



COURSE DESCRIPTION

## 2016 Winter Session (2016-2017 Academic Year)

ENGL 223-003: How to Read The American Long Poem - Dr. Sarah Parry

### Literature in the United States

#### Term 1

**MWF, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

This course will be devoted to the study of the long poem as an American literary genre. Equally if not more importantly, it will survey a range of methods and theories of criticism that make the meaning and significance of these difficult poems accessible to readers. We will study long poems that are considered to be monuments in American poetry, including Walt Whitman's foundational nation-building romantic anthem *Song of Myself*, T.S. Eliot's deconstructionist modernist masterwork *The Waste Land*, and Lyn Hejinian's radical postmodernist prose poem *My Life*. These works seem daunting to understand at first. However, this course will demonstrate that they become much more accessible when they are explained by expert critics. Key theoretical frameworks for understanding literary texts—such as formalism, historicism, and materialism among others—will be surveyed and explained. By studying criticism that explains the aesthetic, social and political significance of each work, students will acquire knowledge of the basic principles that are used in literary analyses of the long poem as genre. They will also develop familiarity with the technical terms that are used in literary criticism more generally. The course will prepare students to pursue upper division English courses in a variety of subject areas. However, it may be taken by anyone who loves American literature and wishes to understand and appreciate it more fully. Students will undertake two short close readings and two research essays over the course of the term.