

**Critical Reading and Writing: Poetry**  
College of the Holy Cross, Fall 2002  
MWF 12:00-1:00 pm, Stein 202

Instructor: Paige Reynolds  
Office Hours: Fenwick 230, F 1:00-2:00 or by appointment  
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**Texts:** J. Paul Hunter. *The Norton Introduction to Poetry*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Norton)  
Dawn Rodrigues and Myron C. Tuman. *Writing Essentials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Norton)

**Course Objectives:** In this course, you'll learn how to read poetry closely and critically. We'll begin by exploring why authors choose poetry to express their ideas and feelings, and by practicing fundamental research and writing skills. From there, we'll focus on sonnets from the seventeenth century to the present in order to practice and develop those skills further. Next, we'll play around with different poems – asking how they use language and form, why they invoke art or music to communicate ideas, how they mock or celebrate poetic tradition, and other interesting questions. Finally, we'll work together to unravel the meanings in a series of difficult poems. In addition to our efforts in class, you'll be asked to think hard outside of class through a variety of assignments and papers. Throughout the semester, we'll use poetry to hone your capacity to express your ideas about literature both in discussions and in written analyses. Plus, you'll (hopefully!) discover that it's fun to read, think, and write about poetry.

**Coursework:**

**Class participation (10%):** Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. There isn't a tremendous amount of reading for this class, but you are expected to read the assigned material quite closely. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than six absences mean you likely will not pass the course.

**Assignments (15%):** For many classes, I will assign questions that ask you to think critically about the assigned poems. Or I will ask you to generate your own questions and claims about the reading. Some of these assignments are already in the syllabus -- others I will hand out in class sessions. Your written responses to these questions will help to generate a more lively and analytical class discussion. The assignments must be written out -- handwriting is encouraged, but it must be coherent (and neat) enough for outside readers to understand. The assignments will be graded, albeit more loosely than your formal papers. If you miss a class when I collect these, you will receive a zero for that particular assignment; however, I will drop at least one of these grades before determining your final "assignment" cumulative grade.

**Library Tour (5%):** We'll meet at the library, and you'll go on a "treasure hunt" for sources that can help you answer research questions. Your "team" of treasure-hunters will complete a worksheet to be turned in for a grade.

**Short Papers (30% total, 10% each):** You will be required to write three short papers about poems we read. We will discuss the expectations for each paper in class prior to the due date. You will also be responsible for peer reviews of the first drafts of these papers.

**Group Presentation (5%):** You will work with a small group of peers to read and interpret a poem. You'll then be responsible for leading the class through a discussion of your interpretation.

**Final Paper (20%):** In this longer paper (6 pgs.), you will write a critical paper about a poem. In this paper, you will make a contestable claim about the poem (based on your interpretation of the poem you select), then support that claim with evidence and analysis. This grade will be based on your first draft of the paper and your peer review.

**Final Exam (15%):** For the final, you will be asked to write a cogent in-class analysis of a poem.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** For these written assignments, I will expect your paper to be in proper MLA form. These papers will be typed, double-spaced, stylistically and grammatically correct.

**Recitation (extra credit):** For extra credit, you may recite a memorized poem from our anthology. This performance will demand that you know one poem inside out, that you study the textures of language, to convey what you know about this work.

**Basic Ground Rules:**

- Plan to meet with me during office hours at least once this semester. Also, please feel free to talk with me about reading or writing during office hours.
- Be prepared for a few changes in the syllabus, if we see that class needs demand those changes.
- Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, even after our class discussions about the topic, ask me questions.
- Late papers are penalized 1/3 of a grade for each date they are late, including weekends. So Friday's A- is Monday's B-.
- Don't forget about the Writer's Center (1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Dinand Library) as a resource – they're particularly good at helping you with basic style and grammar problems.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

*Why Poetry?*

W 9/4 Alexander, "Nineteen" (handout)

F 9/6 Alexander, "Nineteen"  
Writing and Research: Plagiarism and Using the Internet  
**Assignment 1**

