

# LT251: Poetry and Poetics

Foundational Module: Poetry and Poetics  
Spring Term 2017  
(8 ECTS credits)  
Instructor: James Harker  
Wednesdays and Fridays 10:45-12:15  
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Office hours: Wednesdays 13:30-15:30 and by appointment

## 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 (2500 words)	25%
Final Essay (2500 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**

Wednesday, February 1	Introduction Marianne Moore, "Poetry"
Friday, February 3	Bring a poem of your choice.

Stephen Adams, "Meter and Rhythm" from  
*Poetic Designs*

### Week 2: The Sonnet

Wednesday, February 8

William Shakespeare, Sonnets 1, 18, 116, 130

Friday, February 10

Sir Philip Sidney, Sonnet 1 from *Astrophil and Stella*

John Donne, Sonnet 1 from *Holy Sonnets*  
John Milton, "On Shakespeare"

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

Wednesday, February 15

John Dryden, "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham"  
Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Criticism"

Friday, February 17

Anne Bradstreet, "The Prologue"  
*Exam*

### Week 4: Romanticism

Wednesday, February 22

Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry"

Friday, February 24

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Aeolian Harp"  
Lord Byron, "She walks in Beauty"  
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"

### Week 5: The Ode

Wednesday, March 1

John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" "Ode on Melancholy"

Friday, March 3

John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"  
Tony Harrison, "A Kumquat for Keats"

### Week 6: The Sonnet, pt. 2

Wednesday, March 8

John Keats, "On the Sonnet"  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnets 1, 43  
Edgar Allen Poe, "A Sonnet-To Science"

Friday, March 10

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "A Sonnet" from *The House of Life*  
*Performances*

### Week 7: Blank Verse, Whitman, and his influence

Wednesday, March 15

Walt Whitman, "Leaves of Grass"  
Ezra Pound, "A Pact"

Friday, March 17

Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"  
Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California"

*Midterm Essay Due Friday, March 17 at 23:59*

**Week 8: Emily Dickinson**

Wednesday, March 22:

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"

Friday, March 25

Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for  
Death" "The Heart asks Pleasure – first"

**Week 9: Symbolism, Modernism, Imagism**

Wednesday, March 29

William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"  
"The Second Coming" "No Second Troy"  
"Among School Children"

Friday, March 31

T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent" "The  
Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

**Week 10**

Wednesday, April 5

Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect" "Portrait d'une  
Femme"  
H.D. "Sea Rose" "Sea Violet" "Helen"

Friday, April 7

Gertrude Stein, from *Tender Buttons*

SPRING BREAK

**Week 11: Villanelles, Sestinas, and the use of Traditional Forms**

Wednesday, April 19

Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"  
Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That  
Good Night"  
Langston Hughes, "Harlem Sweeties"

Friday, April 21

Elizabeth Bishop, "Sestina"

John Ashbery, "Farm Implements and  
Rutabagas in a Landscape"

**Week 12: Free Verse**

Wednesday, April 26

Audre Lorde, "A Small Slaughter"  
Sylvia Plath, "Lady Lazarus"

Friday, April 28

William Carlos Williams, "Spring and all"  
Derek Walcott, "Midsummer"

**Week 13: Language Poetry**

Wednesday, May 3

Ron Silliman, "The Chinese Notebook"

Friday, May 5

Rosmarie Waldrop, from *Curves to the Apple*

**Week 14: Sonnets, pt. 3**

Wednesday, May 10

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

Friday, May 12

Conclusion

*Final Paper Due Wednesday, May 17 at 23:59*

**Essay Deadlines**

Midterm Essay Deadline: Friday, March 17 at 23:59.

Final Essay Deadline: Wednesday, May 17 at 23:59.