

DESCRIPTION

The 20th-century poet Marianne Moore begins “Poetry,” one of her most famous poems, “I, too, dislike it.” With that opening sentence, Moore acknowledges a common attitude towards poetry: that it’s hard to like because of its difficulty. This course, which presents a small, focused selection of poetry in English, is designed to help you read poems so that you can see past the assumptions and prejudices you may have against them, and establish confidence in reading, analyzing, and writing about poetry. You will gain an understanding of poetic terms and concepts of poetic craft, which will allow you to respond to poems critically and to articulate your emotional responses to those poems more accurately. When writing about the assigned poems in our Canvas discussions and in the annotations and the close-reading analysis paper, you cannot simply react viscerally. Responses such as “I liked it” or “It made me sad” or “I don’t understand it” will not receive credit. You will need to indicate *why* you did not like a particular poem—or a moment in a poem; *why* you are struggling to understand an idea, an image, or a metaphor.

Some of you are probably used to writing about poetry, and others may be studying poetry for the first time. Whatever your level of familiarity, success in this class will require open-mindedness, honesty, and rigorous and creative thought. I hope that you will end up loving some of what we read, but I also expect that you will engage with the poems you feel resistance to, even use that resistance as a tool to help your understanding of what the poem is doing. Most of our work in this course will be *describing*, thinking about how a poem sounds, moves, and changes.

HOW TO READ THE POEMS

Some students are under the impression that, because poems are shorter, they require less attention than prose. This impression is incorrect. When reading a poem, you need to pay attention to words in ways that are very different from the way you pay attention when reading a newspaper or a magazine or even a story or a novel. You could probably cram all of the reading assigned for this class into one long night. This would yield a *horizontal* (flat) reading of the poems. In this course, however, we will read the assigned poems *vertically*—thoroughly and with as much depth as possible. Because poems are concentrated language, they require repeated readings. And you’ll need to look up vocabulary with which you are unfamiliar and references that may appear in the assigned poems. It’s also important that you develop the habit of reading poems aloud and make note of their aural qualities. You need to hear what they sound like and what the words feel like as they resonate inside your chest cavity, throat, and mouth.

NOTES ON CLASS PARTICIPATION & WORKLOAD

There will be daily assignments, which will include participation in our discussions, annotations, creative writing exercises, a midterm quiz, and audio recordings of you reading two poems aloud. All of the aforementioned assignments are mandatory and will be factored into the final grade—along with the close-reading paper and the final exam.

In this course, each week is the equivalent of four weeks during the regular semester. In order to do well in this course, you should expect to spend at least 35-40 hours per week preparing for and participating in the course (reading, note-taking, reviewing, completing the assignments, and contributing to discussions).

All of the assigned reading and other relevant documents will be posted on our Canvas site. Each week you can expect to read about two packets of poems (6-12 poems per packet) and/or essays on poetics, watch a video lecture and/or read a written lecture, and complete the daily assignments I’ve already mentioned. You will need to have regular internet access in order to complete the requirements of this course. We will be using the Discussion and Assignment features on a daily basis. Additionally, I will be sending emails to you individually and to the group, and I will make announcements about upcoming assignments and scheduling changes using the Announcement feature. Please make sure that your email is accurately registered.

For Canvas support and IT issues, visit <http://www.elms.umd.edu/page/student-support> or send an email to elms@umd.edu.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADE BREAKDOWN

35%: Class Participation (Discussions, Midterm Quiz, Audio Recordings)

35%: Written Assignments (Annotations, Creative Writing Exercises, and Close-reading Analysis Paper)

30%: Cumulative Final Exam

All work needs to be submitted/uploaded by the deadline!

GRADING SCALE

A (90-100%) Excellent mastery of the subject: outstanding work and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative; B (80-89%) Good mastery of subject: superior work done in a sustained and intelligent manner; C (70-79%) Acceptable mastery of the subject: basic quality work; D (60-69%) Mastery of the bare minimum of subject matter content: work of the lowest passing quality; F (below 60%) Failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance (a failing grade).

