

LIT 3031 STUDIES IN POETRY

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This course is also *strongly recommended* for anyone who might consider going to graduate school in English, as well as anyone who just wants to understand about “the poetic,” in many ways the foundation of all artistic feeling.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

If human history and modern psychology have taught us anything, it is that the poetic impulse—our need to visualize, to fictionalize, to *play* with different paradigms of reality—has always existed at the root of the human experience. This course will study in detail primarily lyric poetry, in order to understand the technical interrelationships between poetic structure and meaning and the varied and complex ways by which human “themes” and reactions emerge—in short, *what* a poem means and *how* it comes to mean what it means.

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Prior training in studying and analyzing poetry is not required. If you don’t know much about poetry now, this course will change that. By the end of the term you will be expected to have learned and be able to demonstrate:

- ✓ ① a solid general knowledge of poetic devices, metrical forms, and other elements of poetics;
- ✓ ② the ability to do a discerning and meticulously detailed (line-by-line) analysis of a poem, showing a clear understanding of how the specifics of language, form, and structure create meaning; and
- ✓ ③ the ability to draw out and deal intelligently with the larger thematic patterns or philosophical issues in the poems.

The course assignments (and other requirements detailed below) are designed to ensure that you will have every opportunity to achieve (or enhance) these skills during the term, assuming a normal amount of conscientious effort.

THIS COURSE IS NOT A COURSE IN HOW TO WRITE POETRY. There are other courses and workshops for that. This course will analyze the themes and structures of poetry and the assumptions embedded in poems. You will surely learn a great deal about the logic and mechanics of poetry (which might help you to write poetry better). However, it is *even*

more important for you to learn sophisticated analytical skills that will transfer valuably to almost *any* subject matter—particularly, a precision in critical thinking and a sensitivity to the subtleties and nuances of language. I therefore intend that the texts in the course, however interesting they may be in themselves, will also serve as the raw material on which you can hone such skills.

BASIS FOR FINAL GRADE

Your grade will be based largely on how well you demonstrate clearly and effectively your ability to read and assimilate the material accurately. With that understanding, **your final grade will be computed based on the following:**

- 1 25%** — A detailed poem analysis of approximately 1000–2500 words (approximately 4–8 printed pages, double-spaced on 8½ x 11 white typing/printer paper), choosing for your analysis *one of the first TWELVE poems at the beginning of the photocopy packet, starting with “Self- Deception” and ending with “Adam’s Curse.”* For this exercise you may NOT write on any other poem except one of those twelve. To give you a blueprint for writing a poem analysis, a “Helpful-Hints” checklist has been included in the photocopy supplement, as have two good sample analyses by students from a 2000-level course. This poem-analysis paper is designed mostly to confirm that you have the basic critical-reading skills which you should have already acquired in more elementary courses (or to enable you to learn those skills, if you haven’t).

Therefore, if the analysis you submit is not reasonably accurate and technically solid, then you will be required to rewrite that paper until it is (the grade recorded for this assignment will be the average grade of all the papers you need to write to satisfy the assignment).

A checklist grading sheet, giving you an idea of what is expected in all papers, is included in the photocopy packet.

- 2 25%** — Another poem analysis on a poem in the Meyer textbook or the photocopy packets—*if* that poem has **NOT** been discussed in class.
- 3 35%** — Your average score on intermittent “*pop quizzes*” and scheduled **EXAMS** [Points on individual quizzes will be recorded as earned (80 = 80, etc.), except that any “A” quiz scores between 90 and 160 points—i.e., including credit for added bonus questions—will be converted to and recorded as a fixed-point value, as follows: perfect score = 105; high A = 100; lower A = 90.]. ⇨⇨ **I GIVE NO MAKE-UP QUIZZES OR EXAMS.** ⇦⇦ However, you

will be permitted to drop from your record the lowest 20% of your “pop quiz” grades, if you have *not* exceeded the cut limit (explained below)

