

EN 213: Poetry

3 Credits

Fall 2023



NASA image: "Earth's Poetic Muse"

Professor: Maggie Greaves

Time: MWF 9:05-10:00

Class location: PMH 201

Email: mgreaves@skidmore.edu

Office hours: M 1:30-3:30

Professor's office: PMH 309

Course Description

"If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry," Emily Dickinson wrote of this enthralling and often perplexing form. This course will introduce you to the analytical pleasures of reading, discussing, and writing about poetry. As we read poems from multiple cultures and historical periods, you will create a toolkit of terminology and methods for interpreting poetry. Assignments will include an essay, an exam, a recitation, poetry games, and a final project with a creative component.

Required Texts

- Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (Shorter 5th ed.)
- Glossary of terms at The Poetry Foundation:
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-terms?category=all>
- Course packet

Our textbook is available at the bookstore. If you purchase it elsewhere, be sure to get the correct edition. Other readings will be provided as a course packet distributed in class.

Course objectives

In EN 213, students will

- develop skills in close reading
- build a foundation in poetic terminology and methods of interpretation
- learn to read and analyze poems from a variety of cultures and time periods, identifying key literary devices, themes, and stylistic features

- explore the social and historical contexts in which poetry in English has been produced, with particular attention to questions of class, gender, race, and empire
- engage in collaborative and creative activities related to poetry, such as leading class discussion and writing original poems in response to the works we study
- develop the ability to write critically about poetry, crafting compelling arguments and interpretations of the works they encounter
- situate poetry within major literary movements, including Romanticism and modernism —while also learning to read poems across time periods
- become familiar with key critical approaches to poetry, such as formalism and historicism, and apply these approaches in their own analysis of poems
- hone research skills, learning how to find and evaluate credible sources of information about poetry and using these sources to support their arguments
- develop their oral communication skills through class discussions and recitations, learning to articulate their ideas and respond thoughtfully to the ideas of others
- use archival materials and site-based learning to enhance encounters with poems

Assignments and grading

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| Participation | 20% |
| Short writings/poetry games | 10% |
| Recitation | 5% |
| Partner-led discussion | 10% |
| Essay | 20% |
| Exam | 20% |
| Final project | 15% |

Participation

In this class, participation involves keeping up with the reading, responding thoughtfully to the reading and to your classmates, and engaging in small group work. Because many factors impact how much and in which ways students participate, I assess participation in multiple ways: class discussion, think-pair-share activities, quiet in-class activities, and reading quizzes. I encourage you to meet with me early in the semester if you encounter barriers to participation.

Short writings/poetry games (complete 8 of 10)

One of the best ways to learn to read poetry is to play with words, lines, and literary devices. Most weeks, you will have a short writing assignment and/or game to help you understand the machinery of a poem. Assignments will include a forgery exercise, color-coded charts of a poem's anatomy, puzzles, crosswords, and annotation competitions. Each assignment is posted on theSpring. These assignments are graded for completion. You have 10 opportunities to complete your required 8 exercises.

Recitation

Once during the semester, you will recite a poem of at least 8 lines from the syllabus. You'll be asked to reflect aloud on what you learned about the poem from memorizing it. If you have a

poem you *really* want to recite that's not on the syllabus, please talk to me in advance. Please take this opportunity to learn a new poem rather than to recite one you already know by heart.

Partner-led discussion

Once during the semester, you will partner with a classmate to lead discussion on a poem from the day's list of readings. You will conduct outside research to help you interpret the poem and situate it biographically, historically, and conceptually. Plan to set the poem up in 3-5 minutes before leading the class in a 10-15 minute discussion based on *two questions*. We will practice devising effective discussion questions in class.

Essay

You will write one essay that analyzes the relationship between form and content in one or two poems. The essay will also incorporate published criticism on poetry. You will receive detailed instructions prior to the due date.

Exam

Your exam will assess your knowledge of key terms, concepts, and poets. We will discuss the exam format and expectations in class.

Final project

For your final project, you will have the opportunity to write a second essay, produce an anthology of poems with a critical introduction, write three poetic imitations with accompanying artist statements, or create a poetry podcast. You will receive detailed instructions well in advance of the deadline.

Course Policies

Paper and late work policies

All papers should be formatted following MLA style. Assignments are penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late.

