

The art of losing's not too hard to master.
—Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"

1a	M	May	26	John Milton (1608-1674) Sonnet: Methought I saw
1b	M	May	26	Alexander Pope (1688-1744) Epistle II: To a Lady (Price, 138) Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (Price, 149)
2	W		28	The Rape of the Lock Episode of Sarpedon (hand-out)
	W		28	Email me with any questions about the Essay Guide or simply to say you have read and understood all.
3	F		30	Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady (Price, 71) Eloisa to Abelard (Price, 74)
William Wordsworth (1770-1850)				
4a	M	June	2	Nutting (130 in Norton) ; Tintern Abbey (65)
*	M		2	<i>first essay opportunity due (on Pope)</i>
4b	M		2	The 1805 Prelude, book 11.258-397 (pp. 353-56 in Norton) book 1.1-304
5a.	W		4	The Prelude, books 1 (305-426) and 2 (1-303); Intimations Ode (434)
5b	W		4	The Prelude, book 4; (361-504) Resolution and Independence (397)
	F		6	[No class today; due today is an email from you stating that you have read and understood the Essay Guide—or asking for any clarifications you need.]
6a	M		9	The Prelude, book 5; Elegiac Stanzas (430); Surprised by Joy (528)
6b				The Prelude, book 6 (452-580)

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

7a	W	June	11	T.S. Eliot: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock [Eliot and Yeats in handout] La Figlia che Piange Preludes W.B. Yeats: When You Are Old Adam's Curse The Cold Heaven The Wild Swans at Coole
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- 7b W June 11 **T.S. Eliot:** Journey of the Magi
The Waste Land: The Burial of the Dead
W.B. Yeats: The Magi
Sailing to Byzantium
Among School Children
- * Th 12 *second essay opportunity due* (on Wordsworth)
[If you did not take the first opportunity, you must take the second.]
- 8a F 13 **T.S. Eliot:** The Waste Land: II. A Game of Chess
III. The Fire Sermon
W.B. Yeats: A Dialogue of Self and Soul
Vacillation
Long-Legged Fly
News for the Delphic Oracle
Crazy Jane and the Bishop
- 8b F 13 **T.S. Eliot:** Gerontion [handout]
The Waste Land: IV. Death by Water
V. What the Thunder Said
W.B. Yeats: John Kinsella's Lament
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death
In Memory of Major Robert Gregory
A Coat
Easter 1916
Man and the Echo
Municipal Gallery Revisited
- 9 M 16 **T.S. Eliot:** Marina
Ash Wednesday
W.B. Yeats: A Prayer for My Daughter
The Circus Animals' Desertion
Lapis Lazuli
- 10a W June 16 **Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)**
Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)
- Bishop:** Man Moth (16)
The Monument (25)
Over 2,000 Illustrations. . . (57)
The Bight
- Brooks:** Kitchenette Building
The Mother (21)
The Funeral (26)
The Preacher: Ruminates. . . (31)
The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith (42)
- * Th 19 *third essay opportunity due* (on Eliot or Yeats or Eliot and Yeats)

- 11a. F 20 **Bishop:** At the Fishhouses (62)
Cape Breton (65)
Armadillo (101)
- Brooks:** The Children of the Poor (115)
The Rites for Cousin Vit (125)
- 11b F 20 **Bishop:** The Weed
The Moose (193)
First Death in Nova Scotia
The Filling Station
The Riverman (100)
In the Waiting Room (179)
- Brooks:** The Lovers of the Poor (349)
Bronzeville Woman in a Red Hat (367)
The Ballad of Rudolph Reed (376)
- 12a F 20 **Bishop:** The Filling Station
Crusoe in England (182)
The Moose (189)[again]
One Art (198)
- Brooks:** Medgar Evers (440)
The Sermon on the Warpland (451)
The Second Sermon on the Warpland (453)
Riot (470)
The Third Sermon on the Warpland (472)
An Aspect of Love
- 12b F 20 **Bishop:** Santarem (207)
North Haven (210)
Edgar Allen Poe and the Juke Box (284)
- Brooks:** A Bronzeville Mother Loiters. . . (333)
The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till (340)
Natalie Diaz (1978-): Asterion handout
- * F June 20 *fourth essay due* (on Bishop or Bishop and Brooks) [You may freely take till Sunday, June 22, if you announce by Friday, June 20 what poem or poem you are working on.]

