

## MODERNIST POETRY AND POETICS: THE OBJECTIVIST POEM

English 6389 - Fall 2002  
T 7:05-9:45 (Poetry Alcove, MB 4th)  
Dr. Kenneth Sherwood MB 429  
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[www.utpb.edu/courses/sherwood/engl6389F02](http://www.utpb.edu/courses/sherwood/engl6389F02)



### **Course Description**

This course will focus on the work of Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Lorine Niedecker, Charles Reznikoff, and Basil Bunting--poets whose work has been categorized as Objectivist by literary history. Influenced by Pound and Williams, this "group" of writers nearly became a footnote to Imagism until a resurgence of interest stimulated by poet-critics influenced by their work in the 1970s. We will explore Objectivist poetics, reflecting on whether there are common principles shared between the five poets by looking first at the "Objectivist" issue of Poetry (Chicago) from which the identifying adjective emerged. As we read the primary texts of these poets, we will draw upon companion essays in The Objectivist Nexus, which will stimulate us to think about the poets' relation to the cultural moment and the reception of their work. An important component of the course will be additional critical readings on such topics as the "canon," "representation," "culture," and "influence." These will stimulate further questions relevant to these poets but also to literary study in general: What constitutes a literary movement? What kinds of authorial performances lend themselves to canonization? How might literary criticism evaluate formally innovative or indeterminate texts? The aim will be to facilitate a meta-critical discussion that deepens students' appreciation for this group of poets but also contributes directly to their overall development of graduate-level critical skills. Conducted in a seminar format, the course will require students to do independent research and participate in the "teaching" of the class. A final seminar paper will culminate a sequence of research, short-essay, and response-writing assignments.

### **Required Texts**

*(for purchase at UTPB bookstore)*

- ❑ Zukofsky, Louis. "A". Johns Hopkins
- ❑ Zukofsky, Louis. Complete Short Poetry. Johns Hopkins
- ❑ Oppen, George. The Collected Poems of George Oppen. New Directions
- ❑ Niedecker, Lorine. Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works. U California Press
- ❑ Blau Duplessis, Rachel and Peter Quartermain eds. The Objectivist Nexus : Essays in Cultural Poetics U Alabama
- ❑ McLaughlin, Thomas and Frank Lentricchia, eds. Critical Terms for Literary Study University of Chicago

*(electronic editions)*

- ❑ Reznikoff, Charles. Testimony: The United States, 1885-1915, Volume 1 (1978), Testimony: The United States (1885-1915): Recitative, Volume 2 (1979), Black Sparrow \*
- ❑ Reznikoff, Charles. Poems 1918-1975: The Complete Poems of Charles Reznikoff (1989), Black Sparrow Press. \*
- ❑ Bunting, Basil. Complete Poems (2000), Bloodaxe Books. \*

*(\*available through a UTPB database: LION, Chadwyck Healy. Select Individual Literature Collection, 20th C. American Poetry; 20th C. British Poetry)*

## **Other Resources**

- ❑ Course website and discussion board:  
<http://www.utpb.edu/courses/sherwood/engl6389F02>
- ❑ "Man and Poet" series volumes on Zukofsky, Oppen, Reznikoff, Niedecker, and Bunting.
- ❑ Firstsearch: MLA Bibliography\*
- ❑ LION (Chadwyck-Healy, 20th C poetry collections and limited criticism archive)\*
- ❑ Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism (terms defined)  
[http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins\\_guide\\_to\\_literary\\_theory/](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/)
- ❑ XRefer (Humanities Reference E-library, includes Oxford companions to Art, Language, English Literature, and Philosophy) [www.xrefer.com](http://www.xrefer.com)
- ❑ JSTOR (Journal Storage: Searchable, full-text archive)\*
- ❑ Project Muse (Hopkins searchable, full-text journal archive)\*
- ❑ Gale Research (Dictionary of Literary Biography and other databases)\*
- ❑ EPC - Electronic Poetry Center (web index) [epc.buffalo.edu](http://epc.buffalo.edu)
- ❑ MAPS - Modern American Poetry (critical excerpts, companion to Oxford Modern American Poetry) <http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/>
- ❑ Factory School (Web audio archive of spoken word poetry)  
<http://www.factoryschool.org/content/poetry/>

(\*Access UTPB library databases [http://www.utpb.edu/library/alphabetical\\_list.html](http://www.utpb.edu/library/alphabetical_list.html). Off-campus access requires direct dial-up or proxy service. For more information see <http://www.utpb.edu/library/remote.html>)

## **Expectations, Workload, and Help**

This will be a challenging, graduate-level college course. At the graduate level, students are expected to be able to handle a moderately heavy reading load; they should read for mastery, coming to class with a provisional understanding of material, ready to share their ideas and offer questions. This seminar will integrate poetry, criticism, and theory; the combination is designed to help graduate students develop sophisticated critical skills, irrespective of their specialization. Students will seek out secondary critical sources to deepen their understanding of the poetry; they should be

ready to engage in the reexamination of some long-accepted and, perhaps, unconscious critical paradigms with which they are quite comfortable. Students are encouraged to meet with me for extra help or to discuss ways to enhance their learning.

