LT251 Poetry and Poetics

Foundational Module: Poetry and Poetics
Spring Term 2014-15
(8 ECTS credits)
Instructor: James Harker
Mondays and Wednesdays, 9.00-10.30
Seminar Room 4 (Platanenstr. 98A)
Office hours: Mondays, 10:30-12:30

Course Description

This course will approach poetry from many angles. First, what does poetry do? And what makes poetic language distinct? As we look for answers to these questions, we will think about poetry’s relationship to philosophy, rhetoric, prose, and everyday speech. Second, how do we analyze poetry? Throughout the course, we will learn to identify verse forms, meters, and figures and to speak with fluency using the technical language of prosody. The goal is more than to learn a “technical” vocabulary; it is to learn to discover more in the poetry that we read. Finally, how has poetry changed over time? The course offers a survey of English-language poetry from the English Renaissance to the present day. We will be able to trace the rise and fall—and occasional return—of poetic forms as well as the influence that certain major figures and movements have exerted on succeeding poets. We will also each memorize a sonnet and even try writing in some of the poetic forms we study. All of these approaches are intended to make every phase in the history of poetry more alive, exciting, and relevant.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on two essays, two presentations, one “performance,” one exam as well as seminar participation. All requirements must be completed in order to pass the course.

Essays
A midterm essay and a final essay are required. Each essay is 2000 words.

Presentations
Each participant will open discussion of a poem to the class on two occasions during the semester. These presentations should be about 10-15 minutes and should include a one-page handout.

“Performance”
Each participant will memorize a poem (a sonnet or longer) and recite it in class.
Exam
There will be one exam covering the technical terms of prosody.

Participation
A grade will be given for participation in seminar, which includes attendance, contributions to discussion, and participation in our poetry writing exercises.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
All written work must be submitted electronically and on time.

As specified in the Student Handbook, essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). The instructor is not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where the instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Policy on Attendance
Attendance at all sessions of the course is required. After two absences for any reason (including minor health issues, unavoidable travel, appointments, etc.), the participation grade will be lowered one step (i.e. from A- to B+) per absence.

In accordance with the Student Handbook, a failing grade for the course will be given if absences reach 30% of the course meetings.

Arriving late to class will count as ½ of an absence.

Grading breakdown
Midterm Essay (2000 words) 25%
Final Essay (2000 words) 25%
Presentation 1 (including 1-page handout) 10%
Presentation 2 (including 1-page handout) 10%
Exam 10%
Participation 20%

Required Texts
All reading materials are in the course reader.
## Course schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to Poetry, Poetics, and Prosody

| Monday, January 26 | Introduction  
|                   | Marianne Moore, “Poetry” |
| Wednesday, January 28 | Bring a poem of your choice.  
|                   | Stephen Adams, “Meter and Rhythm” from *Poetic Designs* |

### Week 2: The Sonnet

| Monday, February 2 | William Shakespeare, Sonnets 1, 18, 126, 130 |
| Wednesday, February 4 | Sir Philip Sidney, Sonnet 1 from *Astrophil and Stella*  
|                   | John Donne, Sonnet 1 from *Holy Sonnets*  

### Week 3: The Heroic Couplet and the Status of the Poet

| Monday, February 9 | John Dryden, “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham”  
|                   | Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Criticism” |
| Wednesday, February 11 | Anne Bradstreet, “The Prologue”  
|                   | *Exam* |

### Week 4: Romanticism

| Monday, February 16 | Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defense of Poetry” |
| Wednesday, February 18 | Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Aeolian Harp”  
|                   | Lord Byron, “She walks in Beauty”  
|                   | Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” |

### Week 5: The Ode

| Monday, February 23 | John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale” “Ode on Melancholy” |
| Wednesday, February 25 | John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”  
|                   | Tony Harrison, “A Kumquat for Keats” |
### Week 6: The Sonnet, pt. 2

**Monday, March 2**
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnets 1, 43
- Edgar Allen Poe, “A Sonnet-To Science”

**Wednesday, March 4**
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “A Sonnet” from *The House of Life*  
  *Performances*

### Week 7

**Monday, March 9**
- Class Rescheduled

**Wednesday, March 11**
- Class Rescheduled  
  *Midterm Essay Due at 9:00 am*

**Spring Break**

### Week 8: Blank Verse, Whitman, and his influence

**Monday, March 23:**
- Walt Whitman, “Leaves of Grass”  
  - Ezra Pound, “A Pact”

**Wednesday, March 25**
- Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”  
  - Allen Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California”

### Week 9: Emily Dickinson

**Monday, March 30**
- Emily Dickinson, “I never lost as much but twice”  
  - “Some things that fly there be”  
  - “Hope is a thing with feathers”  
  - “There’s a certain Slant of light”  
  - “I like a look of Agony”

**Wednesday, April 1**
- Emily Dickinson, “Because I could not stop for Death”  
  - “The Heart asks Pleasure – first”

### Week 10: Symbolism

**Monday, April 6**
- Federal Holiday
Wednesday, April 8
William Butler Yeats, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”
“The Second Coming” “No Second Troy”
“Among School Children”

**Week 11: Modernism and Imagism**

Monday, April 13

Wednesday, April 15
Ezra Pound, “A Retrospect” “Portrait d’une Femme”
H.D. “Sea Rose” “Sea Violet” “Helen”

**Week 12: Villanelles, Sestinas, and the use of Traditional Forms**

Monday, April 20
Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art”
Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”
Langston Hughes, “Harlem Sweeties”

Wednesday, April 22
Elizabeth Bishop, “Sestina”
John Ashbery, “Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape”

**Week 13: Free Verse**

Monday, April 27
Audre Lorde, “A Small Slaughter”
Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus”

Wednesday, April 29
William Carlos Williams, “Spring and all”
Derek Walcott, “Midsummer”

**Week 14: Gertrude Stein and Language Poetry**

Monday, May 4
Gertrude Stein, from *Tender Buttons*

Tuesday, May 5
Student Reading at Socratea House, 19:30

Wednesday, May 6
Ron Silliman, “The Chinese Notebook”
Rosmarie Waldrop, from *Curves to the Apple*
Week 15: Sonatas, pt. 3

Wednesday, May 13

Gwendolyn Brooks, “my dreams, my works, must wait till after hell” “We Real Cool”
Vikram Seth, 5.1-5 from *Golden Gate*

*Final Paper Due Monday, May 18*