- 13 M 23 **Louise Glück (1943-)**
Jericho Brown (1976-)
- Glück:** Grandmother in the Garden 20
Portrait of the Queen in Tears 23
Nurse's Song 29
Letter from Our Man in Blossomtime 31
Cottonmouth Country 41
Gretel in Darkness 61
Archipelago 63
The Magi 64
To Autumn 70
Departure 77
Abishag 84
- Brown:** Another Elegy [Expect death] handout
Herman Finley is Dead handout
To Be Seen handout
Ganymede 5
- * Tu 24 *fourth essay opportunity (on Bishop or Brooks)*
- 14a. W 25 **Glück:** Love Poem 87
The Garden 102
Aphrodite 133
Mock Orange 147
The Triumph of Achilles 159
Widows 208
Lost Love 211
The Untrustworthy Speaker 216
Celestial Music 240
- Brown:**
The Microscopes 8
The Tradition 10
White Lilies 13
Foreday in the Morning 14
- 14b W June 25 **Glück:** *: The Wild Iris 245
Matins [The sun shines] 246
Matins [Unreachable father] 247
Lamium 249
Matins [Forgive me] 255
Retreating Wind 258
The Garden 259
April 262
Witchgrass 264
Vespers [I don't wonder] 284
Vespers [Even as you appeared] 285
Harvest 288
Retreating Light 292
- Brown:**
Bullet Points 16
Night Shift 35
Shovel 36
The Long Way 38

- 15a F 27 **Glück:** The White Lilies 303
 Quiet Evening 309
 Departure
 Ithaca 315
 Telemachus' Fantasy 339
 Nostos 342
 Circe's Torment 344
 Vita Nova [You saved me] 363
 The Golden Bough 395
 Nest 399
 Lament 410
 Vita Nova [In the splitting-up dream] 412
- Brown:** Duplex [I begin with love] 49
 The Virus 55
 Turn You Over 54
- 15b F 27 This is our "final examination" (of the poets)
- Glück:** Night Migrations 489
 October 493
 Persephone the Wanderer 501
 Prism 505
 Landscape 524
 A Myth of Innocence 532
 Persephone the Wanderer 552
 Twilight 559
 Harvest: It's Autumn 597
 Twilight 559
 A Village Life 625
- Brown:** Dark 67
 Duplex [Don't accuse me] 68
 Stand 71
 Duplex Cento [My last love] 72
- * Sat June 28 *fifth essay opportunity due*, concerning Glück and Brown; if you have already written one comparative essay, this one could concern Glück *or* Brown.

MEETING TIMES: The designated meeting time for this class is M,W, F 1:00-3:30, not 1:00-3:15. The extra fifteen minutes beyond what another MWF summer class may involve is so that we can imagine each M,W, and F as consisting of two classes with a short break in between.

SYLLABUS: This particular incarnation of "the new 126" is an attempt to hold on to something of the greatness of the old 126 while also capturing something of the exciting expansiveness of the new—and that within the span of five wonderfully packed weeks!. The old course, a noble tradition at Yale for many decades, was a course in "major poets," and was distinguished from analogous courses at other universities by the concentration on a limited number of poets. No one thought these were the only poets worth studying, but there was a general consensus that each of the very few studied in this foundational course occupied so large a space in the imagination of successors that it was important to know these well in order to understand what came after them. For most sections, for most decades, that meant only four poets: Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, and Eliot (later, Eliot or Yeats). For fifty years, I myself taught it as a course in *five* poets, the fifth being a living poet, though that poet changed as one after another of the great living poets we studied passed away. A fundamental principle of that course was that close reading of the very greatest, canonical writers, allowed for depth that a broader survey, hopping from poet to poet, would not. "The new 126" acknowledges how problematic the

notion of *canon* is and how much larger is the library of great writing from which a limited selection can be made. In order to preserve the virtues of concentration but allow for the expansion of the field of study, we will shift, after Wordsworth, from reading just one poet at a time, for a sustained number of sessions, to reading two poets at a time, but keeping to a sustained number of sessions for each poet.