Office Hours	Tuesday	Thursday
9:00-9:30	<i>Office</i>	9:00-9:30 <i>Office</i>
9:30-10:45	Ethnic Lit	9:30-10:45 Ethnic Lit
11:00-12:15	English Lang	11:00-12:15 English Lang
12:30-2:30	<i>Office</i>	12:30-1:30 <i>Office</i>
6:30-7:00	<i>Office</i>	
7:05-9:45	Modernist Poetry	
9:45-10:15	<i>Office (classroom)</i>	

### **Grade Distribution and Deadlines**

<b>30% - Participation</b>  Includes weekly web-posts.	Active questioning, argument, reflection, listening, and reading are assumed. Demonstrate your engagement with the material orally and/or through weekly (informal) posts to the discussion group.
<b>50% - Essay</b>  Draft - 11/5 Revision - 12/3	A developed argument treating the work of one author; it should reflect knowledge of course themes and critical issues; it must effectively incorporate appropriate secondary sources in advancing an "original" proposition.
<b>20% - Final</b>	Comprehensive assessment; short essays; open book.
<b>Attendance</b>	Attendance is assumed. Beyond two absences, the student's final average will be reduced 5% points per absence, including the first two. A student who misses more than three classes, will receive no higher than a "C" for the semester; a student who misses more than five classes will automatically fail the course.

#### **□ About: the Web Board**

Our class has an online discussion area accessible from my web page (<http://www.utpb.edu/courses/sherwood/engl6389F02>), which will also feature links to relevant resources. You should offer at least one, 150-word post of thoughtful writing each week. Address the texts themselves, points raised in class discussion/lecture, or the ongoing web conversation. You may make an argumentative claim or raise a thoughtful question. Consider it an electronic twin to our classroom discussion, with the advantage that you can work out your thoughts before "sending".

Work with your classmates, reading their posts and responding, and you may gain further: picking up ideas for your paper or clarifying your knowledge of a text. I will browse your postings and occasionally participate in the discussion, but I will not grade each individual post. Participate weekly; you should not expect to make up for missed postings in the final week of class.

### **Miscellaneous Policies**

#### **❑ Make-up work**

Successful mastery of course material requires students to complete assignments in a timely fashion. Make-up work does not serve the learning process and so will not be permitted, except for tests missed because of family emergency or severe illness. Writing assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due; the grade of a late paper will be reduced by a letter-grade for each day or portion of a day it is late; after four days, a grade of F will pertain, though the student should still submit a paper in order to avoid getting a zero. Should you unavoidably miss a class, be sure to convey any assignment to me: leave it in my HFA-office mailbox; use a classmate as courier; email it (sherwood\_k@utpb.edu); or fax 552-3280.

#### **❑ Computer breakdown and other exigencies**

Make paper and back-up copies of work done on computers. Begin work in advance of deadlines, so that you have time to troubleshoot disk errors, virus alerts, printer problems, etc. I know intimately how unreliable technology can be, but you are responsible for submitting work despite the gremlins and Murphy's Law.

#### **❑ Cheating, Plagiarism, and Collusion (See UTPB Policy below)**

Scholastic Dishonesty is a serious matter. I am savvy and vigilant in detecting students who use unattributed web sources, "collaborate" with fellows students, or utilize other "clever" methods to enhance their grades. Take the grade you honestly earn on an assignment. Should a classmate attempt to use your work, refuse; I make no distinction between cheaters and those who aid them.

#### **UTPB Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty**

*Students are expected to be above reproach in all scholastic activities. Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the university. 'Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.'* Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the university, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced--Student Discipline for Scholastic Dishonesty: A Guide for Administrators, Faculty, and Hearing Officers (28).

See also: [www.utpb.edu/UTPB\\_Student/Students/StudentLife/StudentService\\_Other/StudentGuide/main\\_student\\_guide.htm](http://www.utpb.edu/UTPB_Student/Students/StudentLife/StudentService_Other/StudentGuide/main_student_guide.htm)

#### **❑ Cell Phones**

Please silence cell phones and beepers during class time.