Attendance

You may miss up to 3 classes with no grading penalty. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, but please do let me know in advance if you won't be in class. For each absence after the first 3, your grade goes down by 1/3 of a letter. Keep in mind that if you miss excessive classes, you will also miss a lot of content that will make it difficult to do well on assignments.

Tardiness and leaving the room

Occasionally, you might be a few minutes late; occasionally, you might need to leave the room during class time. However, because these occurrences are distracting, and because we only get 55 minutes together per class, I ask that you do your best to be on time and remain in the classroom. Three instances of tardiness and/or leaving the classroom during class time=one absence.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Skidmore College is committed to supporting the learning needs of all students in our diverse community. If you have a documented barrier to learning or think you may have a disability, please consult with Meg Hegener, Associate Director of SAS and Coordinator of Student Access Services (mhegener@skidmore.edu). Accommodations are approved by the coordinator following a review of students' documentation. If you are approved for academic accommodations, please provide your letter of accommodations to me early in the semester or as soon as you are approved so that we can proactively coordinate implementation. Academic accommodations based on disability cannot be granted by individual faculty. For further information, please call (518) 580-8150 to contact Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

Conscientious Religious Observance Policy

Skidmore College acknowledges that our community is one of many faiths with a diverse range of practices and observances important to each tradition. In order to fulfill our mission to educate a diverse population of talented students and our commitment to inclusion regardless of religious and spiritual tradition, we seek to practice an equitable and consistent approach in providing religious accommodations. If religious observance requires absence from class or you anticipate a conflict with assignments or due dates, please notify your instructor **prior** to the absence or conflict so that accommodations can be arranged. Although not required, please provide notification about a pending religious holiday at the start of the semester or at least one week before the holiday. As an option, students may use the form available at www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar (or [here](#)). According to policy, accommodations for your absence should not reduce the overall expectations of a course nor unduly burden the student requesting accommodation. Students shall not suffer academic, athletic, or employment penalties because of the conscientious observance of any religious day or days. Faculty must permit students to take a makeup examination without any penalty if they miss an examination due to religious observances. Similarly, faculty must permit students to submit missed assignments by an agreed upon due date, without penalty. If a student, supervisor, coach, or faculty member feels the policy is being violated, they should contact the Dean of Faculty Office at 518-580-5705 (Palamountain 416), the Dean of Students Office at 518-580-5760 (Case Center 313), or Human Resources at 518-580-5800 (Barrett Center first floor). The full policy can be found at www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar.

Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct: Title IX Statement

Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal and state regulations. Skidmore College faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and options for reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the

student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, the Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates (anonymous) are all options available.

More information can be found at the Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct [website](#) or by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, Joel Aure (jaure@skidmore.edu), 580-5708, or Deputy Coordinator for Student Affairs, Gabriela Melillo (gmelillo@skidmore.edu), 580-5022.

Academic Honesty

As a member of an intellectual community in this class and at Skidmore College, you are expected to respect intellectual property—both your own and others'. Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas without proper citation and acknowledgement of the nature and extent of your use. Other forms of academic dishonesty include multiple submissions of your own work and cheating on assignments. I am honor-bound to report *all* violations of the Honor Code. Review the Honor Code in your student handbook, accessible online at https://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/honor-code.php. Violating the Honor Code for any assignment will result in a 0 on that assignment.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Skidmore College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community in which members develop their abilities to live in a complex and interconnected world. Consistent with our educational mission, we recognize ourselves as a community that respects individual identities based on varying sociocultural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, religious and spiritual tradition, age, ability, socioeconomic status and learning style. We strive to create a socially just world that honors the dignity and worth of each individual, and we seek to build a community centered on mutual respect and openness to ideas—one in which individuals value cultural and intellectual diversity and share the responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment. We recognize that our community is most inclusive when all members participate to their full capacity in the spirited and sometimes challenging conversations that are at the center of the college's educational mission.