- 4** **15%** — Your degree of *active class participation* and general preparedness during each class session. [Total points for helpful (as opposed to disruptive or irrelevant) class participation over the entire term will be awarded as follows: A = 10 points (speaking effectively in virtually every class session); A- = 9 (speaking effectively in almost every class session); B+ = 8.5 (speaking effectively every week); B = 8 (speaking every week, but not as effectively); B- (speaking about every other week effectively) C+ = 7.5 (speaking every other week, but not as effectively); C = 7 (speaking intermittently during the semester effectively); C- (speaking intermittently during the semester, but not as effectively); D+ = 6.5 (speaking rarely); D = 6 (speaking hardly at all); E = 5 (almost never speaking)].
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OPTIONAL:

As an option, students wishing to compensate for poor performances may substitute, up to **20%**, for their poor grades on any category of assignment or combination of assignments *one of the following*:

- (a) another poem analysis; or
- (b) a paper comparing the different views/assumptions of several authors who have written on a particular specific theme, using a discussion of portions of specific poems as evidence supporting your argument; or
- (c) a poem written by you, along with an attached detailed commentary on the logic of your poem and what techniques you attempted to utilize in it.

There is, of course, no guarantee that your optional paper will be good enough to better a weak performance; in fact, if the paper is worse, it would lower an already weak grade. So proceed carefully.

Students taking one of these above options must meet with me beforehand during office hours to discuss the options.

Final course grades will be awarded on the following scale: A = 93–100; A- = 90–92; B+ = 87–89; B = 83–86; B- = 80–82; C+ = 77–79; C = 73–76; C- = 70–72; D+ = 67–69; D = 63–66; D- = 60–62; E = 0–59.

For UF overall grade policy, see the following website:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

EACH STUDENT WILL BE HELD TO THE SAME STANDARDS AND

REQUIREMENTS (i.e., no special pleading, please).

GENERAL RULES AND POLICIES

I. ATTENDANCE:

(1) ***Prompt attendance is mandatory.*** You need to attend class, *and* you need to be ***on time*** for those class periods. If you take more than *three* hours of unexcused cuts (i.e., the *equivalent of one week's classes*), your final grade will be reduced one-half of a letter grade for each cut over the three-hour maximum. **PLEASE DON'T MISS CLASS!**

(2) You will be expected to be ***well prepared for*** and ***take an active role in*** class sessions. **IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING THAT IS SAID IN CLASS, PLEASE ASK!!!** I *much prefer* that you speak up and are wrong than for you not to speak at all.

II. WRITTEN WORK:

Since this is an upper-level English course, you are naturally expected to produce written work that is relatively free of grammatical/punctuation errors. (If you need a spot-check review, any grammar text should be able to answer any problem or resolve any confusion you have.) **All written work should be thoroughly proofread for misspelling and typographical errors.** Therefore, *any paper containing a number of basic-grammar or punctuation errors will suffer a substantial reduction in the grade it might have received on content alone.* **PLEASE PROOFREAD!**

III. DEADLINES:

All work must be turned in on time. *Late papers will get a substantial grade reduction (usually one letter-grade per class session late), and they will be graded without comments.* A paper will be considered late if turned in *any time* after the class session it is due. **Any written work more than one week late will not be accepted at all. You will receive a zero for that assignment.**

IV. "DEATH PENALTY" FOR CHEATING:

Yes, everyone knows that lots of people lie and cheat, even in the highly judgmental, efficiently-driven corporate world that prides itself on not tolerating employee mistakes (so, ironically, people become sorely tempted to lie and cheat, to avoid being fired). But my job is, among other things, to teach you how to reason clearly and precisely. Dishonest shortcuts defeat that purpose and ultimately turn potentially disciplined minds into lazy and inept mushmuckers.

So my approach to cheating is brutally simple: ***The first time you are caught cheating in any form, you fail the course. No second chances. No excuses.*** Furthermore, I automatically send a letter to the University Administration recommending that you be suspended or expelled from the University.

