

COURSES FOR ATHENA SCHOLARS

English 10N02 Section LA1

Thinking Through Poetry

T F 2:10-3:25 p.m. Registration Code: 88708

Danielle Blau

Poetry and philosophy have a long history of being set at odds with one another. Plato wrote about “the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” in his book *The Republic* and banished the poet from his utopia: Poetry is dangerous to society, he claimed, because it has the power to persuade us by way of our emotions when we ought to be persuaded by force of reason alone. Some twenty-three centuries later, the poet Randall Jarrell questioned the aesthetic integrity of poetry with any ulterior intellectual motives and spoke of the philosophical poet’s “elevated and methodical but forlorn and absurd air as he works away at his flying tank, his sewing-machine that also plays the piano.” In this course, though, we will explore the ways in which poets and analytic philosophers have far deeper affinities than either tend to admit and—in an effort to do away with a long-standing, unnecessary divide between the realm of feeling on the one hand, thought on the other—learn to revel in what the poet Wallace Stevens celebrated as “the passion of thinking.” Through close readings of a wide selection of poems paired with short philosophy excerpts, we will investigate the same big questions asked in college-level metaphysics classes, comparing a range of intuitions—about e.g., reality, consciousness, personal identity, death, time, free will, the problem of evil—as they have been passionately felt and thoughtfully probed in poetry and logical argumentation across the centuries.

Texts will include poetry by A. R. Ammons, W. H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, William Blake, Louise Bogan, William Bronk, Suzanne Buffam, Emily Dickinson, John Donne, Emily Fragos, Zbigniew Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marianne Moore, Novalis, Sylvia Plath, William Shakespeare, Mark Strand, Susan Wheeler, as well as excerpts from “Ecclesiastes” and Plato’s dialogue, “The Phaedrus.” Critical readings will include T. S. Eliot’s “The Metaphysical Poets” as well as essays by Harold Bloom, Stephen Burt, Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, and excerpts from Randall Jarrell’s “A Sad Heart at the Supermarket” and Wallace Stevens’ “The Necessary Angel.”

English 25039 Section HC1 and 01

Narrative Medicine: From Classic Works of Scientific Narration to Contemporary Medical-Case Studies

Group D, European traditions

Mondays, 9:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Registration Code: 80881

Danielle Spencer

This course will offer an introduction to the field of Narrative Medicine and scientific writing. Material will include historical and contemporary case studies, from the ground-breaking studies in psychic distress and hysteria authored by Freud and the sensational Victorian case of “The Elephant Man” (a real-life story made into a 1977 play by Bernard Pomerance and a 1980 movie by David Lynch) to the contemporary humanistic writings of Oliver Sacks, Atul Gawande, and Danielle Ofri. We will read critical and creative works by such authors as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Rita Charon, Richard Selzer, Anatole Broyard, Joan Didion, Tod Chambers, Arthur Frank, Aleksander Hemon, and others. The class also will explore the various means by which issues in medicine, healthcare, science, and ethics may be addressed and developed in different narrative genres, including works of film and theater (for example, the 1984 documentary *Dax’s Case: Who Should Decide?*, which raises the issue of whether a patient has the right to refuse treatment, and Margaret Edson’s 1999 award-winning play *Wit*, which concerns a middle-aged professor’s ordeal with terminal cancer.) Topics to be considered include: How do physicians and scientists narrate pain? What are the different ways in which we analyze medical evidence? How does the way that a medical case is told shape our interpretation, opinion, and ethical judgment? What is the responsibility of the scientist in society, and how might we expand and enrich the communication between those conducting scientific research and their peers as well as with the lay

public? Students will have the opportunity to write about their own scientific and medical research projects where applicable. Course requirements: Short written assignments, one-mid term paper, a final paper and class presentation.