

Poetry

ENGL 340 | Section A | Eisenhower Hall 228 | MWF 11:30 | Fall 2005
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Office Hours: M & F 10:30-11:20, Thu 9:00-10:20, plus many more by appointment
Class Website: <http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl340/>

*Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?
Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the
dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.*

—Walt Whitman

Course Description

English 340 is an introduction to the reading and critical examination of poetry. The primary purpose of the course is to familiarize you with various ways to read, evaluate, analyze, and take pleasure in poetry. Along the way, you will have the opportunity to read some great poets; to study a few poetic traditions; to talk about ideas and experiences that tend to elude ordinary modes of expression; and to learn how to study language in a careful, patient, devoted manner.

While exploring poetic language, forms, and techniques, the class will consider some rather fundamental questions about poetry: How do poets use sounds, forms, and appeals to the senses to make meanings? What's the relationship of a poem to personal identity? What good is poetry, anyway? Why do people bother to read poems? Why do readers love and hate poetry? Why do poets write poems? What does poetry do that we should take notice? I imagine that the answers to these questions are diverse and complex, and I hope that within our class discussions these questions will generate a lively conversation and raise further questions about what poetry is and what it does.



Walt Whitman

Course Goals

The over-arching goal of Poetry is to prepare you to become thoughtful lifelong readers of poems. Although you will learn lessons useful in other courses and future employments, this course itself is not, strictly speaking, background information needed to study something else or training in a job skill. Although it provides excellent preparation for upper-level English courses in poetry, this course is not a prerequisite for those courses. In short, I think of this course as preparation for the rest of your life; the focus of this course is you, not some other course, teacher, job, or boss.

To become excellent lifelong readers of poetry, you will need to learn and develop four particular abilities:

- **Explication:** the ability to read a poem, make sense of it, and explain your understanding of it to others.
- **Close Reading:** the ability to use knowledge of a poem's formal structures and its sounds to enhance your understanding of its meaning, purpose, and effects.
- **Appreciation:** the ability to explain a poem's significance and value.
- **Critical Thinking:** the ability to think about and use what you've learned about a poem in order to think about or do something else; the ability to connect a poem to this something else; the ability to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate what you've learned about a poetic text as a guide to action or belief.

We're going to read poems; figure out various ways to explain and interpret what's going on in them; analyze their formal and musical elements as a way to talk about individual poems as a whole; learn ways of explaining to others the importance we find in them; and connect them to other aspects of our living and thinking.

In teaching these four skills, this course builds on the thinking and writing skills taught in **Expository Writing**: focus, organization, development, editing, and tone. If your writing skills are shaky and you've never taken **Expository Writing** or some other college composition course, you may want to take ENGL 100 along with or before ENGL 340. If you think you might need to transfer out of this course into a section of ENGL 100, please let me know.

Course Work & Course Policies

Reading. The key to doing well in a poetry class is reading and re-reading the poems carefully. Read them to understand them, and read them to figure out what's interesting or unusual about each one. Read the assignments attentively before coming to class and look up words that are unfamiliar to you. A poem is not always accessible after only one try; so don't give up.



Susan Hahn

Papers and exams. The writing in our course will consist of two formal papers and many short writing assignments (almost one for every class period for the first part of the semester). Many of these shorter assignments will be homework exercises or in-class exercises. I will also ask you to prepare a class presentation and to attend at least one poetry reading. There will be two exams, a midterm and a final. When the time comes, I will distribute information explaining these assignments in detail.

Late papers. I don't generally like to accept late papers; but in certain, limited circumstances I will accept papers after the due date. Assignments will lose a grade for every class period that they are late. I like to collect papers at the beginning of class on the due date.

Attendance. In addition to careful reading of the poems, I expect good attendance and active participation in class exercises and discussions. ENGL 340 emphasizes active learning, student involvement, and student experiences. You will be at the center of the teaching and learning that happens during our class conversations and activities, and your attendance is absolutely essential to the learning that happens here.

Thus, I take roll religiously. I believe in class attendance. Irregular attendance will hurt your grade and may cause you to fail. I do understand that every once in a while circumstances may make it impossible for you to attend. If you miss one or two classes during the semester, don't worry about it. If you miss more than that, your attendance may hurt your grade. Students who miss seven or more class sessions will receive zero points for attendance and participation (15% of your grade). Students who miss ten classes automatically fail the course. On the positive side, I reward good attendance and active class participation. Those who miss no sessions will receive five extra-credit points.

Grades. In determining final grades, each course requirement carries the following weight:

Attendance and participation	15%
Formal Paper #1	15%
Formal Paper #2	15%
Shorter and In-Class Writing Assignments	15%
Presentation	10%
Midterm Examination	10%
Final Examination	20%

Students with disabilities. If you need special accommodation in this course for a learning or physical disability, please contact Disabled Student Services in Holton Hall, Room 202 (532-6441), so that they may assist us in making arrangements.

The Honor Code. Kansas State University has an Honor Code, which stipulates that you should do all your academic work at the university individually. Do not collaborate on any academic work unless specifically approved by your instructor. On all of your assignments,

exams, and other course work, the following pledge is implied, whether or not it is explicitly stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."

Perhaps the most serious violation of the Honor Code in an English course is plagiarism, taking or copying someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; the truly gnarly XF grade for the course; and/or expulsion from the university

Complete copies of the academic dishonesty policy are available in the Office of Student Activities and Services in the Union, or you may visit the Honor System web page at www.ksu.edu/honor.