Course Schedule

- All assignments are due by the start of class on the day listed.
- All readings and other materials are to be completed *prior to* the class session for which they are listed. “CP” stands for “course packet.” If not marked CP, all poems are in your anthology.

| Day | Week | Class Topic | Reading | Assignment Due |
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| 9/6 W | 1 | Syllabus | Robert Hayden, drafts of “Those Winter Sundays” (distributed in class) | |
| 9/8 F | | Poetic riddles | Poetic riddles packet: Anglo Saxon riddles; e.e. cummings, “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r”; Sylvia Plath, “Metaphors”; Tracy K. Smith, “Einstein’s Mother” (CP) <i>Poetics background reading:</i> Stephanie Burt, “Don’t Read Poetry” (on theSpring) | Short Writing 1: Favorite poem interview |
| 9/11 M | 2 | Old English versification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Caedmon’s Hymn” • <i>Beowulf</i>, lines 1-25 • Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Carrion Comfort” • Kemi Alabi, “We Would Hex the President But” (CP) | |
| 9/13 W | | Ballads, hymns, and folksongs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anon., “Western Wind” • Robert Herrick, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” • John Newton, “Amazing Grace” (CP and listen online) • Bob Dylan, “Blowin’ in the Wind” (CP and listen online) | |
| 9/15 F | | The Romantic ballad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Wordsworth, “The Tables Turned,” “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways,” “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” • John Keats, “La Belle Dame sans Merci” | Short Writing 2 |

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| 9/18 M | 3 | Emily Dickinson's hymn meter | Emily Dickinson, #s 260, 269, 314, 320, 340, 372, 479, 591, 764, 1263 | |
| 9/20 W | | Ballads of the Harlem Renaissance and after | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langston Hughes, "Cross" • Countee Cullen, "Incident" • Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till" (CP) and "we real cool" | |
| 9/22 F | | Haiku | Haiku packet: poems by Basho, Buson, Ezra Pound, Richard Wright, Paul Muldoon, Marilyn Chin (CP) | Short Writing 3 |
| 9/25 M | 4 | Image and emotion | Rita Dove, "Adolescence I," "Adolescence II," "Parsley," "Geometry," "Dawn Revisited" (CP) <i>Background material: Poetry Unbound podcast episode with Rita Dove (linked on theSpring)</i> | |
| 9/27 W | | Rita Dove visits class | Rita Dove, "Daystar," "Exit," "Persephone, Falling" (CP) | Short Writing 4: Rita Dove questions |
| 9/29 F | | Scansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Campion, "Now Winter Nights Enlarge" • W.B. Yeats, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" • Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" • William Blake, "The Tyger" • Countee Cullen, "Heritage" • Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" | |
| 10/2 M | 5 | | Recitation Day | Recitation |
| 10/4 W | | Scansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edgar Allan Poe, "Annabel Lee" • Edward Lear, "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" | |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hardy, “The Voice” • Isabella Gardner, “At a Summer Hotel” (CP) | |
| 10/6 F | | Sonnets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Wyatt, “Whoso list to hunt” and “They flee from me” • William Shakespeare, Sonnets 1, 18, 55, 116, 130 <p><i>Poetics reading:</i> Sonnet handout on theSpring</p> | Short Writing 5 |
| 10/9 M | 6 | No class; study day | | |
| 10/11 W | | Sonnets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Drayton, “Farewell to Love” • Sir Philip Sidney, “What Length of Verse?” and <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> 1 • Mary Wroth, <i>Pamphilia to Amphilanthus</i> 1 • John Milton, “When I Consider How My Light Is Spent” | |
| 10/13 F | | Sonnets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Wordsworth, “Scorn Not the Sonnet” • Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias” • John Keats, “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” and “Bright Star” • Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnets from the Portuguese XLIII | Essay due Sun., 10/15, by 11:59 PM to theSpring |
| 10/16 M | 7 | Class meets in Pohndorff Room for sonnet materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Frost, “The Oven Bird,” “Design,” and “The Silken Tent” • Edna St. Vincent Millay, “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed” • Terrance Hayes, “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” (CP) | |

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| 10/18 W | | Stanzas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Herbert, “The Temple,” “Easter Wings,” “The Flower” • W.B. Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” • Lucille Clifton, “oh antic god” | |
| 10/20 F | | Heroic couplets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Pope, from “Essay on Man” • Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” • Wilfred Owen, “Strange Meeting” | Short Writing 6 |
| 10/23 M | 8 | Couplets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natasha Trethewey, “Theories of Time and Space” • Tracy K. Smith, “Sci Fi” • Ada Limon, “The Contract Says, We’d Like the Conversation to be Bilingual” • Emily Leithauser, “Cardiac Flicker” | |
| 10/25 W | | Tercets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Frost, “Acquainted with the Night” • Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man” • Philip Larkin, “Talking in Bed” • Gwendolyn Brooks, “kitchenette building” • Natasha Trethewey, “Myth” | |
| 10/27 F | | Villanelles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They Might Be Giants, “Hate the Villanelle” (CP and listen online) • Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art” • Tracy K. Smith, “Solstice” (CP) <p><i>Poetics reading:</i> Background on the villanelle (on theSpring)</p> | Short Writing 7 |
| 10/30 | 9 | Sestinas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Bishop, “Sestina” | |

