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English 9150A The Senses, the Soul, and Poetic Consciousness

By the Romantic era, the subject of poetry is the poet's own soul-- its own exquisite sensations, its visions, its "emotions recollected in tranquility," as Wordsworth put it. Yet, the modern idea of a self-conscious, sensate, and thinking being began much earlier, as did its poetic expressions. In this course we will trace the development poetic self-consciousness from the late seventeenth century to the Romantics. Instead of the familiar literary and cultural history of the self and its agency, or the self and sensibility, we will track consciousness as, on the one hand, an imaginative retreat from the world into the mind, and, alternately, as co-extensive with sensory experience. Not coincidentally, nature poetry and its thematization of heightened sensory attention are crucial to this history. We will study a range of poets with an emphasis on overlooked lyric forms: ode, hymn, and reverie. The course will end with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. Our readings also include brief selections from philosophical debates about the relation of body to mind/soul and current scholarly essays.

Pedagogy

This course is a seminar: I may give a few lectures, but for the most part students engage in an intellectual conversation about the material. We will also incorporate basic mindfulness techniques (approx. 10-15 minutes each week). I will discuss the aims and benefits of mindfulness practice at our first session.

Texts

All readings will be scanned and copied for students.

Work

All written work will be submitted in electronic format only (Word or RTF). I may use plagiarism-checking software.

- 1.) Oral presentation of a reading and 5-6 page write-up. 20% of final grade. The primary aim is for you to present an informed and developed analysis of some aspect of the primary text. Focus on a synthetic close reading in an attempt to explain your take on the reading. The secondary aim is for you to spur class discussion. You will be evaluated on content and on clarity of presentation. Plan to speak in class for no more than 15-20 minutes.
- 2.) Weekly oral participation. You are expected to come to class having read the material thoroughly and to be prepared to contribute your thoughts and observations. For the first few weeks, I may send you study questions and a prompt to consider certain passages in order to help you prepare for discussion.
- 3.) Designated respondent for another student's presentation (once only). This response and your weekly participation will make up 15% of the final grade. As the designated respondent you may do any number of things: ask for clarification based on your own understanding of the reading;

present a similar or alternative reading of the text; draw us to another aspect of the reading that develops the presenter's reading; formulate a question for discussion. You will not have a copy of the student's presentation prior to your response.

4.) Research bibliography/preparation for final essay 10%

5.) Essay: approximately 15 pages or 4500-5000 words. 55% of the final grade.

Any topic and approach relevant to the course is acceptable. Style and documentation: MLA Bibliography style or *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. Late papers will be penalized except in extenuating circumstances.

Policies

No laptops or other devices in class.

Absences are unacceptable except in extenuating circumstances.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Schedule

Sept. 10 Introduction

(Group email by Sept. 15th at 5 p.m. a short excerpt that represents consciousness (poetry or narrative or non-fiction; any time period or tradition)

Sept. 17 Terms: Soul, Person, Consciousness

Aristotle, selection from *De Anima*

Locke, from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Book II, chapter 27, "Of Identity and Diversity." Read 2.27.1-9

Sept. 24 Locke's Self as Consciousness

John Locke from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "Of Identity and Diversity" Read 2.27.10-29

Raymond Martin and John Barresi, "Personal Identity," *Naturalization of the Soul* (Routledge, 2000)

Oct. 1 Inwardness

Anne Finch "A Nocturnal Reverie" and "Spleen: An Ode"

Robert van Hallberg "Thought" from *Lyric Powers* (Univ. of Chicago, 2008)

David Fairer, "The Romantic Mode," *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (Pearson, 2003)

Oct. 8

No Class

Oct. 15 The Senses and the Poetics of Nature

James Thomson, *The Seasons* "Winter"

Heather Keenleyside, "Personification for the People: On Thomson's *Seasons*" *ELH* 76. 2 (2009): 447-472.

Oct 22

James Thomson, *The Seasons* "Spring"

Reginald Gibbons, from *How Poems Think* (Univ. of Chicago, 2015)

Oct. 29

Charlotte Smith, from *Elegaic Sonnets*, "Beachy Head" **

"Charlotte Smith's Tactile Poetics," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 54.2 (Summer 2013): 215-230.

Nov. 5 Romantic Consciousness I

William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations on Immortality"; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan "The Pains of Sleep"

Noel Jackson, "Critical conditions: Coleridge, "common sense," and the literature of self-experiment" from *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge UP, 2008)

Nov. 12 Romantic Consciousness II

John Keats, "Sonnet to Sleep," "Ode on Melancholy," "Ode on Indolence," "To Autumn"

Alan Richardson, "Keats and the Glories of the Brain," *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge UP, 2001)

Nov. 19

N. Katherine Hayles, "The Cognitive Nonconscious: Enlarging the Mind of the Humanities" *Critical Inquiry* 42 (2016): 783-808.

Research refresher

Research bibliography due **Nov. 24** by midnight

Nov. 26

Individual meetings regarding final essays

Dec. 3

Conclusions and brief oral presentations of final essay work-in-progress

Essays due December 20th

Graduate Course Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year: Faculty of Music <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and the McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.