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please email me immediately. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Services in the Shoemaker Building (301.314.7682; Dissup@umd.edu), you should do so immediately.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/StudentsInfo.aspx>. In an online course, the temptation may be greater to cut and paste items gleaned from a Google search without citing the source—don't succumb to that temptation! I hope that most of your observations about the poems you read this month will be your own. The annotations and the paper should reflect your developing skills as a *close-reader* of poetry. You should not consult outside sources—beyond the essays I've assigned and the biographical information about each poet featured on www.poets.org and www.poetryfoundation.org—when preparing your written assignments for this course.

Week 1 (Jan. 2-4): Poems about poetry and poem-making; introduction to poetic terminology

- introduction to the course and to one another
- poetry v. prose
- the dramatic situation: who's speaking to whom under what circumstances? (who is the speaker? what is the occasion?)
- diction (word choice) v. syntax (word order)
- concrete v. abstract language
- image and metaphor
- the line & the stanza

Reading Assignments (Jan. 2-4), Packet 1

- "In a Station of the Metro," Ezra Pound and commentary by Mark Doty:
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/19705>
- "Poetry," Marianne Moore and commentary about the poem's history by Robert Pinsky:
http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/poem/2009/06/marianne_moores_poetry.html
- "Theme for English B," Langston Hughes
- "Tell All the Truth But Tell It Slant," Emily Dickinson
- "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," William Wordsworth
- "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," Walt Whitman
- "Traveling through the Dark," William Stafford

- “Pleasures,” Denise Levertov
- Read two essays on poetics: “The Figure a Poem Makes,” Robert Frost (pdf) and an excerpt from James Longenbach’s *The Art of the Poetic Line*: http://poems.com/special_features/prose/essay_longenbach2.php

Read through the glossary of poetic terms—before completing the annotation assignment.

Watch the first lecture video on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/45724861>.

Read the biographical material for each poet (Moore, Hughes, Dickinson, Wordsworth, Whitman, Stafford, Levertov) provided by the Academy of American Poets: www.poets.org

Written Assignments (Jan. 2-4):

1. **Discussion prompt 1 (Post by Jan. 2):** Introduce yourself to the group in a paragraph (5-7 sentences). Please describe your prior experiences with poetry (in high school, at the college level). If you have a favorite poem, tell us about the experience of reading that poem. Why are you drawn to that particular poem?
2. **Discussion prompt 2 (Post by Jan. 3):** In a paragraph (5-7 sentences), compare and contrast two of the poems in the first packet. Additionally, by the end of the weekend (Jan. 5), please respond to one of your classmate’s posts.
3. Upload—in the Assignments section of our Canvas site—annotations for “Traveling through the Dark” and “Pleasures” by Jan. 4. ***Each*** annotation should attempt to answer the following 8 questions. (A note on length: ***each*** annotation should be at least one full double-spaced page):
 - What is the **dramatic situation**? (Who is speaking to whom under what circumstances? What do we know about the speaker, the listener/audience, and the occasion of the poem?)
 - What is the setting in time (hour, season, century, and so on)?
 - What is the setting in place (indoors or outside, in Nova Scotia or in Michigan, in an urban or rural/pastoral landscape, in a domestic place, in a dream, in the mind)?
 - Paraphrase or summarize the plot/events/narrative of the poem in two sentences or less.
 - State the central idea or theme of the poem in one sentence.
 - Discuss the **diction** (word choice) of the poem. Point out a few words that seem particularly important or that stand out to you, and explain why.
 - Discuss the **imagery** of the poem. What kinds of images are used? Is there or change in the imagery? Can you track the accumulation of images and describe the effects of that accumulation?
 - Describe the music of the poem. What sound patterns do you hear (**rhyme, consonance, assonance**)? How does the sound of the poem affect meaning?

Week 1 Audio Recording: Your first recording is due on Mon., Jan. 6. In the conversations/inbox area of Canvas, you’ll send a message to me as a recorded audio comment. Click on the microphone icon to the right of the attachment icon. The audio comment you’ll record and send to me will be your recitation of one of the poems in packet 1 (excluding Pound’s two-liner “In a Station of the Metro”). I recommend that you practice reading the poem aloud a few times before you record and send it my way.

