# INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce you to poetry, provide tools with which to interpret it critically, and encourage you to build the confidence necessary to develop original arguments about the poems you will read. By the end of the course, you will be able to identify key poetic genres and use literary terminology to analyze a poem's structural features and thematic meanings. We will also engage with secondary sources, thereby responding to existing scholarship and situating our readings within historical context.

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION

- Attendance is mandatory.
- Active participation in class and online amounts to 10% of your final grade. For every class there will be an online "Forum", where you will either have a specific question, and if not, you will be expected to pick one element (word, phrase, technique, idea etc.) from the poem, and say why you picked it. Submit by 13:00 (an hour before class).
- Read the assigned texts, which are all available on Moodle. Weekly readings will consist of several poems, as well as a selection from *The Norton Introduction to Literature* and/or a secondary source.
- Submit two written assignments. The first paper, 2 pages, is worth 35% of the final grade, and the second paper, 3–4 pages, is worth 45% of the grade.
- Creative assignments:

  *Learn one poem by heart and recite in class.

  *Present a creative response to a poem in the final session.

  These assignments are worth 10%.

| Grading |
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| Participation (in class and on Moodle): 10% |
| Paper 1: 35% |
| Paper 2: 45% |
| Creative assignments: 10% |
| **PLAGERISM WILL NOT BE TOLERTAED** |

**SCHEDULE**

**Introduction: The Politics of Poetry**

For next class: read Audre Lorde "Poetry is Not a Luxury"

**Week 1: Introduction**

What Is Poetry?

New terms: poetry/poetic versus prose/prosaic, form and content, verse, found poetry

For next class: Read Howard Nemerov's "Found Poem" and "Because You Asked about the Line between Prose and Poetry" (1980)

**Week 2: Introduction Cont.; Lyric Poetry**

How to Read a Poem?

Primary text: Howard Nemerov, "Because You Asked about the Line between Prose and Poetry" (1980)

New terms: stanza, line, figurative language (figures of speech), word choice, ambiguity, syntax, register, conflict, enjambment

For next class: read pages 705–708 from the *Norton* and Catullus VII

**Week 3: The Lyric Cont.**

The Classical Lyric

Primary text: Catullus VII

New terms: lyric poetry, classical lyric

For next class: read pages 739–741 from the *Norton* and Sylvia Plath's "Mirror" (1961)

The Modern Lyric

Primary text: Sylvia Plath, "Mirror" (1961)

New terms: speaker, persona, voice, characterization, internal drama, poetic conventions

For next class: read pages 794, 841, 897–901 from the *Norton* and Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite"

**Week 4: The Lyric Cont.**

The Ode

Primary text: Sappho, "Ode to Aphrodite"

New terms: ode, theme, external and internal parts, shift, allusion, myth

For next class: read pages 834–838 from the *Norton* and Lucille Clifton's "homage to my hips" (1987)

The Ode Revisited

Primary text: Lucille Clifton, "homage to my hips" (1987)

New terms: tone, metaphor, personification

For next class: read Emily Dickinson's "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (1861)

**Week 5:**

Close Reading and Writing Tutorial

Primary texts: Emily Dickinson, "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (1861)

For next class (after Pesach): read pages 931–932 from the *Norton*, Petrarch 90 (c. 1327–1368), and William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" (1609)

**Week 6:**

The Sonnet

Primary texts: Petrarch 90 (c. 1327–1368); William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 18" (1609)

New terms: Petrarchan (Italian) sonnet, Shakespearean (English) sonnet, octave, volta, sestet, quatrain, couplet, rhyme scheme, iambic pentameter

For next class (after Independence Day): read pages 871–875 from the *Norton*, as well as Emma Lazarus' "Assurance"

**Week 7: The Lyric Cont. & Conclusion**

Meter

Primary texts: Petrarch 90 (c. 1327–1368); William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 18" (1609); Emma Lazarus, "Assurance"

New terms: scansion, rhythm, meter, metric line, syllable, foot

For next class: read and an excerpt from Lisa L. Moore's "A Lesbian History of the Sonnet" (2017)

The Sonnet Revisited

Primary text: Emma Lazarus, "Assurance"

Secondary source: Lisa L. Moore, "A Lesbian History of the Sonnet" (excerpt [2017])

For next class: read pages 839–840 from the *Norton* and Gwendolyn Brooks' "First Fight. Then Fiddle" (1949)

## Week 8: The Lyric Concluded; Dramatic Poetry

The African American Sonnet

Primary text: Gwendolyn Brooks, "First Fight. Then Fiddle" (1949)

New terms: simile, analogy

For next class: read pages 704–705 from the *Norton*; read and listen to Alan Menken's and Stephen Schwartz's "Hellfire" from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996); lastly, read Macbeth's "Tomorrow" soliloquy (Shakespeare 5.5.17–28 [1606])

Soliloquy

Primary texts: Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz, "Hellfire" (1996); William Shakespeare, Macbeth's "Tomorrow" soliloquy (1606)

New terms: dramatic poetry, dramatic monologue, soliloquy, blank verse

For next class: read pages 737–739, 848–854 from the *Norton* and Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842)

## Week 9: Dramatic Poetry Concluded & Narrative Poetry

The Dramatic Monologue

Primary text: Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842)

New terms: ekphrasis, symbol

For next class: read Marina Tsvetaeva's "Hamlet's Dialogue with His Conscience" (1923)

The Dramatic Monologue Revisited

Primary text: Marina Tsvetaeva, "Hamlet's Dialogue with His Conscience" (1923)

New terms: intertextuality

For next class: read pages 735–737, 863–866 from the *Norton* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845)

**Week 10: Narrative Poetry**

Narrative Poetry
Primary text: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven" (1845)
New terms: narrative poetry, end rhyme, internal rhyme, slant rhyme, eye rhyme, masculine rhyme, feminine rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, consonance
For next class: read an excerpt from Matthew Redmond's "If Bird or Devil: Meta-Plagiarism in 'The Raven" (2018)

Close Reading and Writing Tutorial
Primary text: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven" (1845)
Secondary source: Matthew Redmond, "If Bird or Devil: Meta-Plagiarism in 'The Raven" (excerpt [2018])

**Week 11: Narrative Poetry Cont.**

"The Raven" Continued.
For next class: read pages **918–929 from the *Norton*** and Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, Canto V (from *The Divine Comedy* [1308–1320]) + excerpt from Mina Loy's "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" (1923–1925)

The Epic+ Mock Epic
Primary text: Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto V
Mina Loy, "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" (excerpt [1923–1925])
New terms: the epic, mock epic, heroic action, in medias res

For next class: read Kei Miller's "Quashie's Verse" (2014)

**Week 12: Free Verse**

Kei Miller's "Quashie's Verse" (2014) and an excerpt from
New terms: free verse, white space

For next class: read M. NourbeSe Philip's "Discourse on the Logic of Language" (2015) and Marianne Moore's "Poetry" (1919)

**Week 13: Conclusions**

Revision: What Is Poetry?

Primary text: M. NourbeSe Philip, "Discourse on the Logic of Language" (2015);
Marianne Moore, "Poetry" (1919)


DOUBLE CLASS

Creative Assignments Show and Tell