I. What Does It Mean To Dwell Poetically?

Is God unknown? Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend to believe. Such is man’s measure. Well deserving, yet poetically man dwells on this earth

Readings: Hölderlin, *In lovely Blue*  

II. What is the Measure of Human Being?

A man thought the gods deigned not to punish mortals who trampled down the delicacy of things inviolable. That man was wicked.

Readings: Aeschylus, *Oresteia*  
Plato, *Republic*, Book IV

III. The Death of the Gods & The Birth of Freedom?

“Zeus: What will they make of it?  
Orestes: What they choose. They’re free; and human life begins on the far side of despair.”

Readings: Jean Paul Sartre, *The Flies*  
Jean Paul Sartre, “On Existentialism”

IV. Freedom for Whom?

"I have another duty equally sacred. . . . My duty to myself."

Readings: Ibsen *A Doll’s House*  
V. The Birth and Death of Tragedy?

“Come, God -- Bromius, Bacchus, Dionysus -- burst into life, burst into being, be a mighty bull, a hundred-headed snake, a fire-breathing lion. Burst into smiling life, oh Bacchus!”

Euripides

Readings:  
Euripides, *The Bacchae*  
Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

VI. The Birth and Death of Man?

“When God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything. Make a machine. And a machine to make the machine. And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it.”

McCarthy

Readings:  
Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*  
Simone Weil, *The Iliad, Or the Poem of Force*  
John Gray, “Hobbes & McCarthy”

VII. Perhaps there is Something in the Land, Work and Friendship?

“The two families, sundered in the ruin of a friendship, were united again first in new friendship and then in marriage. My grandfather made a peace here that has joined many who would otherwise have been divided. I am the child of his forgiveness.”

Wendell Berry

Readings:  
Wendell Berry, *Fidelity*  
Wendell Berry, “Compromise Hell” and “The Unsettling of America”

VIII. Perhaps Dwelling Is Merely Absurd?

“But too many people now climb onto the cross merely to be seen from a greater distance, even if they have to trample somewhat on the one who has been there so long.”

Camus

Readings:  
Albert Camus, *The Fall*  
Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*
IX. And What, Now, of Dwelling Poetically?

“Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms, To grasp the father's ray, itself, with our own hands, And to offer to the people The heavenly gift wrapt in song, For only if we are pure in heart, Like children, are our hands innocent.

Hölderlin

“But if he must, the man remains fearless. Alone before god, simplicity keeps him safe. He needs no weapons and no cunning, As long as God’s absence comes to his aid

Hölderlin

“Man seeks to articulate his purpose both in an overly subjective and an overly objective state … Yet this purpose can be attained only in a sacred, divine feeling, one that is beautiful because it is neither simply agreeable and fortunate, neither simply sublime and strong, nor simply unified and tranquil, but which is all of these simultaneously – a feeling which is transcendental and where a pure, formal mood has been distilled from it that encompasses life in its entirety.”

Hölderlin

Course Objectives

First, as you can see from the syllabus we begin and end this course with Heidegger’s famous utterances on language and Being, based on Hölderlin’s writings on poets and poetry. Thus, the first question we encounter, and a question we will continue to encounter throughout the semester, is the following: what is the relationship between being, the poetic and politics? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we must examine what precisely is meant by poetics and how poetics is related to being. And, what do either have to do with politics? Second, as you can also see, the syllabus continues this reflection on poetry and being by examining a selection of poetic writings with parallel philosophical discussions, each in their own part concerned with an important aspect of human being. Thus, we engage in the exercise of “thinking” about what it means to think poetically/philosophically about being. This will require that we spend some considerable time reflecting on the nature of mythos and logos. Third, and finally, the particular form of being with which we are concerned is the political. Here we diverge considerably from Heidegger and attempt to come to some understanding of what it means to dwell politically and what this being is who does the dwelling, namely the human being.

Course Requirements:

1. Reflections: At the conclusion of each of the first eight sections each of you will be required to write and hand in a 1-2 page set of reflections on the relevant poetic/philosophical/political readings and class discussions. It is expected that these reflections on your part will be cumulative in nature, building on what you have read and reflected upon in previous sections. It is also expected that your thoughts will vary considerably depending on where you are in your own educational journey. These reflections will be due one week after a section is completed and, combined, will be worth 30% of your grade in the course. The final copy of the reflections will be due no later than Saturday, December 8, at 2:30 pm. Printed in 12 pitch, double-spaced format.

2. Two semester examinations, only one of which will count. These will occur at about the 1/3 and 2/3 marks of the semester. Everyone in the class must take the first of these; you may choose whether you wish to take the second. You may take the higher grade for the two exams. The examination will count for 30% of your grade in the course.

3. Final project: In lieu of a final exam, or what in effect is your final exam, you will write a final project of no less than 10 pages (Printed in 12 pitch/double-spaced) in length on a poetic/philosophical/political reading(s) that we do not cover in the course. (Graduate students are expected to write longer projects.) In every case, your selection of a set of readings to cover in this assignment must be approved in advance. It is important that you begin this project early in the semester, most assuredly by the mid-semester point. This final project will count for 40% of your course grade and it will be due no later than Friday, November 30 at class time.

Reflections = 30%
Exam = 30%
Final Project = 40%
Readings:

The readings are listed on the syllabus. Some are books that I have asked you to purchase, either at local book stores and/or via Amazon or other on-line book sellers. Others are links to internet versions of the readings, such as the assigned selections from Plato’s Republic or Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan. Still others will be readings that I provide for you. These will be posted on Moodle, as will the links to internet versions mentioned above. I will, on occasion, add or suggest other readings as we progress through the semester.

Moodle:

I will make some limited use of Moodle for this course, first, by posting the syllabus and, second, by posting the internet addresses of other readings as well as copies of some readings that are not otherwise available. There will be a grade book published on Moodle as well.

Attendance:

I do not take attendance and there is no specific attendance grade for this course. However, I hasten to add that doing well in the course is very dependent on your continual participation in the conversation we are going to have about the way we think, use the language, and “dwell poetically” as well as politically.” In short, our discussions are going to be cumulative and participating in them at a meaningful level will require a commitment on your part to attend class on a regular basis, do the readings in a timely manner, and engage the material with utmost seriousness.

Office Hours:

My schedule this semester will be MWF. I will be in my office at 9 AM each day and available until I teach at 10:30. In between my 10:30 class and this one at 12:30, I will be free. You may join me for lunch if you wish, to discuss concerns of the course. If you have a special reason to meet with me after our class, I’ll stay and talk to you then as well, although usually I will leave for the day around 2:00 pm. My Office is in 237 Stubbs. Email = poeubk@lsu.edu.