

Prof. Nicholas Jenkins
English 160; Room: 60-120
MWF 10:30am-11:20am, Fall 2015

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Office Hours: MF 3-4.30

Poetry and Poetics



Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris Street; Rainy Day* (1877),
Art Institute of Chicago

Poetry - or artfully arranged, inspired speech - is a feature of all cultures, past and present and, presumably, future. Today, just as poetry always has done, it continues to offer revelatory perspectives on the whole spectrum of experience.

In one way poetry is timeless - poems written long ago in vastly different historical contexts can still be read with real enjoyment. In another way, poetry has a strong relation to the particular historical moment of its making. Poetry may sometimes seem like a private art form but it is always imprinted with the social, the communal and the shared. In this course we will try to keep both poetry's characteristics - its timelessness and its time-boundness - in focus. Both are factors in the more or less evident esteem that most societies have for poets.

The course is designed to enhance your understanding of what poetry in English is, how it works, what it can do, why it has evolved in the ways it has, and why it is important to know how to read it. It also, and just as importantly, aims to increase the pleasure you can take in reading a poem, whether it is a tiny, highly stylized medieval lyric or a modern confessional poem in free verse. It assumes no special knowledge of poetic history or of interpretive techniques.

Requirements include the duty (or chance) to learn a short stretch of your favourite poetry by heart and the chance (or duty) to write a short poem. It does not have to be a "good" poem, it just has to observe the basic technical rules of a poetic form, something

which anyone can do.

So this is not primarily a survey or literary history course designed to inculcate dates and facts. Rather, it is a chance for you to acquire familiarity with the main questions to ask of any poem you ever read, hear or overhear, whether in a college class, in a newspaper or on a subway train. It should also train you to understand the answers the poem gives. We will move forwards in a loosely chronological fashion but there will be many occasions when within a single lecture we fast-forward or rewind from one century to another in order to trace the development of a poetic form such as the sonnet, a genre such as the elegy, or a language issue such as poetic tone.

Learning Goals

The aims of this course are simple. By the end of the quarter you should feel that:

- you can confidently, methodically and rapidly approach the work of interpreting a lyric poem
- you can recognize some basic formal structures of poetry, such as the sonnet; and you can identify basic poetic genres, such as the elegy
- you can appreciate some of the reasons for the relatively stylized nature of poetic utterance and can explain the ways in which this stylization is an important expressive feature

Ways of Thinking/Ways of Doing

Poetry and Poetics satisfies the breadth requirements for the Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry category.

Thus, after taking this class, you should be better able to:

- appreciate the nature of human responses to meaningful cultural objects, and distinguish among the different methods to interpret those responses;
- acquire and assess techniques of interpretation (including close reading techniques), criticism, and analysis of cultural texts, artifacts, and practices;
- demonstrate facility with the analysis of arguments for and against different theories and interpretations;
- understand diverse artistic, literary, and theoretical traditions, their characteristic forms of production, and/or their development across historical time;
- understand how expressive works articulate responses to fundamental human problems and convey important values.

Primary Text

Margaret Ferguson and others, eds., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th edn (New York: Norton, 2005)

The Stanford Bookstore should have adequate numbers of new and used copies of this text. However, the book is widely available, both at other local bookstores and online from booksellers such as amazon.com Please be aware that only the 5th edn will work for this class. (Other editions include somewhat different poems and have different pagination -- the schedule won't make sense with other edns.)

A few other poems and documents will be available to class members on this CourseWork site during the quarter.

Course Requirements and Grading (percentages approximate)

- 1 very short paper (1-1.5 pages) 10%
- 1 short paper (2-4 pages) 15%
- Recitation in section of 30 lines of poetry 10%
- Composition of 1 short poem 15%
- 1 longer paper (6-9 pages) 25%
- Regular attendance at lectures and sections, substantive participation in class and section 25%

Please remember when handing in your papers to include xeroxes of each of the poems which you have discussed.

TA

The TA for this class will be tbd. On Weds, Sept 23, s/he will begin organizing section times. Sections will begin (all being well) in week 2.

Procedural

For two sessions out of each three, the basic element of this course will a lecture, but in all our sessions there will also be dialogue and the interchange of ideas and perceptions about poetry. During each lecture there will be a period for you to ask questions. And every Friday, every third session in other words, we will read one previously-unseen poem together in class.

In order that the course be a meaningful one for you, it is vital that you do the reading before each class. For most classes, the assigned amount of reading is relatively small. This is to give you a chance to read and re-read the poems intensively, the only sure way to bring out a poem's inner meaning. It is also helpful if, hefty as the book is, you can

bring the *Norton* with you so you can make references and follow lectures and other people's comments.

Please double space all your papers, use 12 pt type and standard margin sizes. No late work is accepted without prior notification to me or our TA, given well in advance. In cases of doubt or discrepancy, the online version of the syllabus at the class's CourseWork site should be considered the latest and most authoritative version.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066 URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>).

Honor Code

The class adheres firmly to the practices outlined in Stanford's Honor Code (<http://registrar.stanford.edu/bulletin/5471.htm>). The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

- The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
 - that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
 - that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
- The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
- While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

“☑” indicates that “a deadline or something else to take note of happens today.”