Week 1 (Jan. 5-8): Poems about childhood and familial relationships, elegizing parents

- the dramatic situation, cont’d
- the line & the stanza, cont’d
- introduction to meter
- the musical devices: internal & end rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration
- apostrophe
- end-stop, enjambment, caesura

- TONE
- ELEGY
- IRONY
- hyperbole & understatement
- sestinas

Reading Assignments (Jan. 5-8), Packet 2

- "My Papa's Waltz," Theodore Roethke
- "Those Winter Sundays," Robert Hayden
- "Daddy," Sylvia Plath
- "The Lost Pilot," James Tate
- "Halley's Comet" & "The Portrait" Stanley Kunitz
- "Sestina," Elizabeth Bishop
- What is a sestina? (Discover the details of the form here: <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5792>)

Watch the second lecture video on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/46509231>.

Read the biographical material for each poet (Larkin, Roethke, Hayden, Plath, Tate, Kunitz, Bishop) provided by the Academy of American Poets: www.poets.org.

Written Assignments, Jan. 5-8

1. Upload—in the Assignments section of our Canvas site—annotations for **two** of the poems in packet 2 **by Jan. 8**. Each annotation should attempt to answer the following 8 questions (A note on length: ***each*** annotation should be at least one full double-spaced page):
 - What is the **dramatic situation**? (Who is speaking to whom under what circumstances? What do we know about the speaker, the listener/audience, and the occasion of the poem?)
 - What is the setting in time (hour, season, century, and so on)?
 - What is the setting in place (indoors or outside, in Nova Scotia or in Michigan, in an urban or rural/pastoral landscape, in a domestic place, in a dream, in the mind)?
 - Paraphrase or summarize the plot/events/narrative of the poem in two sentences or less.
 - State the central idea or theme of the poem in one sentence.
 - Discuss the **diction** (word choice) of the poem. Point out a few words that seem particularly important or that stand out to you, and explain why.
 - Discuss the **imagery** of the poem. What kinds of images are used? Is there or change in the imagery? Can you track the accumulation of images and describe the effects of that accumulation?
 - Describe the music of the poem. What sound patterns do you hear (**rhyme, consonance, assonance**)? How does the sound of the poem affect meaning?
2. **Discussion prompt 3 (Post by Jan. 6):** Choose one of the poems in the second packet and describe/explore the speaker's attitude toward the subject. What is the **tone**, in other words, of the poem? Your post should be about 10 sentences, as you'll need to provide **evidence** from the poem (specific examples of the poem's music, language, and imagery) to support your description. Think carefully about the poem before writing your post; your post should show the tension in the poem, the **mixed emotions** that the speaker has. (Obviously, you'll need to begin by indicating the *dramatic situation* of the poem—who is speaking, to whom, under what circumstances? You should be able to answer all of those three questions in the first sentence of your post.) **And now for the tricky part:** None of the poems can be posted about more than twice. And posts that show **original** thought, that resist the temptation to reiterate/recycle arguments already made, will receive more credit.

3. **Discussion prompt 4: Anderson through Purcell** will post a *study* question* about a poem in packet 2 by Jan. 7; **Ramaswamy through White** will answer one of the questions posed by Jan. 8. *A *study* question will not yield a yes or no response; rather, both the question and the answer should demand deep engagement with one of the poems. A strong *study* question should emerge from thoughtful observations about language, music, or form.