One of the most common and most misunderstood ways of cheating is plagiarism. Plagiarism is broader than just copying someone else's thoughts word for word. It includes many other kinds of intellectual theft. You should certainly take advantage of the expertise of gifted scholars; in general, it would be arrogant and foolish not to. But that does not mean that you can *steal* their ideas, which is what you are doing if you pass off someone else's points as your own. Any time you write something that incorporates someone else's ideas—no matter how much you may have reworded, reworked, or otherwise disguised them—you are obligated to give that person credit. Part of becoming educated is learning to appreciate and respect the discipline and hard work that previous scholars have put in, which has advanced knowledge of a subject to the point where you have found it. If you have any doubt about what constitutes cheating in any particular circumstances, ask my opinion. Better to be safe and informed than ignorant and expelled.

V. SEEK HELP AND ADVICE:

I am here to help you learn from this course. I HOPE YOU WILL FEEL FREE TO SPEAK WITH ME AT ANY TIME BEFORE CLASS, AFTER CLASS, DURING MY OFFICE HOURS, OR BY APPOINTMENT — PARTICULARLY (AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE) IF YOU ARE HAVING ANY PROBLEM.

My office is in 4336 Turlington Hall. My scheduled *office hours* this term will be during *10th period (5:10 PM–6:00 PM) on Tuesdays and Thursdays*. If you find that you cannot see me during my office hours and aren't able to talk to me *shortly before or after class*, please *telephone* or *e-mail* me. And, of course, as a last resort, we can try to set up an appointment for a mutually agreeable time to meet other than my normal office hours.

I am happy to make accommodations for students with disabilities. However, university policy mandates the following procedure: "Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation."

When all else fails, take a deep breath, concentrate, and don't forget that real learning is fun. So work hard, but also **BE SURE TO MAKE IT FUN FOR YOURSELF!**

REQUIRED TEXTS

Michael Meyer, *Poetry: An Introduction*, 7th edition (Bedford/St. Martin's: ISBN 13: 9781457607301)

Photocopy supplements (available at Orange and Blue Textbooks)

SCHEDULE

IMPORTANT DIRECTIONS:

- You are required to read all the poems contained within the pages of the assigned chapters in the textbook *Poetry: An Introduction*, by Michael Meyer. All assigned pages have important information, but be absolutely certain that you study carefully any pages I have [bracketed and italicized] for any particular week.
- It is very important that you read and take advantage of the guiding questions provided following almost all of the poems. If you don't, as the experience of previous students has repeatedly confirmed, you will handicap yourself crucially.
- Additional assigned poems (beyond those in the assigned chapters) are listed by name on this syllabus. Some can be found elsewhere in the textbook *Poetry* (indicated by page number), and some are in the photocopy supplemental packet, arranged alphabetically by author (indicated by having no page number).

- Week 1** Introduction to the course.
Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," p. 355.
- Week 2** Meyer: "Introduction: Reading Imaginative Literature," pp. 1–7.
Meyer: "Encountering Poetry: A Visual Portfolio," pp. 8–16.
John Ciardi, "Introduction"; ". . . an ulcer, gentlemen, is an unwritten poem."
Meyer: **Chapter 1**: "Reading Poetry," pp. 19–56 [21, 24–27, 38–39, 42–43, 53–55].

Ellen Kay, "Pathedy of Manners."
Marge Piercy, "Secretary's Chant"
- Week 3** Meyer: **Chapter 2**: "Writing About Poetry," pp. 57–64 [58–62].
Meyer: **Chapter 3**: "Word Choice, Word Order, and Tone," pp. 65–104 [68–70, 73, 76–79, 84–86, 90–93].
Thomas Hardy, "Ah, Are You Digging on my Grave?" "The Man He Killed," "The Ruined Maid," "A Broken Appointment," "Neutral Tones," "Channel Firing," "Hap," p. 607.
Margaret Atwood, "Landcrab," "Siren Song."
Ben Jonson, "Song: To Celia," p. 615.
Philip Sidney, "Loving in Truth . . ." [Sonnet #1, from *Astrophel and Stella*], p. 626.
Thomas Wyatt, "Song: Go Catch a Falling Star," "They Flee From Thee."
Archibald MacLeish, "Ars Poetica."
- Week 4** Meyer: **Chapter 4**: "Images," pp. 105–29 [110–13, 115, 117–18, 120–23, 128–29].
Meyer: **Chapter 11**, "Combining Elements of Poetry," pp. 287–97.

