

Madeleine A. Vala, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Fall 2018

English 3219
TTh 11:30-12:50
PED 106

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

My Contact Information

Office: AJBR 240

Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-2:30pm and 5:30-6:30pm; Thursdays, 1-2:30pm and 5:30-6pm; and by appointment. Please let me know in advance if you plan to attend my office hours.

Department office phones: 764-0000, ext. 89611 (Humanities) or ext. 88862 (General Studies)

Email: madeleine.vala@upr.edu

Course website is available on Moodle

Course Description

What is a poem? Many of us have certain preconceptions about poetry, such that it expresses personal emotions, rhymes, or is stylistically complex. None of these are necessarily true. While poetry may seem intimidating because of its precise use of diction, sound, and language, the elements of poetry surround us every day, from song lyrics and popular sayings to advertising jingles. This class examines the genre of poetry. We will devote most of the semester to the formal elements of poetry—voice, rhythm, imagery, closed and open forms—before studying poems according to theme. While my primary objective is to teach you the distinguishing aspects of this genre and develop your analytical facility with it, I also hope that you will connect poetry to your contemporary lives. Indeed, we will conclude the term by reading poems about the current refugee crisis. By the end of the term, I aim for you to be excellent readers of poetry, stronger writers, and sophisticated thinkers. In order for you to accomplish these goals, you need to be committed to your education; this means coming to class prepared, engaging in discussions, and seeking extra help when necessary.

Course Objectives:

- Learn the formal elements of poetry
- Understand the connections between poetry and its socio-historical contexts
- Develop skills for literary analysis and critical thinking
- Develop strategies for building strong arguments and revising essays
- Appreciate connections between poetry and the contemporary world
- Understand the ways musical and visual adaptations revise poetic texts
- Search for information effectively and properly cite sources of information
- Collaborate with peers, including those with disabilities, in classroom activities and group projects

Required coursepack is available at PromoImage, 54 Calle Domingo Cabrera.

Required Text: Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1998. Available at amazon.com.

Course Requirements:**

Paper 1	22%
Paper 2	25%
Poetry Test	20%
Poetry Performance	15%
Participation	10%
Moodle Responses	8%

Grading Scale:

A	100-90%
B	89-80%
C	79-70%
D	69-60%
F	59-0%

**Percentages may be adjusted to reflect the actual work accomplished in course.

Papers (47%) In this class, you will write 2 papers, two analyses of poems (5-6 pages). All papers should be submitted as a hard, paper copy. They should be typed, double-spaced, and written in 12-point Times with 1-inch margins top and bottom, and 1.25 inch margins left and right. Do not double space between paragraphs. Please include page numbers and staple your essay. I strongly discourage you from turning in papers late. Papers will be marked down three points for each day late, including weekend days. Thus, an otherwise 95 essay due on Thursday becomes a 92 on Friday and an 83 on Monday. I will not accept a paper more than ten days late and you will earn a zero instead. I do not accept papers via e-mail, nor will I peruse a draft over e-mail. That said, I will be happy to help you with a draft in my office hours.

Test (20%) You will have a midterm test requiring you to apply concepts learned in class.

Poetry Performance (15%) In the second half of the semester, you will give a 10-15 minute presentation, reciting or dramatizing a poem, and then describing what you learned from the exercise.

Participation (10%) I expect active, informed participation in class discussions. That means coming to class each day having read and thought about the readings. That means reading the poems carefully several times; do not read them quickly in the 10 minute break before class. Please raise your hands before contributing and be aware of the overall class conversation. That means no glamour mouths and no wallflowers; see the classroom rules below. I may also give unannounced quizzes and in-class writings periodically. These will be factored into your participation grade.

Moodle Responses (8%) To ensure that you are both keeping up with the reading and processing it before class, you will submit **1-2 paragraphs** to the Discussion Forum a total of **eight times** over the semester, which averages to approximately one response every two weeks. Please focus on only ONE poem, rather than one sentence summaries of each poem assigned for the day. Your responses may include a few questions, or comment on a particular issue that interests you from the reading. This is your forum for

comment, and I will grade these largely based on your level of engagement with the text. I can, however, distinguish internet interpretations from your own. I will use these responses to prepare for class discussion the following day; your input allows me to address your questions and concerns. Responses must be posted by **7pm** the day before class meets, or I will not accept them. **You may only post one paragraph per class (i.e., no retroactive postings), so don't wait until the last few weeks of the term to fulfill this requirement!** If you do not have internet access at home or work in the evenings, plan accordingly. You may post responses earlier than the night before class, and you can access Moodle from any computer terminal on campus.

Moodle: As UPR students, you should all have a username and password associated with your email and already be enrolled in classes on Moodle, a virtual classroom platform. Often I will post announcements about unforeseen changes to class meetings, clarify homework assignments for the following day, or send you reminders. You can find the syllabus, assignments, additional readings, and classroom handouts posted there as well. Your success in this class depends in part on your ability to access Moodle. I am not an IT expert, so should you have any problems, please consult the computing center, DTAA, in Plaza Universitaria.

Attendance: Attendance is not directly factored into your grade, as it is expected of everyone. It is not synonymous with your participation grade. You are allotted three absences during the semester for reasons of illness, family emergency, etc. **On your fourth absence, your final percentage grade will be lowered five points, with each additional absence penalizing you three points.** That means a 90 average becomes an 85 on your fourth absence, a 79 on your sixth, and a 73 on your eighth. If you have a particular family situation or other problem that forces you to miss more than three weeks of class (six classes), you should take the course at another time. Repeated tardiness will also negatively affect your grade, so make every effort to be on time.