M 9/9 Pound, "The River Merchant's Wife" (6)  
Writing and Research: Summary  
**Assignment 2**

W 9/11 Donne, "[Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you]" (167)  
Writing and Research: Using the OED

F 9/13 Blake, "London" (32)  
Writing and Research: Paraphrase  
**Assignment 3**

*Reading and Understanding Poetry: The Sonnet*

M 9/16 Frost, "Design" (286)  
**Assignment 4**

W 9/18 Milton, "[When I consider how my light is spent]" (258)  
Writing and Research: Explication

F 9/20 Wordsworth, "Nuns Fret Not" (254)  
Writing and Research: The First Paragraph.  
**Assignment 5**

M 9/23 Shelley, "Ozymandias" (265)  
Writing and Research: MLA Format

## Assignment 6

W 9/25 Millay, “[I, being born a woman and distressed]” (403)

## Assignment 7

F 9/27 Shakespeare, “[Full many a glorious morning I have seen]” (107)

## Assignment 8

### *What Do They Mean By That?: The Tools to Better Understand Poetry*

M 9/30 Library “Treasure Hunt” [Meet at reserve desk in Dinand at NOON SHARP!!!!]

## Paper 1 Due: Explication

W 10/2 Boland, “Pomegranate” (handout)

Writing and Research: Explication to Analysis (the “so what?”)

## Assignment 9

F 10/4 Yeats, “Easter 1916” (554)

## Assignment 10

M 10/7 Yeats, “Easter 1916” (554)

## Treasure Hunt Work Due

W 10/9 Musgrave, “You Didn’t Fit” (45)

Writing and Research: Body Paragraphs

## Assignment 11

F 10/11 **Group Presentations 1 and 2:** Piercy, “Barbie Doll” (26); Hayden, “Those Winter Sundays” (44)

M 10/14 Columbus Day, no class

W 10/16 Olds, “The Victims” (233); student writing sample (247-249).

## Assignment 12

### *Finding Your Own Voice: Creative Ways to Engage with Poetry*

F 10/18 Heaney, “Punishment” (388)

## Assignment 13

M 10/21 Burns, “A Red, Red Rose” (164); Blake, “The Sick Rose” (180); H.D., “Garden” (handout)

## Paper 2: Draft Due

W 10/23 McKay, “The White House” (257); MacNeice, “Sunday Morning” (handout)

## Paper 2: Peer Revision Sheet Due

F 10/25 **Group Presentations 3 and 4:** Atwood, “Death of a Young Son by Drowning” (65); Heaney, “Digging” (499)

M 10/28 Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” (266); Bishop, “Sestina” (267)

## Paper 2 Due: Include Final Version, Drafts, Peer Critiques

W 10/30 Cherry, “Alzheimer’s” (46)

F 11/1 **Group Presentations 5 and 6:** Nemerov, “The Town Dump” (187); Moore, “Poetry” (266-267)

M 11/4 Text and Sound: Harper, “Dear John, Dear Coltrane” (213); Hopkins, “Pied Beauty” (138)

W 11/6 Text and Image: Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts" (284); Ali, "Postcard from Kashmir" (52)

F 11/8 Text and Image and Sound: Van Gogh, "Starry Night"; Sexton, "Starry Night"; Maclean, "Starry, Starry Night"

***Putting It Together***

M 11/11 Larkin, "Church Going" (228)

**Paper 3 Due**

W 11/13 Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (485)

**Assignment 14**

F 11/15 Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

M 11/18 Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (303)

**Assignment 15**

W 11/20 Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

F 11/22 Rich, "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" (316)

**Assignment 16**

M 11/25 Rich, "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"

W 11/27 Thanksgiving Break, no class

F 11/29 Thanksgiving Break, no class

M 12/2 Catch-up Day; Group Discussions

W 12/4 Writing Workshop: In-class draft critiques

**Paper 4: Draft Due**

F 12/6 Vona Groarke, selections from *Flight*

M 12/9 Review for final.

**Paper 4 Due: Include Final Version, Drafts, Critiques**

W 12/11 Study Period

**Final Exam: Friday, December 20 at 2:30**