Meyer: **Chapter 27**, “Reading and the Writing Process,” pp. 666–700.
Carol Jane Bangs, “Touching Each Other’s Surfaces.”
Keith Douglas, “*Vergissmeinnicht*.”
Ted Hughes, “Pike.”
Adrienne Rich, “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers,” “Living in Sin.”
Barton Sutter, “Shoe Shop.”
Oscar Wilde, “Harlot’s House,” “Impression du Matin,” “*Hélas!*”

Week 5 Meyer: **Chapter 5**: “Figures of Speech,” pp. 130–52 [132–33, 137–38, 144, 146–48].
Poetic Terms Websites: e.g., <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/Define2.htm> and <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/Firsterm.htm> and there are many others on the web that you may find useful.
John Donne, “The Good Morrow,” “The Sun Rising,” “Elegie XIX: To His Mistris Going To Bed”; “Death Be Not Proud,” p. 289; “The Flea,” pp. 605–606.
Matthew Arnold, “Isolation. To Marguerite,” “To Marguerite—Continued.”
D. C. Berry, “On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High.”
Philip Larkin, “Toads.”
Alistair Reid, “Curiosity.”
May Swenson, “Lion.”
David Wagoner, “Being Herded Past the Prison’s Honor Farm.”

—**POEM ANALYSIS DUE** (on Thursday)—
Sharon Olds, “The Victims,” “Sex Without Love.”
Anne Sexton, “Pain for a Daughter.”

Week 6 Meyer: **Chapter 7**: “Sounds,” pp. 181–210 [185, 194–95, 199–200, 202–203, 207–209].
Rhyme website: <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/Define2.htm> (study the terms “exact rhyme” in the first column through “alliteration” in the second column).
Ernest Dowson, “To One in Bedlam,” “Dregs,” “A Last Word.”
John Keats, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci,” p. 505.
Edgar Allan Poe, “Annabel Lee.”
Elvis Presley, “Return to Sender.”
Arthur Symons, “Emmy,” “Nora on the Pavement,” “Prologue: Before the Curtain.”

Week 7 Meyer: **Chapter 8**: “Patterns of Rhythm,” pp. 211–34 [222–23, 228–33].
Meter Website: <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/meters.htm> (continued)
Ernest Dowson, “Vitae Summa Brevis Spem Nos Vetat Incohare Longam,” “Dumnos Fata Sinunt, Oculos Satiemus Amore,” “Non Sum Qualis

Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae,” “Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration,”
“Vain Hope,” “Yvonne of Brittany.”

A. E. Housman, “Is My Team Ploughing,” p. 611; “Bredon Hill,” “On
Moonlit Heath and Lonesome Bank,” “Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff.”
Excerpts from poems by **A. E. Housman**.

Week 8 **G. M. Hopkins**, “The Windhover,” p. 611; “Spring,” “Spring and Fall,” “The
Sea and the Skylark,” “Hurrahing in Harvest,” p. 610; “Pied Beauty,”
p. 611; “(Carrion Comfort),” “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not
day,” “No Worst, There is None.”

EXAM ON METER (counts as four quizzes).

Week 9 Meyer: **Chapter 6**: “Symbol, Allegory, and Irony,” pp. 153–63 [154–55,
158–59].

Meyer: “Glossary of Literary Terms,” pp. 709–25.

W. H. Auden, “*Musée des Beaux Arts*,” “The Unknown Citizen.”

Donald Baker, “Formal Application.”

Earle Birney, “Twenty-Third Flight.”

