

# Skyline College Official Course Outline

Date: April 2007

**1. TITLE:**

Literature 225: Mirrors of Today: Contemporary Poetry  
3.0 units, 3 lecture hours per week  
Prerequisite: English 100 or English 105 or equivalent

**2. COURSE CLASSIFICATION:**

Credit course applicable to the Associate Degree

**3. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Catalog Description:**

The poetry of the last quarter of the twentieth century is both a product of and a reaction against our "postmodern condition." This course, by situating major examples of this poetry in the relevant social, intellectual, and critical contexts, clarifies the meaning and methods of contemporary poetry in English. Transfer credit: UC; CSU (C2).

**Schedule of Classes Description:**

Study of representative poetry with an emphasis on contemporary poetic techniques and themes. Reading, discussions, critical papers. Transfer: UC; CSU (C2).

**4. COURSE JUSTIFICATION:**

This course is intended for English majors for the A.A. degree and satisfies the transfer requirement for English majors for many California State Universities and Universities of California. Because contemporary poetry illuminates the concerns facing the modern individual, the works chosen are offered for an appreciation of the timeless, universal themes of the human dilemma; the impact of modern living upon those themes; and to allow study of the evolving English language. Essential for English majors, the course complements the work of social science, psychology, history, and other disciplines and offers more work in critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. The course, therefore, serves the whole student body. Transfer: UC; CSU (C2).

**5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S):**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify, analyze, and evaluate major themes and literary techniques in the reading
- Critically read, discuss, and interpret texts
- Write coherent, analytical, and original responses to course content
- Analyze various poetic techniques, including use of imagery, repetition, etc.
- Analyze and evaluate each poet's role in the development of the contemporary English language and literature

**6. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

During the course, students will be asked to:

- Analyze and synthesize the works of a variety of writers
- Understand the cultural and literary contexts of various works
- Trace the cultures' developing themes, characters, and imagery
- Understand the relevance of the various works' ideas to the present
- Compare/contrast the various works to works of others
- Read and understand the language of contemporary poets while comparing/contrasting it to Standard English

## 7. COURSE CONTENT:

The course covers a representative sample of the entire range of contemporary poetry; appropriate historical and literary backgrounds and analyses; and writing essays/research paper demonstrating independent analytical responses.

- I. Historical background and context
- II. Literary background and context
- III. The language of contemporary poetry
- IV. Universality of contemporary poetry
- V. Epic: at least one work in depth and others for discussion
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VI. Dramatic: at least one work in depth and others for discussion
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VII. Lyric: at least one work in depth and others for discussion
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VIII. Comedic: at least one work in depth and others for discussion
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- IX. Others: at least one work in depth and others for discussion
  - A. Song lyrics

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Lecture, small/large group discussion, guided readings, reading journals, critical essays, oral reports, field trips to live performances as appropriate, films, dramatic presentations, and collaborative/individual projects.

Reading assignments will cover a segment of a poem or several poems per class session, plus reading background materials, with a total of at least five. Students will keep reading journals in response to specific questions on the works.

Writing critical essays, totaling at least 2,500 words, will demonstrate understanding of the materials and independent analytical responses supported by references to the texts.

## 9. ASSIGNMENTS: Typical assignments might include the following:

Course Objective	Instructional Methods	Assignment	Method of Evaluation
Identify, analyze, and evaluate major themes in contemporary poetry	<b>Lecture:</b> Instructor gives oral presentation to introduce students to the specific works being studied—origins, themes, literary history; identifies major themes and concerns of contemporary poetry;	<b>Reading Journal:</b> Students reflect on the associations of the word “post modernism,” for example; write responses to specific questions on the texts for discussion	<b>Essays:</b> Students present written textual analyses which show understanding of the context and ideas of the works.
Critically read and interpret various poets’ works	connections with historical associations of	<b>Guided reading:</b> Students are assigned a poem or part of a poem	Essays must also present original ideas supported by references to the

<p>Analyze the language of various poets for their use of poetic techniques</p>	<p>poetry.  <b>Student Discussion:</b> Student-led oral discussions based on journal reading and structured group interaction.  <b>Guided reading in-class:</b> Students read aloud passages or entire poems. Instructor explains difficult language, highlights certain passages to critically analyze  <b>Group work:</b> Groups report on findings in their assigned poems contributing to general analyses of the works.  <b>Collaborative/individual projects:</b> Student-initiated projects related to coursework or related material (biographical/historical context, etc.)</p>	<p>to read in advance, and again in class.  <b>Group work:</b> In groups, students continue analyses modeled by instructor by preparing analysis of a poem looking for tone, rhythm, sound, imagery, etc.  <b>Collaborative/individual projects/reports:</b> Students work in groups or individually to create visual projects perhaps with the aid of media or performing or visual arts, which demonstrates understanding of coursework or background materials (biographical/historical/contextual, etc.)  <b>Exercises/homework:</b> Students will be assigned practical exercises and other brief homework activities to practice interpretive skills and contemporary interpretations of the texts.</p>	<p>texts.  <b>Oral participation:</b> Participating in and initiating discussions demonstrates understanding of the works and their contexts; also, leading discussions and participating actively in small and large group (class) discussions demonstrates how far students have developed original responses.  <b>Presentation of report or project:</b> Students will be judged on the quality of their research as well as their presentation skills.  <b>Exams and quizzes:</b> Students will be evaluated on their understanding of texts and contexts as well as on their interpretation of content.</p>
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**Suggested Out-of-class Assignments:**

- **Readings**—Selected contemporary poems and supplementary essays by scholars of contemporary poetry
- **Journals**—Written responses to questions or course materials (readings, videos, film, lectures, etc.)
- **Essays**—Write critical compositions of 500 to 1, 250 words analyzing and evaluating themes and poetic techniques in the works of various poets supported by references to the texts
- **Projects/reports**—Oral/written presentations of individual or collaborative research on relevant subjects
- **Viewing**—Students may be asked to watch/listen to a relevant videotapes, audiotapes, or other presentations with appropriate written responses and analyses

## 10. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

Letter grade will typically be based on:

**Essays**—Organized, coherent, and developed critical essays demonstrating understanding of material and presenting independent analytical responses supported by references to the texts.

**Oral participation**—Active participation in class discussions demonstrating understanding of and responses to the texts.

**Journals**—Written critical responses to assigned readings and class discussions demonstrating understanding and analyses of important concepts in the texts.

**Oral presentations/reports**—Students will be judged on the quality of their work as well as on the delivery of the information.

**Quizzes**—Students will be quizzed on comprehension of material.

**Homework/exercises**—Students will be required to practice interpreting the texts of contemporary poems in short, written exercises.

**Final exam**—Students will be required to demonstrate that they have learned to recognize, analyze, and evaluate themes and techniques in the works of contemporary poets.

## 11. RECOMMENDED or REQUIRED POETS and/or POEMS:

Maya Angelou

Billy Cousins

Donald Hall

Nikki Giovanni

Adrienne Rich

Louis Glick

Sharon Olds

Gary Soto

Richard Wilbur