Course Listserv. During the first week of class, I will subscribe each member of the class by your K-State e-mail address/eID to an ENGL 340 listserv. I will then provide everyone with the listname. The purpose of this listserv is to try out ideas, to continue discussions and problem solving begun in class, and to facilitate communication among class participants outside of class. Posting to this listserv is not required; it is here strictly for our convenience. The only rule is this: all postings to the list should be related to our class in some way or another.

If you have technical questions about using a listserv, you might want to check out K-State's listserv information page www.ksu.edu/cns/services/listserv or contact the Help Desk: helpdesk@k-state.edu or 532-7722.



Li Young Lee

Texts and Resources

Required texts

The Norton Anthology of Poetry, 5th edition, edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy (Norton)

Susan Hahn, Confession (Chicago)

Recommended texts and supplies

Stephen J. Adams, *Poetic Designs: An Introduction to Meters, Verse Forms, and Figures of Speech* (Broadview)

T.V.F. Brogan, ed., *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Princeton)

A set of 3.5 floppy diskettes or USB flash drive

Important websites

The Norton Anthology of Poetry Workshop Online

- <http://www.wnorton.com/college/english/nap/>

The Encyclopedia of Literature

- Access available at <http://www.lib.ksu.edu/> > Databases > Literature > Literature Resource Center > Encyclopedia of Literature

The Oxford English Dictionary

- Access available at <http://www.lib.ksu.edu/> > Databases > All Subjects > Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

Glossary of Poetic Terms at Representative Poetry Online

- Access available at http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display_rpo/poetterm.cfm

ENGL 340 Poetry Class Website

- Access available at <http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl340/>

The Reading

Note on the Reading Assignments. Before you come to class, read and re-read carefully the assigned poems for that date. Read and re-read these poems until you feel comfortable talking about them or until you're ready to ask questions about them. You are responsible for all the poems listed for the day. During the class period prior to a reading assignment, I will usually designate a poem or two (or some aspect of the poems) for special attention.

Unless otherwise indicated, the page numbers listed on the Reading Schedule refer to *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (5th edition). Please read the very short biographical sketches about each of the day's assigned poets as well (see pages 2075-2139 in the *Norton*.)

If I've assigned a selection from Stephen Adams's *Poetic Designs* or the essays on "Syntax" and "Versification" in the Norton, I would encourage you to read those pages as well. If a poem has a link to The Norton Anthology of Poetry Workshop Online (designated by a ♣ below), you will not want to miss a look at those online materials.

Note on the Terms. You will want to become familiar with the vocabulary used in the study of poetry. Thus, particularly during this first part of the semester, I will ask you to learn several terms for each reading assignment. These terms are explained in the following places:

- *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*
- Stephen Adams's *Poetic Designs*
- The Norton Anthology of Poetry Workshop Online (which includes flashcards to help you learn the terms)
- The essays in the back of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*
- The online *Encyclopedia of Literature*
- The online *Oxford English Dictionary*
- The online Glossary of Poetic Terms at Representative Poetry Online

The reason I ask you to learn terms is that I want you to have a language for talking about what you see in poems. The purpose of this class is not to memorize as many terms as possible, but to learn how to read, analyze, and talk about poetry. Some of these terms may appear on the midterm or final, but I will not quiz you to see if you have memorized all the definitions for terms for the day. Instead, I will expect to see and hear you use these concepts to explain your interpretations of poems.

In other words, don't get hung-up on the terms. Get hung-up on the poems.

Introductory Reading Schedule

Aug 24W **How do poems mean?**

Reading: ♣ William Blake, "London," 744-45; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," 952-53; Emily Dickinson, 479 (712), 1119; Edward Arlington Robinson, "Miniver Cheevy," 1213-14; Billy Collins, "Litany," 1918; Yusef Komunyakaa, "Banking Potatoes," 1950. *Plus:* Jon Stallworthy, "Versification," 2027-28.

Assignment to bring to class: Read each of the poems carefully, and choose one. Write out its lines as if they were prose sentences. Make paragraphs where you think there should be paragraphs. Read this "prose" to yourself, and bring it to class. You may type or hand-write this assignment.

Terms: poetry, verse, lyric, punctuation, verse paragraph

Aug 26F **Do poems always mean something?**

Reading: John Skelton, "Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale," 90-91; ♣ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Kahn," 809-10; Edward Lear, poems, 1041-1044; Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky," 1135-36; Gertrude Stein, from "Stanzas in Meditation," 1248-1250; E. E. Cummings, "next to of course god America i," 1394; John Ashbery, "Brute Image," 1740.

Assignment: Read each of these poems carefully. Choose one and explain what it says or what it means in about a paragraph. Then choose one of the other poems, one that you do not understand, and write a paragraph that talks about the poem in an interesting, observant way without explaining the meaning of the poem. You may type or hand-write this assignment.

Terms: indeterminacy, nonsense verse

Aug 29M **Speakers and Personae**

Reading: ♣ Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," 256; Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses," 992-994; Charlotte Mew, "The Farmer's Bride," 1216-17; Bob Dylan, "Boots of Spanish Leather," 1854-55; Judith Wright, "Eve to Her Daughters," 1579-80; Craig Raine, "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home," 1943-44. *Plus:* Jon Stallworthy, "Versification," 2027-28.

Assignment: Make a list that briefly describes the speaker of each of these poems. Then choose one of the poems and write a more detailed (one-paragraph long) character analysis of the speaker and his/her/their/its situation.

Terms: persona, speaker, poet, epic poetry, dramatic poetry, dialogue, monologue, dramatic monologue