

Tel Aviv University
Walt Whitman's World
Syllabus
Spring 2020

Dr. Dara Barnat
Office: Webb 502
Tuesday 12:00-2:00

darabarnat@tauex.tau.ac.il
Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00/by appt.
Rosenberg 205

Course Description

Walt Whitman, in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), proclaimed himself to be the poet-prophet of America: "I celebrate myself, / And what I assume you shall assume." Whitman's poetry evoked great controversy, as he challenged formal and thematic boundaries, exploring democracy, race, sexuality, religion, promoting a vision for America that was in conflict over slavery and the Civil War. We will be studying, in this course, well-known and lesser-known works by Whitman, from multiple editions of *Leaves of Grass*, revised between 1855 and 1892. Moreover, we will be exploring Whitman's role in the American poetic tradition and the cultural imagination at large. Finally, we will be investigating responses to Whitman by a variety of poets and writers from the United States and beyond.

Course Procedures

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for this course. Three absences are permitted without affecting the grade, as per university regulations. After three absences, the participation grade will be brought down five points for each absence. Assignments will be accepted only if a student has been attending class on a consistent basis. Arriving late to class can count as half an absence.

If there are extenuating circumstances that require a student to miss class, such as religious holidays or *miluim*, please make arrangements to contact me in advance. In the case of absence(s), students are expected to follow the syllabus, be aware of class updates and assignments on Moodle, and come prepared for the next lesson. The resources for notes, information, and "catching up," are the Moodle site and other students in class.

Classroom Etiquette

Please respect your classmates and conduct yourself in the classroom as you would in a professional setting. It is acceptable to bring a laptop to class; however, there should be **no emailing, texting, Facebooking, Tweeting, Snapchatting**, etc. Any of these activities will be considered disrespectful to the class. If they are pursued, students can be asked to leave and receive an absence for the day. In addition, the student's participation grade may be impacted negatively.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of intentionally or unintentionally presenting another person's ideas, research, or writings as your own. This includes copying from websites and using uncited sources in your work. Academic integrity violations can result in an F on the assignment, and/or a failing grade in the course, and/or referral to the department or program.

For a comprehensive website on using sources, citation, and plagiarism refer to:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

Assignment Format

There will be guidelines for each assignment as to how it should be submitted – by email, on Moodle, as a typed document, or otherwise. This is an English-language course, so assignments are accepted in English, only. When submitting assignments by email, your name and the assignment should always appear in the subject. Papers must follow MLA style for all aspects, including formatting, in-text citations, and the works cited page. Emailed assignments are accepted as **.doc or .docx files ONLY**. Assignments submitted as PDF, .rtf, and other types of files, will not be accepted or graded. If you expect to have a problem submitting your work as a Microsoft Word file, you must contact me least two days before the assignment is due.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted, unless an extension is agreed upon in advance of the due date.

Reading Material

Much of the reading material for this course will be posted on the Moodle site by author/date; therefore, the Moodle site must be checked regularly. All reading assignments must be completed before class. Hard copies are preferred, but it is permitted to bring in the readings on any electronic device (laptop, I-Pad), except a cell phone.

* The Walt Whitman Archive is an important resource for materials on Whitman, including the various editions of *Leaves of Grass*, portraits, manuscripts, translations, and a bibliography. www.whitmanarchive.org.

* The recommended text for Whitman's writings is *Whitman: Poetry and Prose* (ed. Justin Kaplan), which includes the 1855 and "Deathbed" editions of *Leaves of Grass*.

Note: Reading quizzes may be given at any point during the semester, and readings are subject to be added and amended.

Assignments and Grading

The final course grade will include the following assignments:

1. Midterm exam (short-answer questions) 45%
2. Final essay (five-six pages) 45%
3. Attendance, preparedness, participation 10%

* Instructions for each assignment will be posted on the Moodle site, as well as discussed in class.

* It is the student's responsibility to check the Moodle site regularly for announcements, assignments, updates, and material.

Course Schedule – March 8th-June 26th (subject to be amended)

March 17th

Topics:

Introduction to Walt Whitman and *Leaves of Grass*

Portraiture of Whitman (whitmanarchive.org)

Sherman Alexie, "Defending Walt Whitman"

The 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and "Song of Myself"

Assignments: Read the 1855 "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass* (Moodle)

March 24th

Topics:

The Transcendentalist movement/Ralph Waldo Emerson's response to Whitman

1855 *Leaves of Grass*

Discuss the 1855 "Preface"

"Song of Myself"

Assignment: Read the 1855 edition of "Song of Myself" in full (Moodle)

March 31st

Topics:

"Song of Myself" cont.

Assignment: Finish the 1855 "Song of Myself" and read the other 1855 selections from *Leaves of Grass* (Moodle)

*** Sunday, April 5th (Tuesday classes on Sunday)**

Topics:

1855 edition cont.

"Song of Myself"

"A Song for Occupations"

"The Sleepers"

"I Sing the Body Electric"

From: "Whitman's Physical Eloquence," M. Jimmie Killingsworth

Assignments: Read 1860 selections for next class (Moodle)

- PASSOVER BREAK -

April 21st

Topics:

1860 edition

“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”

“Enfans D’Adam” (Children of Adam)

Calamus poems

MIDTERM EXAM STUDY GUIDE POSTED – MOED ALEPH

Assignments: Read 1860 selections for next class (Moodle)

April 28th – NO CLASS**May 5th**

Topics:

1860 poems, cont.

Assignments: Read the 1867 selections from *Leaves of Grass* (Moodle)

May 12th

Topics:

1867 edition – “The Dresser”

PBS American Experience: *Walt Whitman*

Assignment: Read the 1867 selections for next class (Moodle)

May 19th

Topics:

PBS American Experience: *Walt Whitman* cont.

1867 edition cont. – “O Captain! My Captain!”

Assignments: Read the 1867 selections for next class (Moodle)

Friday, May 22nd – MIDTERM EXAM MOED ALEPH

May 26th

Topics:

1867 edition

“When Lilacs Last In the Door-yard Bloom’d”

Selections from WhitmanWEB: <https://iwp.uiowa.edu/whitmanweb/en/writings/civil-war/week-1/the-million-dead>

Assignments: Read the Deathbed Edition selections for next class (Moodle)

June 2nd

Topics:

1891-92 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (Deathbed Edition)

“So Long”

Whitman’s revisions: Comparing the 1855 and 1891-92 “Song of Myself”

MIDTERM EXAM STUDY GUIDE POSTED – MOED BET

Assignments: Read selections for next class (Moodle)

June 9th

Topics: Whitman’s Influence

“A Pact,” Ezra Pound

“A Supermarket in California,” Allen Ginsberg

“I, Too, Sing America,” “Old Walt,” Langston Hughes

From: “Whitman’s Multitudinous Poetic Progeny: Particular and Puzzling Instances,” James E. Miller, Jr.

*** Final essay assigned (Moodle)**

Assignments: Read selections for next class, final essay

June 16th

Topics:

“For the Sake of the People’s Poetry,” June Jordan (essay)
Selections by Adonis

Assignments: Read selections for next class, final essay (Moodle)

Friday, June 19th – MIDTERM EXAM MOED BET

June 23rd

Topics:

Walt Whitman in popular culture (television, comics, music, etc.)

Course review

Assignments: Final essay due July 26th