

### **Four Moderns: Frost, Bishop, Lowell, and Heaney**

In this course we will study the style and development of four modern poets: Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, and Seamus Heaney. While each of these poets has a distinctive style and vision, one of the objectives of the course is to examine the extent to which these poets share stylistic traits and thus collectively form an alternative to the "modernism" advocated and practiced by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and W. B. Yeats earlier in the century.

**Texts:** *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem  
Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems: 1927-1979*  
*Selected Poems of Robert Lowell (expanded edition)*  
Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Selected Poems, 1966-1996*  
-----, *District and Circle*

#### Requirements:

There will be three short papers (4-5 pages) due on individual works of Frost, Bishop, and Lowell as we consider each of them in the semester, and one longer paper (8-10 pages) at the end of the term which will link at least two of the figures in the course. In addition, there will be a take-home final examination which will be administered during finals week. During the semester each student will be responsible for presenting two poems (one before the midterm, one after) to the class, accompanying by a short summary (1-2 pages). Since this course meets three times a week, **there is a maximum of five cuts during the semester for all reasons** (personal, medical, religious, etc.). After that, a student's grade will be lowered one full grade per absence.

#### Class Outline

Week One: Outline of class; method and materials;

Week Two: Frost's dramatic monologues and dialogues; **First paper due Monday, August 31**

Week Three: Frost's poetry continued; misdirections and the mind in conflict with itself

Week Four: Frost's poetics; the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop;

Week Five: The question of Bishop's detachment: art versus life or art replicating life. **Second paper due Friday, September 25**

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Week Six: Bishop's poetry about poetry; the psychology of ambiguity

Week Seven: Late poems; "The Moose"; "In the Waiting Room" "One Art"

### **Fall break: October 15-16**

Week Eight: The poetry of Robert Lowell; the early influence of the New Critics and the Fugitives.

Week Nine: The major shift in Lowell's style; *Life Studies*;

Week Ten: *For the Union Dead*

Week Eleven: Lowell's late sonnet sequences; **Third paper due Friday, November 13**

Week Twelve: The poetry of Seamus Heaney; early poems

### **Thanksgiving break: November 21-29**

Week Thirteen: The central metaphor of digging; North as political and personal excavation of Irish culture

Week Fourteen: Heaney's sonnet sequences; course review; **Final paper due Wednesday, December 9**

**Final examination to be distributed during final class (Friday, December 11) and administered on Monday, December 14, 10:30 am – 1:00pm**