Date	Lecture: Themes/Forms/Concepts/Events	Norton Reading (pages)
Sept 21	Introduction Importance of poetry. Aims of course. The “Centaur” paradigm.	None
23	Part One: General Issues Keats, “On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer”. Places of poetry. Origins of poetry.	None
	☑ <i>Yom Kippur: class attendance optional</i>	
25	Part One: General Issues <i>“Poem for discussion”</i> [on this and every subsequent Friday meeting of the class, we will analyze in depth one poem, or very occasionally two poems, together in class; the poem may be one you have read, it may not be: if the latter is the case, don't worry because no preparation for this session is needed]	None
	☑ <i>TA begins organizing sections for week 2</i>	
28	Part One: General Issues Myths and theories of poetry. Forms of poetry.	None
	☑ <i>Paper one assignment discussed</i>	
30	Part One: General Issues Early Poems in English	1, 10-16
Oct 2	Part One: General Issues <i>“Poem for discussion”</i> [see note to Sept 25]	None
5	Part Two: Forms The Sonnet. Wyatt, Shakespeare.	126-127, 257-269

Date	Lecture: Themes/Forms/Concepts/Events	Norton Reading (pages)
7	Part Two: Forms The Sonnet contd. Yeats, Millay, Owen, Hayden.	1200, 1383-1385, 1386, 1533
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Topics for paper two distributed</i>	
9	Part Two: Forms "Poem for discussion" [see note to Sept 25]	None
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Hand in 1st paper [1 page-1.5 pages]</i>	
12	Part Two: Forms Other "closed" poetic forms: villanelle. Dylan Thomas, Bishop.	1527-528, 1572-573,
14	Part Two: Forms Other "closed" forms: sestina. Sidney, Bishop, Ashbery.	208-10, 1520-521, 1736-737
16	Part Two/Three: Forms "Poem for discussion" [see note to Sept 25]	None
19	Part Three: Genres The elegy. Death and poetry. B. Jonson, Milton, K. Phillips.	323-24, 410-15, 526- 27
21	Part Three: Genres The elegy contd. Self-elegy. Whitman, Dickinson.	1078-085, 1110-111 [#68], 1114-116 [#s 320, 339, 340], 1117 [#359], 1119-120 [#479], 1122-123 [#s 764, 781, 782]
23	Part Three: Genres "Poem for discussion" [see note to Sept 25]	None
26	Part Three: Genres The modern elegy. Hardy, Auden, Jarrell, O'Hara.	1154, 1160-161, 1472- 474, 1553, 1728-729

Date	Lecture: Themes/Forms/Concepts/Events	Norton Reading (pages)
28	Part Three: Genres The ode. Imagination. Isolation of poet. Apostrophe. Making the self in a poem. Wordsworth, Coleridge.	765-68, 810-12
30	Part Three: Genres “Poem for discussion” [see note to Sept 25]	None
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Hand in 2nd paper (3-4 pages)</i>	
Nov 2	Part Three: Genres The ode contd. Keats.	933-40
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Recitations start in section this week</i>	
4	Part Four: Modern Poetry Modernity, and its effect on the poem. Marx, Simmel, Baudelaire.	Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903) [to be distributed]
6	Part Four Modern Poetry “Poem for discussion”	None
9	Part Four: Modern Poetry Free verse. Whitman, Lawrence, Ginsberg.	1060-066, 1285-287, 1708-714
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Final paper topics announced</i>	
11	Part Four: Modern Poetry Imagism. Pound, H. D., Moore.	1296-298, 1311-313, 1328-330
13	Part Four: Modern Poetry “Poem for discussion”	None
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Hand in short poem</i>	
16	Part Four: Modern Poetry Modern experiments (ruptures). Broken forms; new forms. Stein, Williams, Eliot, L. Hughes.	[<i>Tender Buttons</i> reading to be distributed], 1274-

Date	Lecture: Themes/Forms/Concepts/Events	Norton Reading (pages)
		275, 1340-356, 1430-435
18	Part Four: Modern Poetry Autobiography, confessionalism. Persona. Tone. Browning, Lowell, O'Hara, Plath.	1012-013, 1597-602, 1729-730, 1842-845
20	Part Four: Modern Poetry "Poem for discussion"	None
23-27	<i>Thanksgiving holiday. No classes</i>	
30	Part Four: Modern Poetry General "Mopping Up" of topics, questions etc.	None
Dec 2	Part Four: Modern Poetry "Poem for discussion"	None
4	<i>No class</i>	
10	Finishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Final paper due (7-10 pages)</i>	

Bibliography: Some Poetry Handbooks and Guides to Forms and Terms

M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th edn (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1993)

Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: Random House, 1965)

John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse*, 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001)

Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, et al., eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th edn. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012)

Jon Stallworthy, "Versification," in Margaret Ferguson and others, eds., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th edn (New York: Norton, 2005), 2027-2052

Mark Strand and Eavan Boland, eds., *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of*

Poetic Forms (New York: Norton, 2000)

Helen Vendler, *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (Boston: St Martin's, 1997)