## WEEKLY READINGS

Week 1 (T) 8/22	Introduction
Week 2 (T) 8/27 <input type="checkbox"/> "Introduction" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Altieri "Objectivist Tradition" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Hatlen, "Poetics of Marginality" <u>Nexus</u>	<u>Poetry: A Magazine of Verse</u> (Feb 1931) ["Objectivist" Issue, special ed. Zukofsky](xerox)
Week 3 (T) 9/3 <input type="checkbox"/> "Author" <u>CTLS</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Finkelstein, "Tradition and Modernity" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview (x)	Reznikoff I - [Short pieces] <u>Poems 1918-1975</u> (Especially: <i>I step into the fishy pool, On Brooklyn Bridge, The shopgirls, I walked through the lonely marsh, How shall we mourn, My work done, In the shop, Epidemic, Old men, The house-wreckers, The Hebrew of your poets, My Grandfather, Similes, I will write songs, Let other people come</i> ) and [long poem]"Uriel Acosta" (sections 1-48)
Week 4 (T) 9/10 <input type="checkbox"/> Golding, "George Oppen's Serial Poems" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> "Representation" <u>CTLS</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview (x)	Oppen I - <u>Discrete Series</u> , Image of the Engine, From Disaster, Product, The Source, Chartres, The Crowded Countries, Survival Infantry, The Forms of Love, The Zulu Girl, Pro Nobis,
Week 5 (T) 9/17 <input type="checkbox"/> "Interpretation" <u>CTLS</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Heller, "Objectivists in the Thirties" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Interview (x)	Zukofsky I - <u>Complete Short Poetry</u> (Especially: <b><i>Poem Beginning 'The'</i></b> , <i>Not much more, Ferry, Stubbing the cloud-fields, Cars once steel, Song Theme (23), It's a gay li-fe, Crickets'/thickets, To my wash-stand, 23 The Immediate Aim (1-3), 24 This Fall 1933, 27 Song-3/4 time, Mantis, Mantis: An interpretation, When the crickets, What are these songs, It is hard to think of a sea, I walk in the old street, Can a mote, The men in the kitchens, Strange, Belly Locks,</i>
Week 6 (T) 9/24 <input type="checkbox"/> Seed, "Irrelevant Objects" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Homberger, "Communists and Objectivists" <u>Nexus</u>	Bunting I - Villon, Attis, Aus dem zweiten, The Well of Lycopolis, the Spoils, Please stop gushing, Verse and Version, Narcis my numerous cancellations.
Week 7 (T) 10/1 <input type="checkbox"/> Middleton, "Niedecker's Folk Base" <u>Nexus</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Influence, <u>CTLS</u>	Niedecker I - Next Year, <u>New Goose</u> , <u>New Goose Manuscript</u> , <u>Homemade/Handmade Poems</u>

<p>Week 8 (T) 10/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ "Figurative Language" <u>CTLS</u></li> <li>❑ "Canon" <u>CTLS</u></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Intermission</b></p> <p><b>Revisiting of All Authors - Discussion of Essay Topics</b></p>
<p>Week 9 (T) 10/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Bernstein, "Reznikoff's Nearness" <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ Franciosi, "Reading Reznikoff" <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ Influence, <u>CTLS</u></li> </ul>	<p>Reznikoff II - <u>Testimony</u>. (Especially vol. 2, Recitative, "The West"). "Early History of a Writer" (parts 16-19).</p>
<p>Week 10 (T) 10/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Fredman, "And All Now is War," <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ Nicholls, Of Being Ethical, <u>Nexus</u></li> </ul>	<p>Oppen II - Quotations, A Narrative, To C.T., World World, <b>Of Being Numerous</b>, Route, Song The Winds of Downhill, The Speech at Soli, Semite, The Lighthouses, Res Publica</p>
<p>Week 11 (T) 10/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Crozier, "Zukofsky's List" <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ "Culture" <u>CTLS</u></li> </ul>	<p>Zukofsky II - "A" 1-3, 7, 8</p>
<p>Week 12 (T) 11/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Altieri, "The Transformations of Objectivism" <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ Intention, <u>CTLB</u></li> </ul>	<p>Zukofsky III - "A" 9, 12, 22</p>
<p>Week 13 (T) 11/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Peer Essays</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Peer Revision</b></p>
<p>Week 14 (T) 11/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ di Manno, "Land's End" <u>Nexus</u></li> <li>❑ Culture, <u>CTLS</u></li> </ul>	<p>Bunting II - Chomei at Toyama, Brigglatte,</p>
<p>Week 15 (T) 11/26</p>	<p>Niedecker II - <u>North Central</u>, <u>Harpsichord and Salt Fish</u>.</p>
<p>Week 16 (T) 12/3</p> <p><b>Revised Essays Due</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Conclusion</b></p>