Sterling Brown, “Southern Cop.”

Emily Dickinson, “Because I could not stop for Death,” pp. 326–27.

Alan Dugan, “Song: I and Thou.”

Ray Durem, “Award.”

Seamus Heaney, “Mid-Term Break.”

M. Carl Holman, “Mr. Z.”

Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man.”

John Wakeman, “Love in Brooklyn.”

Week 10 Meyer: **Chapter 6**: “Symbol, Allegory, and Irony,” pp. 164–80 [164–67, 169,
173–74, 177].

Anthony Hecht, “Dover Bitch: A Criticism of Life” (compare with Arnold,
“Dover Beach,” p. 110), “More Light! More Light!”

Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B.”

Maxine Kumin, “Woodchucks.”

Sally Mitchell, “From the Journals of the Frog Prince.”

Marge Piercy, “Barbie Doll,” “September Afternoon at Four O’Clock,” “A
Story Wet As Tears,” “To Have Without Holding,” “A Work of
Artifice.”

Dorothy Parker, “A Certain Lady,” “Comment,” “Indian Summer,” “The
Little Old Lady in Lavender Silk,” “One Perfect Rose,” “Tombstones
in the Twilight.”

Edward Arlington Robinson, “The Mill,” “Miniver Cheevy,” “Mr. Flood’s
Party.”

EXAM ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, Chapters 1–8 (**counts as four**

quizzes).

- Week 11** —**SECOND POEM ANALYSIS DUE** (on Tuesday)—
Meyer: **Chapter 9:** “Poetic Forms,” pp. 241–69 [241–43, 247–51, 254, 258–59].
Stanzas Websites: <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/stanzas.htm> and
<http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/beginstanzas.htm>
Sonnets:
William Shakespeare, “Let Not the Marriage of True Minds,” “When My Love Swears She Was Made of Truth.”
Edna St. Vincent Millay, “[I being born a woman and distressed],” p. 503; “What Lips My Lips Have Kissed.”
Dramatic Monologues:
Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess,” p. 175; “The Laboratory,” “Porphyria’s Lover,” “Prospice,” “A Woman’s Last Word.”
T. S. Eliot, “Journey of the Magi.”
Villanelles:
Ernest Dowson, “Villanelle of Sunset,” “Villanelle of His Lady’s Treasures.”
Martha Collins, “The Story We Know.”
- Week 12** Meyer: **Chapter 10:** “Open Form,” pp. 265–86 [266–69, 272–73, 285–86].
Stanzas Websites: <http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/stanzas.htm> and
<http://www.uncg.edu/~htkirbys/beginstanzas.htm> (continued)
Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Constantly Risking Absurdity.”
Jenny Joseph, “Warning.”
Etheridge Knight, “The warden said to me.”
Denise Levertov, “Losing Track.”
Dylan Thomas, “The Force That through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower,” “The Hunchback in the Park” (click http://www.undermilkwood.net/poetry_thehunchback.html to hear Thomas read the poem).
e. e. cummings, “nobody loses all the time,” “Space Being . . . Curved.”
EXAM ON POETIC FORMS (counts as four quizzes).
- Week 13** Meyer: **Chapter 13:** “A Study of Robert Frost,” pp. 349–86.
Robert Frost, “Departmental,” “Nothing Gold Can Stay.”
- Week 14** —**OPTIONAL POEM ANALYSIS DUE**—
William Butler Yeats, “Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland,” “The Fascination of What’s Difficult,” “The Folly of Being Comforted,” “No Second Troy,” “Easter 1916,” “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven,” “Adam’s Curse,” “Among School Children,” “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop,” “Lapis Lazuli,”

“Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,” “Cold Heaven,” “The Second Coming,” p. 638; “Leda and the Swan,” p. 639; “Sailing to Byzantium,” p. 630; “The Circus Animals’ Desertion.”

Katharyn Howd Machan, “Leda’s Sister and the Geese.”

Week 15 EXAM ON POETIC FORMS AND TERMS (counts as six quizzes).