

# **WEBSTER UNIVERSITY**

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

COMM 5000.01

Instructors: Dr. Marlene Birkman

FICTION AND POETRY FOR CHILDREN

TERM: SU  
WH 238 968-7094

Site: 50

**“You will find poetry nowhere unless you bring some of it with you.”  
-Joseph Joubert**

**1. COURSE DESCRIPTION: (Student focus, rationale, scope, and prerequisites)**

Contemporary poetry since the seventies is read, discussed, and evaluated. Speakers, videos, and response experiences (renderings, book sharings, poetry writing, and reader response) highlight the poetry portion. Media related to poetry presentation is considered and evaluated.

**2. LEARNING OUTCOMES: (Goals, objectives, course outcomes, etc.)**

Students will:

-orally and closely read and respond to (taste, touch, look at, smell, and hear) as many different poems as they are able.

-bring questions and/or responses to class that will provoke interesting, thoughtful, imaginative discussion of the experience that the poems offer.

-justify and share their responses (ideas, attitudes, and feelings) from the words of the poems.

-identify and explore the elements and forms of poetry in order to enjoy it and feel its power.

-play with the language.

-read as many poems as possible to children and record and share their responses.

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."---  
Albert Einstein

**Texts:**

Heard, G. Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1999.

Heard, G. For the Good of the Sun and the Earth: Teaching Poetry. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1989.

All Handouts

## COMM 5000.01 - Birkman

**Bibliographies:** See A Poetry Bibliography and Birkman Bibliography;

"It should not surprise us, then, to find that today's children seek the realistic poetry of bolder voices, speaking in a blunt conversational style...The poetry young people want today is real. It relates to the world they know, and it invites them to become physically and emotionally involved. Involvement is what they demand."

Nancy Larrick, Page 5

**Objectives:** (personal questions as listed in class.)

Students will orally and closely read and respond to (taste, touch, look at, smell, and hear) as many different poems as they are able.

Students will bring questions and/or responses to class that will provoke interesting, thoughtful, imaginative discussion of the experience that the poems offer.

Students will justify and share their responses (ideas, attitudes, and feelings) from the words of the poems.

Students will identify and explore the elements and forms of poetry in order to enjoy it and feel its power.

Students will play with the language.

Students will read as many poems as possible to children and record and share their responses.

**Expectations:**

Students will attend all classes. If an emergency absence occurs, please call me.

Students will touch as many poetry collections as possible in bookstores and in school, city, and county libraries. Three libraries and three bookstores will be visited.

Students will actively participate in class discussions.

Students will arrive at initial answers to the questions posed in class through a close reading of all class assignments.

Students will render and document poems for the class. (Copy with bibliographic citation)

Students will prepare a poetry collection for young people according to the Poetry Collection Checklist.

The titled collection should include at least 25 poems (typed or handwritten) selected from at least 25 sources published since 1970. Two of the anthologies should have 2000-02 copyrights. The collection should offer a range of poems showing many subjects, forms, and poets.

The typed preface of the collection should include a detailed, professional discussion of at least three pages of the literary criteria used in selecting the poetry for a specific child audience. (Please include the actual number of poems and sources in the preface.) A developed statement of the feeling you want to convey to children about poetry is essential. Documented quotations from class, handouts, and texts are expected.

## COMM 5000.01 - Birkman

The final part of the collection is a bibliography. Refer to A POETRY BIBLIOGRAPHY for an appropriate format. Page number and poet must be indicated.

The form of the collection should be as IMAGINATIVE AND ENTICING as it can be. Remember that "form follows function." Perhaps, pages will not be the desired medium.  
and:

"In a reading that results in a work of art, the reader is concerned with the quality of the experience that he is living through under the stimulus and guidance of the text. No one else can read the poem or the novel or the play for him. To ask someone else to experience a work of art for him would be tantamount to seeking nourishment by asking someone else to eat his dinner for him."

Louise Rosenblatt

### EAT HEARTILY AND THOUGHTFULLY:

How to eat a poem:

Don't be polite.

