

Literature Syllabus

Clemente Course in the Humanities™
New Bedford, Massachusetts
Fall 2009

Professor Jen Riley

Course Description: For writer W.H. Auden, poetry was seen to be "memorable speech." Matthew Arnold, a literary critic, found poetry and literature to be a "criticism of life." Literature speaks to us in many ways and provides us with a lens through which we may experience different worlds, explore ideas, and contemplate the meaning of our lives. This course will allow you to experience different works, across various genres, of literature. Our course focuses on discussing and answering the questions:

- What makes a great literary work?
- What criteria should we use to assess the quality of literary works?
- Who and what constitutes a literary canon?
- Do we agree that the works we are reading are great and deserve to be a part of the literary canon?

Course Objectives:

- gain a working knowledge of literary terms;
- learn how to read, enjoy, and critique literature;
- understand the literary canon and the issues surrounding the canon;
- interpret literary texts;
- improve public speaking and group communication skills;
- write coherent, persuasive essays using one's own ideas;
- use evidence from a text effectively; and,
- realize the importance of literature and stories and how reading creates lifelong learning.

Course Text:

Kelly, Joseph, Ed. *The Seagull Reader: Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*.

Assignments:

Response Papers: You will each write five response papers. These are 1-2 page papers that allow you to respond to the texts in more detail and practice the critical thinking and analytic skills we've been discussing in class.

Oral Presentation: Each person will share a favorite poem with the class and speak for 2-3 minutes about how the poem reflects upon his/her Clemente

experience. This presentation should be planned and practiced in advance. This event will happen during our last literature class session.

Preliminary Portfolio Paper Proposal: You will write a one page document that tells me the following: the short story, poem, or play you will be writing your final paper on for inclusion in your portfolio for the literature part of the Clemente course; a paragraph explaining why you chose this text; a paragraph outlining the argument you are going to make about the text (what's your interpretation of the text?)

Portfolio Paper: You will each write a paper that is 3 pages in length—no more, no less. This paper will be a critical analysis of a text that presents a clear argument and uses evidence effectively.

Reflective Essay: You will each write a reflective essay during the last literature class session. Your essay will provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon your learning experiences.

Want to get in touch with Jen outside of class? If you have access to a computer, you can do the following: 1) Email me: j1riley@umassd.edu 2) Call me at my office: 508-999-8279. I'm usually there on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00-12:15 and Wednesdays from 9:30-10:30am. You can also leave a message and I'll get back to you.