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| M | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Hecht, “The Book of Yolek” • Alberto Ríos, “Nani” (CP) • Randall Mann, “The Mortician in San Francisco” (CP) <p><i>Poetics reading:</i> Background on the sestina (theSpring)</p> | |
| 11/1 W | | The Romantic ode | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” • Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind” • Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” <p><i>Poetics reading:</i> Background on the ode (theSpring)</p> | |
| 11/3 F | | Contemporary odes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon Olds, “Ode to the Hymen” (CP) • Lucille Clifton, “to my last period” (CP) • Kevin Young, “Ode to the Midwest” (CP) • Kwame Dawes, “Ode to the Clothesline” (CP) • Ross Gay, “Ode to the Puritan in Me” (CP) | Short Writing 8 |
| 11/6 M | 10 | Elegies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Herrick, “Upon a Child That Died” • Katherine Philips, “Epitaph” • W.H. Auden, “Funeral Blues” • Natasha Trethewey, “Graveyard Blues” | |
| 11/8 W | | | Exam Review; bring in questions from review packet | |
| 11/10 F | | | Exam | Exam due by end of class |

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| 11/13 M | 11 | Ghazals | Poems by Rumi, Faiz, and Agha Shahid Ali (CP) | |
| 11/15 W | | Pohndorff Room visit for artists' books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Blake, "The Lamb," "The Sick Rose" • Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" • Yusef Komunyakaa, "Facing It" • Eavan Boland, "That the Science of Cartography Is Limited" | |
| 11/17 F | | Poets talking to the moon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sappho, moon fragments (CP) • Sir Philip Sidney, "Astrophil and Stella 31" • Shelley, "To the Moon" • Jean Toomer, "Evening Song" • Wallace Stevens, "Lunar Paraphrase" • W.H. Auden, "This Lunar Beauty" • Margaret Wise Brown, <i>Goodnight, Moon</i> (link on theSpring) • Timothy Yu, "Moon" (CP) <p><i>Background reading:</i> Mary Ruefle, "Poetry and the Moon" (linked on theSpring)</p> | Short Writing 9 |
| 11/20 M | 12 | Poets in the city | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Blake, "London" • T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" • Maya Angelou, "Awaking in New York" (CP) • Monica Youn, "Venice, Unaccompanied" (CP) • Ada Limon, "The Last Move" (CP) | |
| | | | 11/22-26: Thanksgiving Vacation | |
| 11/27 M | | Love poetry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Ben Jonson, "Song: To Celia" • George Herbert, "Love" | |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” • Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “How Do I Love Thee?” • W.B. Yeats, “When You Are Old” | |
| 11/29 W | | Love poetry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sappho fragments (CP) • Frank O’Hara, “Animals” (CP) • Audre Lorde, “Love Poem” (CP) • Adrienne Rich, from <i>21 Love Poems</i> (CP) • Richie Hofmann, “French Novel” (CP) • Chen Chen, “Winter” (CP) | |
| 12/1 F | | Class meets at the Tang for ekphrastic poetry | Ekphrastic poems by William Carlos Williams, Joy Harjo, Monica Youn, Edward Hirsch, David Hernandez (all in CP) | Short Writing 10 |
| 12/4 M | 14 | List poems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Herbert, “Prayer (I)” • Nazim Hikmet, “Things I Didn’t Know I Loved” (CP) • Holly Iglesias, “Aftermath” (CP) • Andrea Gibson, “Tincture” (CP) | |
| 12/6 W | | | BYOP (Bring Your Own Poem) for group activity Discussion of final projects | |
| 12/8 F | | Course conclusions | | |

Final paper/project due by 12/15 at 5 PM

*The above schedule is subject to modifications. If I ever update readings and/or due dates, it will be to your advantage (that is, you won’t have an *earlier* deadline), and I will post an updated syllabus to theSpring prior to any affected class periods.