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice  
that may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon  
or plate or napkin or tablecloth.

For there is no core

or stem

or rind

or pit

or seed

or skin

to throw away.

Eve Merriam - Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle...pg. 15

Of course the gift to be cherished most of all is that of life itself. One's work should be a salute to life.

Sometimes I look about me with a feeling of complete dismay. In the confusion that afflicts the world today, I see disrespect for the very values of life. Beauty is all about us, but how many are blind to it! They look at the wonder of this earth--and seem to see nothing. Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that never was before and will never be again. And what do we teach our children in school? We teach them that two and two make four, and that Paris is the Capital of France. When will we also teach them what they are?

## COMM 5000.01 - Birkman

We should say to each of them: Do you know who you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all of the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed there has never been another child like you. And look at your body--what a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms, your cunning fingers, the way you move! You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven, you have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another. You must work--we all must work to make this world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals

### The following expectations will count toward your credit or grade:

Responses	30%
Poetry Collection	70%

In order to receive credit, all work must be submitted on due dates according to described guidelines. If you have any questions, please call me at 968-7094. I hope each of you will stop in my office (WH 238) to visit at least once.

Marlene Ann Birkman

"The only true gift is a portion of yourself." Emerson

### Chew on these words:

A great poet uses but the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, and without devising a single new word, gives voice to thoughts undreamed of.

--Alfred Einstein

One of the first tasks of education, then, is to return man to himself; to encourage rather than stifle awareness, to educate the emotions, the senses, the so-called autonomic systems; to help people become truly responsive and therefore truly responsible.

--George B. Leonard

One thought, everyday at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.

--Goethe

I think that the basis of literary education is poetry. Poetry is rhythm, movement. The entering of poetic rhythm into the body of the reader is very important. It is something very close to the development of an athletic skill and, as such, it can't be rushed.

--Northrup Frye

## COMM 5000.01 - Birkman

In Poetry Class:

"Explain," she said, "the difference between literal and figurative."

Well, you see, LITERAL is  
stove pipes and  
sewer lids,  
brushing your teeth,  
paper clips  
and parking permits  
bar graphs and  
plastic bags,  
boiled hot dogs,  
kitchen carpet,  
styrofoam cups,  
IN-and-OUT TRAYS.

While, FIGURATIVE is  
Marbled eyes leather hands  
          crepe paper skin  
needlepoint skies  
          marmalade summer  
          eggplant bruises  
          melon bellies  
          zucchini zeppelins  
mushroom cadavers  
          fingered trees  
MOLTEN SINGING.

Mary Brosmer

Squishy Words  
(to be said when wet)

A teacher who can	SQUIFF
arouse a feeling for	SQUIDGE
One single good action,	SQUAMOUS
one single good poem,	SQUINNY
accomplishes more	SQUELCH
than he who fills our	SQUASH
memory with rows and	SQUEEGEE
rows of natural objects,	SQUIRT
classified with name	SQUAB
and form.	

--Goethe

--Alastair Reid

It is easier in America to be discovered as a poet than to endure as one.

--Norman Holmes Pearson

## COMM 5000.01 - Birkman

MAY SARTON SAID IT: "Is there a joy except gardening that asks so much and gives so little? I know of no other except, perhaps, the writing of a poem. They are much alike, even in the amount of waste that has to be accepted for the sake of the rare, chancy joy when all goes well. And they are alike in that both are passions that bring renewal with them. But there is a difference: poetry is for all ages; gardening is one of the late joys, for youth is too impatient, too self-absorbed and usually not rooted deeply enough to create a garden."

POET STANLEY KUNITZ SAID IT: "Many of my poems come to me while I'm working in the garden. And I feel a direct flow of energy from the earth itself. When I garden, I'm deep in physical sensations and nourished by a storm of images. Gardening for me is a passionate effort to organize a little corner of the earth, which I want to redeem. The wish is to achieve control over your little plot so that it appears beautiful, distinguished--an equivalent of your signature in the natural world."

