Whittier faculty set aside a remarkable number of hours per week to meet with students in their offices--and most of us much prefer such face-to-face interaction. Such interaction is not only more in keeping with our Quaker values, but is more efficient as well.

I offer office hours by appointment in addition to my scheduled hours, in order to make this interaction possible for students, and it is one of the "values added" of a Whittier education.

Nonetheless, a trend has developed lately toward e-mail as many students' preferred method of interaction with faculty, and sometimes work schedules, etc., make such interaction necessary. If you must use e-mail (preferably in addition to personal contact), *please consider your audience and treat your e-mails as the professional correspondence they actually are*. You can help your case immensely with an appropriate salutation (e.g. "Dear Professor Furman-Adams"; "Dear Katy"). (For most professors, either "Dr." or "Professor" is appropriate: one indicates rank, the other degree.) "Hey there!" is never the way to address a professor or preceptor (and "Mrs." "Miss" both have problems that I'd be happy to explain). We will do our best to respond promptly to your requests, questions, and concerns. But we cannot guarantee a response over the week-end or after the end of the regular school day (about 5:00 p.m.). And, with the volume of e-mail we receive each day, we cannot be expected to download and respond to drafts of a paper. *Drafts need to be brought in person during office hours*.

ADA Policy:

If you have any disabling condition that may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements, please begin by contacting the **Office of Disability Services**, located on the ground floor of the Library (extension 4825). I will be happy to provide any accommodations regarded by the Director as appropriate, but am not in a position to offer such accommodations independently. Short of actual accommodations, however, please feel welcome to talk with Katy or me about anything we can do to help you succeed in the course.

Final Exams:

*The final examination for this course will be given only at the published time (Friday, May 21, 10:30-12:30), so plan your departure for the summer accordingly. Plane tickets purchased by students not consulting the schedule (or not informing their families of the schedule) will not be accepted as an excuse for missing (or rescheduling) the exam. If you should find yourself scheduled for three final exams on a single day, you are (as the *Catalog* notes) entitled to request an adjustment.*

The Schedule (subject to change as necessary):

February

15 Introduction to the course and to poetry. "The Secret," by Denise Levertov and "Poetry," by Maryanne Moore.

17 Poetry (1): Introduction. Read Gwynn Introduction, 1-18; "Western Wind," 59; Shakespeare, Sonnet 73, p. 70; Ben Jonson, "On My First Son," 79; Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," 194; Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," 200; Frost, "Stopping by Woods," 217; Li-Young Lee, "Eating Together" (hand-out).

22 Poetry (2): Imagery; Figurative Language, Symbol, Tone. Read Gwynn, 18-27; Wyatt, 62; Donne, Holy Sonnet 14 and "Valediction Forbidding Mourning," 77-79; Herrick, 82; Marvell, 91.

24 Poetry (3): Sound, Meter, Rhythm, and Poetic Forms. Read Gwynn, 27-42; Southwell, 66; Shakespeare, 68-71; Milton, "How Soon Hath Time," 87 and "When I Consider," 88; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," 142; Dylan Thomas, 274.

March

1 Poetry (4): Poetic Forms (cont.). Read Wordsworth, 116-17; Christopher Smart, 105-108; Walt Whitman, 180-81; Matthew Arnold, 182-83; Dickinson, 184-85; Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," 227; e.e. cummings, 250-51.

3 Poetry (5): History and Conventions. Read Gwynn, 42-44; Frost, "After Apple Picking," 210; Williams, 224-26; Eliot, 236-37; Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts," 263; Gwendolyn Brooks, 279-80; Carolyn Kizer, 305; Allen Ginsberg, 308-309.

8 Poetry (6): Philip Larkin, 292-93; Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," 330; Derek Walcott, 337-38; Sharon Olds, 377-78; Seamus Heaney, "Digging," 363-64; Yusef Komunyakaa, 397-97; Rita Dove, 413; Margaret Atwood, 359-60; Maxine Kumin, 306-307; Enid Shomer, 382-83; Mary Jo Salter, 421-22.

10 **Required tutorials for poetry analysis paper.** (Come to my office at your scheduled time only.) Bring a poem--or pair or group of poems--from the Gwynn anthology and as many notes toward your analysis as you have been able to gather. Also read Gwynn, 45-55.

15 Drama (1): Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*.

17 *Oedipus* continued.

22 Drama (2): William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

24 *Hamlet* continued.

24 7:00 p.m. **Required viewing of Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*.** Deihl 118.

29 *Hamlet* continued. **Poetry Analysis due.**

31 Drama (3): Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. **Review of Branagh's *Hamlet* due.**

Spring Break--April 3-11.

April

12 *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* continued.

14 *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* continued. Review for midterm.

19 **Midterm Exam, covering poetry and drama.**

21 Short Fiction: (1) Plot. Read Perrine Introduction, 1-7, 41-49; Graham Greene, 49-61; John Galsworthy, 73-75.

26 Short Fiction: (2) Character. Read Perrine Introduction, 76-80; Alice Walker, 90-97; Katherine Mansfield, 97-101.

28 Short Fiction: (3) Point of View. Read Perrine Introduction, 148-54; Willa Cather, 154-169; Ernest Hemingway, 170-74.

May

3 Tutorials for Short Story Analysis Paper. (Come to my office at your scheduled time only.) Bring your selected story (from the list on your prompt), and any notes you have been able to gather toward your analysis.

5 Short Fiction: (4) Theme. Read Perrine, 102-109; Albert Camus, 190-200; Eudora Welty, 437-43.

10 Novel: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

12 *Unbearable Lightness of Being* continued.

17 *Unbearable Lightness of Being* continued. **Short Story Analysis due.**

19 Reading Day. Class day if necessary to review for final.

21 (Friday) 10:30-12:30, Final Exam (comprehensive). Course portfolio and notebook due. **Note:** Your portfolio, final, and notebook will be returned to your campus mailbox. If you would prefer to have it sent to your home, please provide a large self-addressed envelope with enough postage to cover mailing. (Please make certain that you have your portfolio weighed at the post office!)