BOOKS: Books for this course have been ordered through The Yale Bookstore. Our class will be using the Signet Pope, ed. Martin Price, with an introduction by Christopher R. Miller; the Norton Wordsworth, ed. Nicholas Halmi; *Poems* (the 2011 edition) by Elizabeth Bishop; *Poems 1962-2012*: by Louise Glück, and *The Tradition* (2019) by Jericho Brown. To keep costs down, we will read Eliot, Yeats, and Brooks in packet form (see under "Files" on this Canvas site). Texts of *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* will be available in the Yale Bookstore as "recommended" for the course, but there will be no copies of Brooks's *Blacks*, which is out of print and only available in expensive used editions. Students who want to "do it right" and acquire books but need help financing the venture should contact me.

CLASSES AND PREPARATION FOR THEM: Please do not save the reading for this course for the night before it is due! *Work ahead*, and reserve a last seating before class for selective rereading. The reading are not long in terms of number of pages, but they require high concentration and rereading.

Attend class faithfully, and always come prepared. There is no such thing as an "excused absence" (having a family obligation should be treated the same way as a bout of illness or staying up too late the night before), so you should do three things if you miss a class for any reason—even a COVID affliction or a death in the family: (1) if you have not already done so before missing the class, make up the reading; (2) write a brief essay (a page and a half is sufficient) discussing some specific difficulty in the fourth quarter of the assignment; this you should submit as soon as possible after the class missed; (3) contact another member of the class and find out what we talked about. These make-up procedures are designed for your benefit, not as punitive measures; if you must miss a class, the interchange you thus initiate, especially if supplemented by consulting a classmate, will substitute for the class missed. I do want to hear from you by email—preferably before—if you must miss a class; but I never want to see a dean's excuse. If you are unable to be physically present but could zoom in, I hope a classmate could set up a zoom session on a laptop placed where you might sit.

TARDINESS: For this class, there will be no penalty or handing in an essay a day late, though please remember that the posted dates are, like "Election Day," the *last* day to show what you have been thinking, and "voting early" is always desirable. There is no problem taking an extra day or two once or twice; but I will keep track, and expect you not to abuse the privilege by constantly having recourse to it. All essays should be submitted in paper form in class or to my Saybrook office—or **emailed to me as MS Word (not PDF!)** attachments. Students with a chronic problem about tardiness should beware: Anyone who owes more than one essay at any time is ineligible for passing the course regardless of the brilliance of the earlier or of subsequent submissions. I am interested in the way you react to my comments and the way you build on your own previous work in a series of essays; habitual tardiness frustrates all effort to take seriously the idea of progress.

Please acknowledge and share these priorities: though submitting an essay a bit late is trivial, doing the reading for any class after it is due is not; and missing class because you have chosen to finish an essay rather than prepare for the session and join the discussion is a sin against the Holy Ghost!

If for any reason you must be late with an essay, please email to explain. If you were late for an appointment, you would try to contact the person waiting for you to say you'd be late. Please exercise the same courtesy in regard to your essays.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: The syllabus above gives five essay assignment opportunities, and five is ideally the number a student writes in order to grow into the mode of pondering a problem from various sides. In the compressed summer semester, we will have to make do with four essays, and I invite each student to skip the first or the fifth in the syllabus. I especially recommend to anyone taking two courses at the same time this Session A that you choose the first four, since the likelihood is that you will be busier the last week with your other course and will welcome having finished the written work for this course before the last week. But if you can do all five, that would be better for your growth.