Week 2 (Jan. 9-11): Focus on Quatrains

- the influence of the ballad
- what is a ballad stanza?
- what is a rhyme scheme?
- introduction to meter/scansion
- the musical devices: internal & end rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration
- apostrophe
- end-stop, enjambment, caesura
- TONE
- ELEGY
- IRONY

Reading Assignments (Jan 9-11), Packet 3

- "Western Wind," Anonymous & my commentary
- "A Bird came down the Walk," Emily Dickinson
- "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain," Emily Dickinson
- "Neutral Tones," Thomas Hardy and accompanying handout
- "The Trees," Philip Larkin
- "Not Waving but Drowning," Stevie Smith (plus commentary by Caitlin Kimball: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/poem/175778 - guide>)
- Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Robert Frost
- Handout illustrating the rhyme scheme and metrical patterns occurring in "Tell All the Truth But Tell It Slant," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and "My Papa's Waltz"
- Read Robert Pinsky's essay "Like & Unlike Sounds"

Read the biographical material for each poet (Dickinson, Hardy, Smith, Frost) provided by the Academy of American Poets: www.poets.org.

Watch the third lecture video on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/57507713>.

Spend your free time (there are fewer written assignments due Jan. 9-11) reviewing for quiz, making sure you've read **my** response posts to Discussion Prompts 1-5. Also, begin thinking about the paper. (The paper description, materials, and rubric will be up on Canvas by the end of the day on Jan. 10.)

Written Assignments (Jan. 9-11)

1. **Discussion prompt 5 (Post by Jan. 10):** Following the lead of Robert Pinsky, post 5-7 sentences about how like and unlike sounds "work" in one of the poems in packet 3. **None of the poems can be posted about more than twice.** And posts that show **original** thought, that resist the temptation to reiterate/recycle arguments already made, will receive more credit. Additionally, you'll need to respond to one of your classmate's Pinsky-inspired posts by Jan. 11.

Week 2 (Jan. 12-15): Focus on Sonnets

- the history of the sonnet

- the two sonnet types: Italian/Petrarchan & English/Shakespearean
- meter and scansion
- how rhyme works in sonnets; rhyme's relationship to content in sonnets
- the musical devices: internal & end rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration
- end-stop, enjambment, caesura

Reading Assignments (Jan. 12-15), Packet 4

- "Whoso List to Hunt" by Sir Thomas Wyatt
- Sonnet 31 from *Astrophil and Stella* by Sir Philip Sidney
- Sonnet 73 from *Sonnets* by William Shakespeare
- "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" by John Keats
- "When I Have Fears" by John Keats
- "Anthem for Doomed Youth" by Wilfred Owen
- "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why" by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- "I, Being Born a Woman, and Distressed" by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- Sonnet handout that breaks down the distinct characteristics of the Italian/Petrarchan & English/Shakespearean
- Read the excerpt from *Poems Poets Poetry* in which Helen Vendler walks us through her *exploration* of "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (Keats)

Read the biographical material for each poet (Wyatt, Shakespeare, Keats, Owen, Millay) provided by the Academy of American Poets: www.poets.org. Biographical material for Sir Philip Sidney can be found on the Poetry Foundation's website: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/philip-sidney>.

Written Assignments (Jan. 12-15)

1. An "open-notes" midterm quiz (10-12 short answer questions on the material covered so far, including my lectures and my responses to the Canvas Discussions) will be up on our Canvas site all day on **Jan. 13**. You will need to choose a 70-minute block that works with your schedule to take the quiz. The clock starts once you "enter" the quiz.
2. **Discussion prompt 6 (Post by Jan. 14):** Please discuss with the class your brainstorming process for the close-reading paper. Which poem are you planning to write about and why? Share your thesis statement with us. Discuss the shape you have in mind for the body of the paper: what formal elements will your body paragraphs focus on?
3. **Discussion prompt 7 (Post by Jan. 15):** Using Vendler's approach (detailed in the PDF excerpt from *Poems Poets Poetry*), walk us through one of the sonnets featured this week ("**On First Looking into Chapman's Homer**" is excluded!). Build your post around **two** of the 13 steps Vendler uses. **None of the sonnets can be posted about more than twice!** And, if you choose to post about a poem that has already been "explored" in a previous post, you'll need to take different exploratory steps from the steps your peer has taken already.

Week 2 Audio Recording: Your second recording is due on Tues., Jan. 14. In the conversations/inbox area of Canvas, you'll send a message to me as a recorded audio comment. Click on the microphone icon to the right of the attachment icon. The audio comment you'll record and send to me will be your recitation of one of the sonnets in packet 4. I recommend that you practice reading the poem aloud a few times before you record and send it my way.

