What are Poems for?

COURSE OBJECTIVES
What is poetry, and what is it for? In this introductory course, we will explore answers to this question, first, by reading great poetry—great poetry of the past as well as great contemporary poetry—and, second, by reading, alongside poems, what poets, philosophers, and other readers have said about poetry. Percy Shelley wrote that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," and Aristotle wrote, long ago, that poetry was truer than history. In this course, we will investigate these and other claims about the importance of poets and poetry in the light of our own reading and experience of poems.

STARTING POINTS
Life is energy and energy is creativity. And even when individuals pass on, the energy is retained in the work of art, locked in it and awaiting release if only someone will take the time and the care to unlock it. Marianne Moore

If our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in the old cycles, our process may be 'revolutionary' but not transformative. Adrienne Rich

My silences have not protected me.
Your silence will not protect you. Audre Lorde

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. Percy Bysshe Shelley

Poets are the legislators of the unacknowledged world. George Oppen

Poetry is a way of taking life by the throat. Robert Frost.

... not the assertion that something is true, but the making of that truth more fully real to us. T.S. Eliot

A poet’s work is to name the unnameable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world, and stop it going to sleep. Salman Rushdie

You can tear a poem apart to see what makes it tick.... You're back with the mystery of having been moved by words. The best craftsmanship always leaves holes and gaps... so that something that is not in the poem can creep, crawl, flash or thunder in. Dylan Thomas
REQUIRED TEXTS

Heavenly Questions. Gjertrude Schnackenberg.
Additional shorter readings are available online.

Useful Websites

A Glossary of Terms (poetry):
http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/glossaryIndex.do

A Glossary of Rhetorical Terms:
http://www.uky.edu/AS/Classics/rhetoric.html

The Forest of Rhetoric
http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm

REQUIRED TIME

From UO Catalog: “In planning a term’s studies, students should anticipate that each credit requires at least three hours a week for class meetings or homework.” This is a 4 credit course, so plan for 12 hours a week. That's three in class and nine outside of class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Writing
Two essays. I will provide instructions and grading rubrics for each of these assignments. One will be a close reading of a poem (800-1200 words) that helps to shed light on what a poem might be for. The other will be a more general attempt to answer the question of the course based on your reading of a particular poet or a particular group of poems (1000-1500 words).

Participation
We will have reading each day of class that must be completed before class begins. Each day you come to class, come prepared to participate. You should have read all the poems before class begins. Bring your book to class each day that we are reading poems from it. If there are poems posted online, print them out and bring them to class with you, too.

Attendance is required. I take attendance each day. Be sure that I call your name each day, and shout out if I do not. If you are late, and miss my taking attendance, it is your responsibility to notify me, at the end of class, that you have attended. I will calculate final grades directly from my records, and I cannot fairly accommodate requests to correct my records for past class meetings. To cover illness or other events that make it impossible for you to attend, you are allowed three absences (one week of class). I recommend saving those absences for illness, athletic events, or unforeseen demands on your time. If you get sick with something contagious, do
not come to class as long as you are contagious. If the illness lasts for longer than a week, or if a situation beyond your control causes you to miss more than three classes, be sure to contact me, before the absences have accumulated, so that we can agree on a course of action. Written work may be submitted electronically if you are sick.

Being on time at 11am is also required. Lateness counts in considering your participation.

**Grades**

Essay #1 – 45% of grade
Essay #2 – 55% points

Participation counts and may raise or lower your total.

If you turn the first essay in late, you will lose 5 points for each day it is late up to 25 points. After five days, no credit will be given for the essay. The final paper is due any time before 10:15am on Thursday, March 22. Do not email your final paper. It should be slipped under my office door at 258 PLC. Late papers cannot be accepted.

After the first 3 absences, for *each* of the next three absences, your final grade will be reduced by one step (e.g. a B becomes a B-, a B- a C+, and so forth). After six absences, *each* absence will reduce the grade by two steps.

If an emergency arises or a situation out of your control temporarily prevents you completing work on time, contact me immediately so that we can agree on a plan—before the work is due if that is at all possible, but as soon as possible in any case. Email is the best way of reaching me.

**COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Please include your name, the date you are submitting the work, the course number or name, and my name on your written work.
Please give your written work a title.
You should staple papers that have multiple pages.
Papers should be double spaced, with one inch margins.
Please use a 12 or 14 point font.
There are computers available for you to use in the Knight Library and in other locations on campus.
Written work may be submitted in class or under my door at PLC 258.
I accept electronic written work only in cases of illness or emergency.
RESPECT, CONSIDERATION, AND PARTICIPATION

The course requires your active involvement. Active and respectful participation is inconsistent with cell phone use, texting, internet surfing, side conversations, arriving late, leaving early, sleeping, distracting other people, and coming to class unprepared. If you do not give your full attention, you will not receive what the course has to offer. Listen to others respectfully, and expect the same of them. And feel free to speak up. What you have to say is important and unique. It will take effort and the best kind of cooperation to unlock the energies in the poems we will read. This will require respectful attention to each other, and probably some kindness toward one another, too.

A LITTLE MORE

If you have a disability that may affect your ability to participate in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for your full access.

Please be aware also that the Teaching and Learning Center (68 PLC; phone: 346-3226) provides support for all students. The Center offer tutors to help you with your writing assignments and provides other kinds of academic help. Look into it. Your fees help to pay for this.

An “Incomplete” can be given only in cases when some minor but essential aspect of the course cannot be completed because of unforeseen circumstances beyond a student’s control.

All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. If you plagiarize or cheat, the penalty may be an “F” in the course.

The use of sources (for example, other people’s language or paraphrases of their language or ideas) must be properly documented. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.
Schedule

Week 1

M 1/9  Introductions


Week 2

M 1/16  Martin Luther King Jr. Day  NO CLASS


Week 3


Week 4


Week 5

M 2/6 Read: Aquinas and Dante selections (Blackboard). Read: Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur” (169) and “Pied Beauty” (170). Mark Doty, “Messiah” (Blackboard).


F 2/10 Read: Robert Frost, “The Road not Taken” (190). Louise MacNeice, “Entirely” (Blackboard).

Week 6


F 2/17 W.B. Yeats, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” (175). “The Second Coming” (178). First paper due by 3pm under door at 258 PLC.

Week 7

M 2/20 Read Emerson, “The Poet” (Blackboard).
Read: Walt Whitman (TBA)

W 2/22 Walt Whitman (TBA)

F 2/24 Walt Whitman (TBA)
Week 8


W 2/29 Heavenly Questions (Gjertrude Schnackenberg): 25-42.

F 3/2 Heavenly Questions (Gjertrude Schnackenberg): 43-64.

Week 9


W 3/7 Emily Dickinson (158-164).


Week 10


F 3/16 No Class. Special Office Hours.

Final paper due any time before 10:15am, Thursday, March 22, under door at PLC 258.