### 3. **Schedule of required readings, class preparations and assignments, lectures, discussions, student presentations, and exams:**

POETRY MENU: Read one of Heard's books. Bring with you a one-page summary and a one page response. Use documented quotations and documented paraphrasings in the summary.

#### **WEEK 1:** Introductions, Objectives, Expectations

What has been eaten?  
What is being eaten?  
Why poetry?

#### **WEEK 2:** What about this poetry eating? Allie, allie in free -- free verse

Student Renderings. Bring three poetry books from the seventies, three from the eighties, and three from the nineties. Bring a large poetry folder and a telephone directory or the page with your name on it. Read the fourteen free verse poems aloud to yourself. Choose three to read aloud to children. Record on paper at least five children's responses. Rank in order the fourteen poems from your most to least favorite.

#### **WEEK 3:** What poetry forms are possible? Concrete and found, haiku and tanka. (Bring five new poetry collections to class. Find an international, haiku, and concrete collection to bring also. Bring a loved or hated vegetable. David Clewell, Poet.

#### **WEEK 4:** Doing Poetry: The art of serving. Poetry Feast: Collections due. Course Evaluation and Conference Sign-up. POEMS.

**COMM 5000.01 - Birkman**

**4. RESOURCES:**

Texts Used: Heard, G. Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1999.

Heard, G. For the Good of the Sun and the Earth: Teaching Poetry. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1989.

Supplemental Readings: Birkman articles and bibliographies.

Visual Aids: Slides, videotapes, films.

Other: Speaker: David Clewell, Poet.  
Jan Greenberg, Writer.

**5. EVALUATION:**

- a) Term Paper:
- b) Examinations:
- c) Class participation: Yes (Renderings, Discussions)
- d) Class presentation: Yes (Renderings, Discussions)
- e) Other: Poetry Collection

**6. Supplements: N/A**

**7. 3 Hour Courses: Students taking an 8 week course for 3 credit hours will complete the following additional assignments and/or attend the following additional class meetings;**

- a. Lab**
- b. Curriculum Project**
- c. Paper(s)** a typed summary/reaction paper of at least 2 pages in length for the readings listed in the schedule above for weeks 2,3,4,5, and 7
- d. AV Project**
- e. Other**

**COMM 5000.01 - Birkman**

**8. Final Projects:**

Final projects/paper will be returned to students in the following manner:

Projects/Papers will be returned during the last meeting period.

Students should provide a self-addresses envelope (appropriate size and postage) to the instructor so project/paper can be returned. XX

**NOTE:** Papers will not be available for pick up from the School of Education - M.A.T. Office.

**This syllabus is subject to change at the direction of the instructor.  
Therefore, regular attendance is required.**

**COMM 5000.01 - Birkman and Osburg**

**POETRY COLLECTION CHECK-LIST**

Title/Format	Appropriate and Imaginative	-----
-----		
Preface	Title of collection worked into preface at beginning and ending	-----
	Audience identified (i.e. primary grades/high school)	-----
	Number of poems and sources identified (i.e. twenty-five poems from twenty-five sources)	-----
	Personal rationale	-----
	<u>Professional Rationale:</u>	
	Attention to the why of poetry in the curriculum	-----
	Vital literary elements listed with a poem title and poet cited for each (sensory language, rhythm, idea, image...)	-----
	Observations supported with authoritative, extensive documentation from texts, class notes, and hand-outs	-----
	Clear, organized, creative, detailed, three-page, typed preface	-----
-----		
Poems	Poems by "adult" poets	-----
	Variety of international poems	-----
	Variety of forms with a concentration of free verse	-----
	Variety of topics (sports, mechanical, everyday)	-----
	Variety of feelings	-----
	Variety of personae	-----
	Twenty-five typed or hand-lettered poems, complete with poet's name, from twenty-five sources coded to bibliography	-----
-----		
Bibliography	Twenty-five alphabetized sources	-----