Week 3 (Jan. 16-22): Public & Political Poems, Final Exam Review

Read these poems from our final packet:

- "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," Whitman
- "Leda and the Swan" by William Butler Yeats
- "For the Union Dead" by Robert Lowell (with audio)
- "Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa (with audio)
- "Parsley" by Rita Dove (with audio)
- "The Colonel" (with audio)
- *From Killing Time* by Simon Armitage
- What is a villanelle? (Discover the details of the form here: <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5796>)

All of the poems (except *From Killing Time*, which I've uploaded in PDF) for this final week are on either the Academy of American Poets' website or the Poetry Foundation website. You'll see a link to each poem the Modules section of our Canvas site. Once you've clicked on the poem title, you'll be able to read the poem on your screen and access the biographical material for the poet by clicking on the poet's name under the poem title.

Watch and take notes on the interactive segment on the drafting of "Leda and the Swan" (originally titled "Annunciation"). You'll see a link to the National Library of Ireland's online exhibition and instructions on how to access the piece about "Leda and the Swan" in the Modules section of our Canvas site.

Read the following prose:

- David Baker's "Elegy and Eros: Configuring Grief"
- An article in *The Atlantic* about Saint-Gaudens's *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* to which Lowell's poem alludes
- A close-reading of "Facing It" by Robin Ekiss
- An excerpt from Carolyn Forché's interview with Bill Moyers

Written Assignments, Jan. 16-22

1. In lieu of annotations, you will upload two creative writing exercises that illustrate your understanding of the poetic forms from packets 3 & 4 (**both exercises are due Jan. 16**):
 - a.) A four-quatrain "poem" made up of **ballad stanzas** (this form follows a distinct metrical pattern and a distinct rhyme scheme), with at least **six enjambed lines** (the rest can be end-stopped) and two stanzas that use **slant rhyme** instead of **exact or pure rhyme**.
 - b.) Either an English/Shakespearean sonnet **or** an Italian/Petrarchan sonnet. The lines should be in loose iambic pentameter (10 or 11 syllables in length) and follow the appropriate rhyme scheme. Your sonnet must have a volta/turn/shift in the appropriate position for the type you've written. (You must identify which type you've written at the top of your document.). Additionally, your sonnet must contain **four enjambed lines** (the rest can be end-stopped) and at least **one slant rhyme**.

Note: I will not be evaluating your two "poems" based on your talent as a poet; rather, I will be assessing whether or not you understand the two forms (ballad stanza & sonnet).

2. **Discussion prompt 8 (Post by Jan. 18):** Anderson through Purcell will consider why I've paired "For the Union Dead" with "Facing It;" Ramaswamy through White will consider why I've paired "Parsley" with "The Colonel"; What is the *connective tissue* between each pair? (5-7 sentences). Then, **by Jan. 19**, those who have posted about the poems by Lowell and Komunyakaa will respond to the posts about the poems by Dove and Forché and vice versa.
3. **Discussion prompt 9 (Post by Jan. 21):** Everyone will compare/contrast the dominant floral imagery in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" and *From Killing Time* (5-7 sentences). Posts that demonstrate original and articulate thinking will earn the most credit.
4. **By Sun., Jan. 19**, upload—in the Assignments section of our Canvas site—the final version of your close-reading paper. The rubric and other details about the paper are forthcoming.
5. **Instead of final conferences via Skype**, I'd like each of you to post at least one review question (anything related to the course material that you'd like answered by me) in preparation for the final exam. Remember there are no stupid questions, and please feel free to ask more than one question. I think our time will be better spent that way. **All questions are due by noon on Jan. 21.**

FINAL EXAM (Jan. 22)

The cumulative final exam will be up on our Canvas site on Jan. 22, our last day of class. You'll need to reserve 3.5 hours on Jan. 22 to complete it. Like the midterm quiz, it will be open-book, open-notes, etc., and the clock starts once you enter the test.