

Principles of Literary Study: Poetry

English 359:201:25

Business School Building #5113

Monday and Wednesday, 1:40pm-3pm

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Office Hours: Mondays at noon at Livingston Campus Starbucks

Class Description

All language is ambiguous, elusive, and multi-meaningful, whether it's in the form of a book, real news, fake news, a quarterly report, or an everyday email. Most uses of language try to cover over this complexity. Literature, and poetry especially, is unique in that it puts these qualities common to all language center-stage. In this course, required for English majors but open to all, we will learn how poems work and read some of the very best ever written, from early modern sonnets to contemporary free verse. In the process we will also outline a timeline of art history. The poets of successive literary movements wrote differently out of different ideas about what poetry ought to be; similarly, successive generations read poetry for different reasons and in different contexts – many of which treated poems more like the way we treat pop songs or Instagram captions today. Much as understanding poetic form helps us recognize the workings of language more fully, understanding poetic history gives us intimate insight into each historical moment's most fundamental beliefs and concerns. Perhaps just as importantly, knowing both form and history will ultimately enable you to enjoy poetry more.

Course Goals

This course will fulfill the English Department Learning Goals. Students who major in English will demonstrate:

1. knowledge of literatures in English, their historical, cultural, and formal dimensions and diversity;
2. strategies of interpretation, including an ability to use critical and theoretical terms, concepts, and methods in relation to a variety of textual forms and other media;
3. the ability to engage with the work of other critics and writers, using and citing such sources effectively; and,
4. the ability to write persuasively and precisely, in scholarly and, optionally, creative forms.

This course will also fulfill Rutgers SAS Core Curriculum Goals for AHP, “analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies” and for WCd, “communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.”

There is one final goal in all of my courses: that class members become better people. Life is short; you owe it to yourself and to those around you to make the most of every semester of it.

Course Text

The Norton Anthology of Poetry (shorter 5th edition)

All readings in the Norton are designated by page number; all others will be provided via Sakai.

Schedule

Week	Date	Deadlines	Title	Readings
Week 1	Wed 9/6		What is Poetry? Why Poetry?	William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (171); John Keats, "This Living Hand" (588)
Week 2	Mon 9/11		Poetry and Meaning-Making	Ishmael Reed, "beware: do not read this poem"; Archibald MacLeish, "Ars Poetica" (885); Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"; http://time.com/4884799/statue-of-liberty-emma-lazarus-poem/
	Wed 9/13		Introduction to Meter	Thomas Hardy, "During Wind and Rain" (751); Margaret Cavendish, "Of Many Worlds in This World" (302); Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband" (285); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Metrical Feet"
Week 3	Mon 9/18	Assignment Due	Sonnets and Sonneteers	Thomas Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt" (103); William Shakespeare, Sonnet 73 (173); Mary Wroth, Sonnet 77 (223); Edmund Spenser, Sonnet 75 (142)
	Wed 9/20		More Meter, More Metaphor	Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless, Patient Spider" (702); George Gordon, Lord Byron, "When We Two Parted" (511); Thomas Wyatt, "My Galley" (103); Audre Lorde, "From the House of Yemanja" (1157)
Week 4	Mon 9/25	Quiz 1	The Sonnet Tradition	John Milton, "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent" (274); William Wordsworth, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" (477); Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays" (968); Gwendolyn Brooks, "the sonnet-ballad"
	Wed 9/27		Metaphysical Poets	John Donne, "The Sun Rising" (193) and Holy Sonnet 14 (208); Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (293); George Herbert, "Easter Wings" (236)
Week 5	Mon 10/2	Quiz 2	Spenser's Epic Romance	Faerie Queene Book 1 Canto 1 (125)
	Wed 10/4		Milton's Divine Epic	<i>Paradise Lost</i> book 1:1-621, 2:466
Week 6	Mon 10/9	Quiz 3	Pope's Mock-Epic	Alexander Pope, "The Rape of the Lock" (357)
	Wed 10/11	Assignment Due	18th Century Neo-Classicism	Alexander Pope, from "An Essay on Man" (376); Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (438) and "To S.M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works" (439); Anna Barbauld, "To the Poor" (435)
Week 7	Mon 10/16		Pastoral, Georgic, and Elegy	Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (410); Anne Finch, "A Nocturnal Reverie" (331); Robert Burns, "To A Mouse" (452); Jonathan Swift, "A Description of a City Shower" (333)

