Course Description

One aim of this course is to give you the opportunity to reflect on the wide range of texts you’ve been reading over the last seven semesters, using, as an aid to reflection, questions about inspiration and creative genius. Gertrude Stein said, “It takes a lot of time to be a genius, you have to sit around so much doing nothing really doing nothing.” Other artists warn that if you wait around for the Muse to show up before you start writing, you’ll never start. We’ve all heard Thomas Edison’s famous dictum, “Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration.” Whatever the precise proportion, we’ll be focusing on the nature of that 1%: theories of inspiration, creativity, and genius, and the figure of the Muse. We don’t call on the Muse to write a recipe, an essay, or fill out a tax return, although these things can all be difficult. Why have writers felt in need of a Muse when setting out to write imaginative literature, particularly poetry? How do writers and critics talk about that mysterious 1% which seems necessary for the creation of “art”? The course itself will range across a wide variety of modes, genres and historical periods, beginning with the Greek poet Hesiod’s puzzling representation of the Muses in his *Theogony* and moving in leaps and bounds to the present day where the Muse shows up most often in New Age-y manuals on how to be creative. Why is there sometimes only one Muse, and at other times nine Muses? Why is the poet Sappho called “the Tenth Muse”? What role did the Muse or the Muses play in literary production? Why is the Muse female? How does gender function in the relationship between a writer and his or her Muse? When and why does the Muse become embodied? When, why, and how is a writer’s Muse sometimes a real person? What alternatives to the Muse were experimented with when artists set out to create, and what were the results (two popular alternatives were booze and drugs)? When did the Muse become a stale convention? At what historical junctures did she undergo renewal or revision? When and why do theories of inspiration and creativity go from positing an external source of the poet’s art to an internal source?

Required Texts

- *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*
• *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*
  Katherine Duncan-Jones (Editor) ISBN: 0192840800 Publisher: Oxford University Press
• *Shakespeare, Sonnets* (any edition)
• *Robert Herrick* Robert Herrick, Doulgas Brooks-Davies (Editor) ISBN: 0460877992
  Publisher: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc. Series: Everyman Paperback Classics Series
• More texts TBA.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

- Amanuensis Assignment 10%
- Blackboard Postings 15%
- Participation 15%
- Short Presentation on Cultural Context 10%
- Final Research Paper (15-20 pages) 50%
- Major Portfolio ungraded

**Amanuensis Assignment**

Each week, one member of the class will be assigned to take notes of the class discussion. Other students are free to do so as well, but the idea is to free people up from trying to write, think, and talk, all at the same time! So, one person will take notes and post them by the following Monday on Blackboard, for further discussion, questions, if necessary.

**Blackboard:**

You are asked to contribute one question and one observation about the next set of readings. This question and observation must be posted by Wednesday afternoon at the very latest. You must also post at least five other messages over the course of the semester, not including the summaries of class discussion that get posted. Three of those messages should appear before spring break. Roundtable messages are usually much less formal than papers. Most are likely to be comments and questions about the readings at hand, further thoughts about topics addressed earlier in the course, remarks about subjects neglected or not yet taken up, and responses to what others have had to say in class or on the roundtable. The content, format, tone and stance of these messages are up to you. You will be evaluated on whether you contribute but not on what. In addition to writing messages to the roundtable, you are responsible for keeping up with reading the messages of others. You must read the new messages at least once a week, preferably on Mondays.

**Participation:**

Refer to handout on Kahn’s Seminar Praxis, which we’ll discuss in class.

**Short Presentation:**

You will be required for one of the week’s readings to present a 10-15 minute report on some of the historical and cultural contexts of the readings. Each student will consult individually with the instructor for guidance on where to look, etc.

**Final Research Paper:**

This will be completed in stages, beginning with a prospectus, a working bibliography, and a first draft before the final submission. Further instructions and due dates for each component will be given later in the semester.
Guidelines for the Major Portfolio
Each English major must submit a portfolio to the instructor of English 380 containing written work completed over the course of their years as an English major:
  • One graded paper from English 200
  • One graded paper from a 300-level course, usually completed in the soph/junior year
  • An essay reflecting on one’s experience in the major
  • A second copy of the final seminar paper from English 380

N.B. **ALL** components of the evaluation must be completed to pass the course.
N.B. Use the following as a **rough** estimate: to earn a B in this course, devote 2.5 hours to thoughtful reading and writing outside of class for each hour of class time.

Students are invited to meet individually with me in my office to discuss their work and their progress in the course. **All students are more than welcome to** drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments. **This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368-5230) and who may need individual arrangements. Make use of your professors!!** We’re here to help you learn and we don’t expect you to be perfect (who is?).

Course Policies
• Class attendance is mandatory. I expect students to come to class **on time** and fully prepared to participate in class discussions and group work. **Any absence will affect your grade.** Coming to class more than five minutes late will count as an absence. If you are ill, please call me **before** class to let me know you’ll be absent and please bring a doctor’s note to the next class.

• Your written work must be word-processed, double-spaced with margins of 1 inch on every side, and use a 12-point Times font. Please number your pages and staple them together. Students should keep copies of all work submitted.

