Lyric

This course explores many forms and ideas of the lyric -- and “lyricism” -- in a range of historical periods and in a variety of genres and media, from Sappho’s fragments and the sonnets of Shakespeare and Donne to the “lyrical ballads,” songs, and odes of British Romanticism and the American lyrical experiments of Dickinson and Whitman through the work of modernist and post-modernist lyric poets as well as the “lyrics” of contemporary popular music in many of its forms.

There is no consensus about the classification or definition of the “lyric,” but there are many vibrant explorations of this term and the various literary and cultural practices it might describe. For some authors and critics, lyric poetry announces a new deepened experience of selfhood, and a poetry that emphasizes the subjective voice in its private or “interior” moments, “overheard” by readers. For others, the lyric refers to any non-narrative poem that stresses its own musical qualities. Some artists and critics believe that the “lyric” refers to an intense experience -- what the poet Wordsworth calls a “spot of time” -- that erupts and “arrests” the chronological unfolding of temporality. Though the lyric is most often associated with poetic verse, there are prose fiction writers, filmmakers, and videographers who believe that the “lyric” or the “lyrical” is something that can be experienced in any medium. Over the course of this term, we will explore a wide range of “lyric” possibilities in narrative film, television, prose fiction, and contemporary music as well as certain forms of poetry.

It is my hope that the primary learning outcomes of this course for students will be 1) a rich engagement with important literary and cultural forms we categorize as “lyric”; 2) an understanding of the formal and rhetorical features of certain modes of lyrical poetry (ballads, sonnets, odes, “free verse”); 3) an ability to apply these aspects of the lyric to other media; and 4) an opportunity to reflect on contemporary and future forms of the lyric as a mode of cultural experience.

Advisory, Attendance and Policies Students should be advised that some of what we will read or see or hear in this course contains graphic language and disturbing images of violence. I will do my best to alert you in advance to any such material, most of which pertains to controversial contemporary cultural representations of race and sexuality.
At the time of this writing, university policies stipulate the course to be conducted “in-person.” I will do my best to monitor and follow the university’s directions on Covid contingencies. Unless otherwise directed, students are expected to attend each session in person; and class attendance/participation will be factored into the final course grade. You may use laptops or tablets to access the uploaded readings during class sessions, but please keep your screen viewing focused on the course material and please turn off cell phones. This is a discussion-oriented class, but please refrain from “side” conversations during class sessions. Review the University policy regarding academic dishonesty that can be found in the Schedule of Classes: the policy will be strictly enforced in this class.

**Required Texts** Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Norton Critical Edition), available at the University of Oregon Bookstore. All other literary, musical and visual texts will be uploaded weekly to Canvas. The two feature films -- Terence Malick’s *The Thin Red Line* and Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man* -- are available to rent online. I expect all assigned texts (poems, prose, or videos on Canvas, Emily Brontë’s novel, or the films by Malick and Jarmusch) to be read or viewed in advance of the class meeting in which they will be discussed.

**Assignments and Grading** Introductory Diagnostic Exam 10%/ Midterm Exam 20%/ Two Writing Assignments 15% each/ Comprehensive Final Exam 30%/ Participation 10%

Assigned readings and videos will uploaded each week to Canvas “Modules.” For each weekly module, I will also upload brief introductions to the texts and questions for our class discussions. These introductions and questions should be helpful as review materials for the exams. Please note that the readings and “viewings” listed in the syllabus are subject to change over the course of the term: these changes will be designed to reflect ideas and incorporate examples that emerge during our discussions. Though we may not discuss in class each and every assigned text, you are expected to read or view them all carefully and you may be asked questions on exams about texts we’ve not discussed in class. Please check Announcements and Modules for final accounting of assigned texts. Please let me know what pronouns bt which you choose to be addressed.

The two writing assignments are not conventional five-paragraph “critical essays.” Instead, I will present writing prompts for essay responses: both assignments are designed to be two-pages, single-space. Exams will include short answers (2-3 sentences) and/or brief essays.
ENG 205: Lyric
Schedule of Readings and Assignments
(subject to change)

1. Ideas and Modes of the Lyric
4 Jan: Course Introduction: From Lyrics to Lyricism

6 Jan: Line Breaks/ Lyric Arrest/ Lyric Address
   Smog, “River Guard”/ Emily Dickinson, “This was a Poet”/ Percy Shelley, from “Ode to the West Wind”/ John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”/ Frank O’Hara, “The Day Lady Died”/ Jorie Graham, “Vertigo”

11 Jan: Lyric Image/ Lyric Excess/ Lyric Experience

13 Jan: Introductory diagnostic essay exam (on Canvas) (10%)

2. Three Forms of Lyric Poetry
18 Jan: ballads

20 Jan: sonnets

25 Jan: odes and hymns

27 Jan: Emily Dickinson & Walt Whitman

1 Feb: Frank O’Hara & Ai
3 Feb: William Carlos Williams & Jorie Graham

First Writing Assignment Due: 4 Feb
4. Lyric and Narrative
8 Feb: Emily Brontë, lyric poems, *Wuthering Heights*
10 Feb: Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

15 Feb: Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
17 Feb: **Midterm exam (on Canvas) (20%)**


5. Lyric Cinema, Television, and Video
24 Feb: Terrence Malick, *The Thin Red Line* (film)

1 Mar: Jim Jarmusch, *Dead Man* (film)


10 Mar: Final Exam Review

**Second Writing Assignment Due: 11 March**

16 Mar (Wednesday): 12:30-2:30 **Final Exam (on Canvas)**