	Wed 10/18		Romanticism	John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (585) and "Ode on Melancholy" (584); William Blake, "The Sick Rose" (446) and "The Clod and the Pebble" (445)
Week 8	Mon 10/23	Quiz 4	Greater Romantic Lyric	Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight" (488); William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" (458)
	Wed 10/25	Paper 1 Due	Victorian Dramatic Monologue	Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (643); Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses" (629)
Week 9	Mon 10/30		The Poetess Figure	Felicia Hemans, "Casabianca" (566) and "The Grave of a Poetess"; Lydia Sigourney, "To a Shred of Linen"; Letitia Landon (LEL), "The Nameless Grave"
	Wed 11/1	Quiz 5	American Experiments with the Lyric	Emily Dickinson, "I'm nobody! Who are you?" (722) and "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain" (723); Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven" (615)
Week 10	Mon 11/6		Walt Whitman	Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (684) and 1860 "Song of Myself" with publication material
	Wed 11/8		Dialect, Folk, and Expansions of the Lyric	Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Haunted Oak" and "The Deserted Plantation"; "Home on the Range" (Higley (1876), Goodwin (1904), Lomax (1910))
Week 11	Mon 11/13		Poetry in Reviews	James Russell Lowell, "A Fable for Critics" (selections); selected reviews
	Wed 11/15	Assignment Due	Poetry in the Newspapers	Discuss reprintings and articles found in ChroniclingAmerica.loc.gov
Week 12	Mon 11/20		Imagism, Symbolism, and Dadaism	William Carlos Williams, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" (838) (with painting "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"); Alexander Posey, "Autumn"; Hugo Ball, "Karawane"; Stephen Crane, from "The Black Riders and Other Lines" (792); Gertrude Stein, "Which I wish to say is this" (814)
	Wed 11/22	NO CLASS	CHANGE IN DESIGNATION OF DAYS	
Week 13	Mon 11/27	Quiz 6	Modernism	Hart Crane, "To Brooklyn Bridge" (907); Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar" (820); Marianne Moore, "Poetry" (856), Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel" (923)
	Wed 11/29	Paper 2 Due	The Modernist Lyric	W. B. Yeats, "Easter, 1916" (772); Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est" (890); Robert Frost, "After Apple-Picking" (799)
Week 14	Mon 12/4		The Confessionalists and the New York School	John Ashbery, "Paradoxes and Oxymorons" (1083); Frank O'Hara, "The Day Lady Died" (1075); Sylvia Plath, "Tulips" (1143)
	Wed 12/6	Exam Due	Poetry of History and the History of Poetry	Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck" (1119); Elizabeth Bishop, "In the Waiting Room" (964); Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B" (915)

Week 15	Mon 12/11		Poetry and Politics	Danez Smith, "not an elegy for Mike Brown"; Juliana Spahr, "It's All Good, It's All Fucked"; Seamus Heaney, "Mycenae Lookout"?
	Wed 12/13			Song lyrics and Instagram poetry
	Thu 12/21	Paper 3 Due		

Class Policies and Expectations

1. Attendance and attention.
 - Missing 5 classes will lead to failure of the class. There is no penalty for absences until this point, but class members are responsible for all material missed while absent. This must be done on your initiative.
 - Missing ten minutes or more of any class period will count as half an absence.
 - The course text, the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, is mandatory. After the second class, showing up to class without the book will be marked as an absence. It is a good anthology, worth having; if price is an issue, it can be gotten cheaply used online or from a library.
 - Electronic devices – this includes e-readers, phones, and computers – are not allowed in class unless otherwise specified.
2. Preparation and participation.
 - The quantity of reading for this class is small, but it is complex. It is expected that all class members read all the assigned readings for each class and prepare to discuss them. This means re-read, take margin notes, and think about relations to previous poems.
 - Participation is part of your grade in this class. This is not only because participation demonstrates preparation; it is also because we all benefit more from the seminar when everyone participates thoughtfully in discussion. The success of the class depends on each of us. To receive a 100% for participation, it is necessary to contribute one thoughtful comment or question to almost every class period.
 - In discussion, all class members are encouraged to freely speak their ideas pertaining to the material at hand. In doing so, however, all class members are expected to treat each other with the respect and considerateness they deserve.
3. Grading
 - Do not plagiarize. It is easy to catch; I will catch it. The Rutgers Policy on Academic Integrity defines plagiarism as “the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit” (see http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2014/12/AI_Policy_2013.pdf). Rutgers also prohibits self-plagiarism. Penalties range from failing the course to being suspended from the university. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to educate yourself.
 - One point (four percent) will be taken off late papers for each day they are late. I’m willing to grant extensions under reasonable circumstances if requested in advance.

Assignments

- Quizzes and assignments. 20%. Quizzes are intended to measure preparedness for class, so I will not allow makeups. I will, however, drop each class member's lowest quiz score.
- Poetry performance. 5%. Each class member will perform a poem for the class and write a 200-word account of what and how they prepared.
- Poetry reading. 5%. Each class member will attend one poetry reading event outside of class and write a 300-word response.
- Participation. 10%. See #2 in Class Policies and Expectations section above.
- Paper 1. 10%. 2 pages.
- Paper 2. 15%. 4 pages.
- Exam. 15%. The exam will require short responses (4-5 sentences), to be completed outside of class in a ten-day period.
- Paper 3. 20%. 5 pages.

Poetry: Some Definitions

“Utile et dulce” (“Useful and sweet”)

-Horace (~20 B.C.)

“For beauty includes three conditions, ‘integrity’ or ‘perfection,’ since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due ‘proportion’ or ‘harmony’; and lastly, ‘brightness’ or ‘clarity[.]”

-St. Thomas Aquinas, OP, *Summa Theologica* (1274)

“An art of imitation [...] with this end, to teach and delight.”

-Sir Philip Sidney, *Apology for Poetry* (1583)

“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

-William Shakespeare, *A Midsummers Night’s Dream* (1596)

“True wit is Nature to advantage dress’d;
What oft was thought but ne’er so well expressed.”

-Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711)

“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”

-William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

“A poem should not mean
But be.”

-Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica” (1926)

“Poetry [...] begins in this way: the crossing of trajectories of two (or more) elements that might otherwise not have known simultaneity. When this happens, a piece of the universe is revealed as if for the first time.”

-Adrienne Rich (1990)