• I do not accept late assignments except on compassionate grounds (serious medical illness supported by a doctor’s note or a death in the family). Failure to submit assignments on the due date will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. If you are having problems writing I **strongly urge** you to come and see me to discuss the problem before you’ve missed a deadline. Computer problems are rarely a valid excuse for missing a deadline. Leave yourself enough time for such contingencies!

• **Plagiarism is a SERIOUS academic offense.** I consider its practice to be an indication of a lack of respect for yourself, the instructor, other students, and the purpose(s) of a university education. Please familiarize yourself with CWRU’s policy on plagiarism. If you are at all unsure, please come and ask me.

Reading Schedule:
N.B. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, as it is scheduled below, during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class.
  + Please arrive in class having already completed the readings listed for that day.
+ Please bring your texts and any hand-outs/photocopies to class in order to participate meaningfully in discussion.
+ Readings followed by an asterisk will be available in KSL at the circulation desk under the course title.

**January 16 Introduction to the Muse: The Greeks**
- Students’ wanted posters (what does the muse look like? what does the muse do?)
- Thomas Heywood, *Gunaikeion*. Title Page, Epistle Dedicatiorie, To the Reader, Table Contents.
- Hesiod, from *Theogony* II.1-138
- Homer, from *Iliad*; from *Odyssey*

**January 23 Plato on Poetic Madness**
- *Ion* (entire)
- *Phaedrus* (first half)
- *Symposium* (Diotima’s conversation with Socrates: 201d-212c)
- Elizabeth Asmis, “Plato on Poetic Creativity”*

**January 30 The Roman Muse(s): Horace, Ovid, Virgil**
- Horace, *Odes* 1.26, 32, 34, 35; 2.19; 3.1, 4, 11; 4.3, 6, 8, 9
- Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Book 1.1-5; Book 5.256-end; Book 6 (entire); also: Pygmalion, Orpheus
- Virgil, *Georgics* Book 2.475-89; *Aeneid* Book 1.11
- Lawrence Joseph, “Pyreneus and the Muses”
- Longinus, from *On the Sublime*.

**February 6 Musing on the Classical Muse**
- Lewis Hyde. from *The Gift*. Chapters 1-3*
- Jacques Derrida. “Plato’s Pharmacy”*

**February 13 The Renaissance Muse I**
- Thomas Heywood, *Gunaikeion* Book Two (pp. 57-61)*
- Edmund Spenser, “Tears of the Muses”*
- Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (entire sonnet sequence); *Defense of Poetry*.
- William Shakespeare, from *Sonnets* 1-21, 32-38, 76, 78-9, 82, 85, 100-103*
- Ann Bradstreet, selections from *The Tenth Muse*
- Terry Castle, “Lab’ring Bards: Birth Topoi and English Poetics” (JEGP 78: 193-208)*

**February 20 The Renaissance Muse II**
- John Donne. the verse letters

**February 27 The Renaissance Muse III**
- Robert Herrick, from *Hesperides*. the Julia poems
March 6          The Romantics and Their Genius
• Martha Woodmansee, “The Genius and the Copyright”
• Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”
• William Wordsworth, from The Prelude

March 20         The American Muse
• Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Art”; “The Poet”*
• Emily Dickinson. from Poems 96, 103, 151, 167, 276, 303, 312, 365, 383, 435, 448, 454, 470, 501, 505, 512, 528, 556, 569, 580, 638, 679, 709, 754.
• Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” from Leaves of Grass
• Lewis Hyde, from The Gift. Chapter 8.

March 27         Flesh and Blood Muses
• Francine Prose, The Lives of the Muses: Nine Women and the Artists They Inspired. Chapters on Alice Liddell and Lou Andreas-Salome.
• Harold Bloom, from Genius. Section on Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson)

April 3          The Modernist Muse
• Wallace Stevens, from The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination; from Collected Poems, "American Sublime, The"; "Creations of Sound, The"; "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour"; "House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm, The"; "Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion"; "Idea of Order at Key West, The"; "In a Bad Time"; "In the Element of Antagonisms"; "Large Red Man Reading"; "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (N.B. LONG, like Whitman's "Song of Myself"); "O Florida, Venereal Soil"; "Phosphor Reading by His Own Light"; "Sunday Morning"; "To the One of Fictive Music"

April 10         Booze as Muse
• Horace, Odes to wine 1.9, 18, 19, 20, 24, 27, 31, 37; 3.19, 21
• Ben Jonson, “Inviting a Friend to Supper”
• Raymond Carver, “Chef’s House”, “Where I’m Calling From”

April 17         Women Poets and The(ir) Muses
• Denise Levertov. “Work and Inspiration: Inviting the Muse” and “Origins of a Poem” from The Poet in the World,
• Margaret Atwood, from Negotiating With the Dead: A Writer on Writing, Ch. 3: "Dedication: The Great God Pen. Apollo vs. Mammon: at whose altar should the writer worship?"
• Jefferson Humphries, “Muse Figures: Notes on Gender Difference in Poetry”
• Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision"
• Arlene Croce, “Is the Muse Dead?” The New Yorker, 1996.
• Hirsch, Edward. from The demon and the angel: searching for the source of artistic inspiration.