Try to regard each of the four or five as opportunities to be more alive than sad, dead Robert Lowell, of whom Elizabeth Bishop writes, "Sad friend, you cannot change" ("North Haven"). [Notice, by the way, that parenthetical allusions, when they do not follow an indented block of verse, come *after* the quotation mark and *before* the period. Please adhere to our *Essay Guide* (in the files section of our canvas website) for general instructions on how to approach the writing of essays—and for matters of form and English usage. Unlike the little response papers I am calling for if you must miss a class, the five regular essays are not journal entries or records of what you thought when you first read a passage; they should reflect the product of what Bishop

pretends Nature enjoins, “revise, revise, revise,” and they should give a sense that the essay is not simply a tired grinding out of evidence for a point no longer challenged. Plan that essays should be about 5-6 pp. each; if one or two turn out a little shorter, that’s OK—if you make it up in another essay; and longer is always fine if justified by the intensity of the attention to a limited text or the complexity of the argument.

To encourage the idea that each new essay can be, in a way, a revision of its predecessor, though its texts have changed, I am going to propose that you try to stick to the same theme all summer and write all your essays on elegiac consolation, the complexities of love, or coming to terms with brokenness and failure. But this is a suggestion, not a requirement, and it is fine, if you prefer, to switch from one theme to another of these three—or some other, if you clear it first with me.. More about this before our first essay is due, but the general idea is to try and incorporate into each new assignment something of the benefit of revisiting and rethinking your previous work.

If you are writing on a computer, I urge you to "save" often, writing on the hard drive but backing up your work with a disk, zip drive, mini flash drive, emailing drafts to yourself, or using the ITS Central Backup Service.

TRIGGER WARNINGS: There is virtually no text we read that in itself, or in the discussion it should provoke, could not offend or upset someone. There is some metaphoric or literal rape, for example, in every one of our poets’ work, whether it is Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*, Wordsworth’s rape of a bower, Eliot’s poor typist home at teatime, any of the numerous raw acts of violence in Louise Glück’s lyrics, or the foundational experience behind Jericho Brown’s *The Tradition*. A trigger warning might even be necessary for this paragraph about trigger warnings, for someone may be especially offended at the lumping together of real and figurative acts of sexual violence. A list of the triggers of certain religious or anti-religious positions would be equally problematic. Even if it were possible to list in advance the particular triggers for each text, an attempt to do so is likely to be more confusing than helpful—and perhaps more likely to provoke offense for what it misses. I think it best to issue a single “trigger warning” for the whole semester, if not for the whole college experience, though I invite individual students with histories or problems that are of particular delicacy to inform me of their needs ahead of time. For more on this issue, see

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/08/25/dont-ask-us-for-trigger-warnings-or-safe-spaces-the-university-of-chicago-tells-freshmen/>

GRADES: Many students find it difficult to attend to comments on an essay if there is a grade attached. Therefore, I follow an old Yale English Department tradition of not putting grades on the essays. This does not mean that grades are not given, and if you would like a grade on an essay, e-mail your request. Some students may wish to do this regularly; others, just a single “midterm evaluation” after the second or third essay. Some may prefer not to ask at all. Your choice! I will be happy to look over my notes about your essays and respond.

Grades for the semester will be based largely on the best three of four essays. One reason for this specification is to encourage students to take risks without worrying about how one piece will affect an assessment of the whole semester. A second reason is that with the increasing prevalence of what it was once acceptable to call “the Yale disease” (feeling that work has to be “perfect,” however long that took), it is important to cultivate the habit, and the satisfaction, in doing the best you can within reasonable constraints of time.

CONFERENCES: My office is in Saybrook, Entry P, Room 12. I believe all undergraduates have gate access, and I am hoping to see all students interested in a face-to face meeting at least once. But some may prefer never to meet in person, and individual Zoom meetings are fine by me. Please e-mail for an appointment (leslie.brisman@yale.edu). I am most available this semester Wednesday and Friday afternoons after class, but if you wish to see me late afternoon a different day, just ask.