Plagiarism: I will not tolerate academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words or ideas as your own. It is a serious offence. You must give proper credit to any words or ideas that are not your own. Turning in a paper that has been written for another class is also a form of plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing, punishment varies from a zero (ie, not simply an F) on the assignment at the minimum to university expulsion at the maximum. I refer cases of plagiarism to the disciplinary board. Please ask me if you have any questions about how to cite information. The university policy on plagiarism is as follows:

Article 6.2 of the UPR Students General Bylaws (Board of Trustees Certification 13, 2009-2010) states that academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: fraudulent actions; obtaining grades or academic degrees by false or fraudulent simulations; copying the whole or part of the academic work of another person; plagiarizing totally or partially the work of another person; copying all or part of another person answers to the questions of an oral or written exam by taking or getting someone else to take the exam on his/her behalf; as well as enabling and facilitating another person to perform the aforementioned behavior. Any of these behaviors will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the disciplinary procedure laid down in the UPR Students General Bylaws.

Students with disabilities: In accordance with the recommendation of the Office of the Dean of Students, Division of Persons with Disabilities, students with special needs must contact the professor at the beginning of the term to make arrangements for reasonable accommodations and for any necessary auxiliary equipment. Alternative evaluation methods will be provided to students with special needs.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(subject to changes)

Types of Poetry: Lyric, Narrative, and Dramatic Poetry

- 8/21 Syllabus. D. H. Lawrence, "Piano"; Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"
Martin Espada, "Coca Cola and Coco Frio"
- 8/23 Seamus Heaney, "Blackberry Picking", Mid-Term Break"
Wole Soyinka, "Telephone Conversation"; Robert Frost, "Out, Out—"
Adrienne Rich, "Living in Sin"
- 8/28 No class. Monday schedule.

Tone, Voice, Irony

- 8/30 R. S. Gwynn, "Introduction" in *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology*; "Tone" and "Irony"
Natasha Tretheway, "White Lies"; Philip Larkin, "This Be the Verse"
Martin Espada, "Jorge the Janitor Finally Quits," "My Native Costume"
- 9/4 William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence*
William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Experience*
Excerpts from William Bolcom's composition, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*
- 9/6 Margaret Atwood, "Siren Song"; Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess"
Pinsky, chapters 1 and 2.

Imagery and Figurative Language

- 9/11 "Imagery," "Figures of Speech," and pp. 21-27 of "Introduction"
Seamus Heaney, "Digging"; Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"
Sharon Olds, "The One Girl at the Boys' Party"
- 9/13 John Donne, "The Flea," "The Sun Rising," "The Bait"
Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"
Sir Walter Raleigh, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd"
- 9/18 Sylvia Plath, "Lady Lazarus", "Daddy"

Rhythm and Meter

9/20 "Rhythm" and "Meter"; pp. 27-33 of "Introduction"; Pinsky, chapter 3.
William Blake, "The Tyger"; Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, sonnet 1

9/25 **Paper #1 due by 5:30pm to my office, AJBR 240**

Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*

9/27 Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*

Sonnets

10/2 Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush" (Meter cont'd)
"Closed Form," "The Sonnet," and pp. 33-39 of "Introduction"
Pinsky, chapter 4; Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*, sonnet 1

10/4 Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*, sonnets 64, 75; William Shakespeare, sonnet 130
Sir Philip Sidney, from *Astrophil and Stella*, sonnets 7, 61

10/9 William Shakespeare, sonnets 55, 128; Kim Addonizio, "First Poem for You"
Edna St. Vincent Millay, "What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why"

Closed Forms

10/11 Elizabeth Bishop, "Sestina," "One Art"
Florence Cassen Mayers, "All-American Sestina"

10/16 "Ballads"; William Wordsworth, from "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*,
"Lucy Gray," "We Are Seven," "Goody Blake and Harry Gill,"
"Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"

10/18 Emily Dickinson, "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"
John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

10/23 Midterm Test

Open Form

10/25 "Open Form," and pp. 33-35 of "Introduction"; Pinsky, chapter 5.
Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice Cream"
William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All", "This is Just to Say"

10/30 Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, 6; Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B"
Allen Ginsburg, "A Supermarket in California"

Myth and Gender

11/1 Anne Sexton, "Cinderella"; Jim Hall, "Maybe Dats Your Pwoblem Too"
Louise Bogan, "Medusa"; William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium"

11/6 Adrienne Rich, "Rape"; Lucille Clifton, "wishes for sons"; Diane Lockwood,
"My Husband Discovers Poetry"; Judith Ortiz Cofer, "Quinceañera"

Things in Poetry

- 11/8 Philip Larkin, "Aubade", "Home is So Sad"; Sharon Olds, "The Green Shirt"
Sylvia Plath, "Mirror"; Miller Williams, "The Book"

Poetry of the Refugee Crisis

- 11/13 Warsan Shire, "Home"; Bissan Al-Charif, "Missing Sky" (video)
Found poem, "What Would You Take?"
Yiannis Behrakis, selected images from *People on the Move*
- 11/15 Zeina Hashem Beck, "Naming Things," "Correcting My Mother's Essay"
Carolyn Forché, "Mourning"; A. E. Stallings, "Empathy"

11/20 Presentations

11/22 Thanksgiving. No class.

War Poetry

- 11/27 **Paper #2 due by 5:30pm to my office, 240 AJBR.**
Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est"; John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields"
Thomas Hardy, "The Man He Killed"; Siegfried Sassoon, "Dreamers"
- 11/29 Diane Thiel, "The Minefield"; Enid Shomer, "Women Bathing at Bergen-Belsen"
Carl Sandburg, "Grass"; William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming"

Politics and Ethnicity

- 12/4 Sharon Olds, "On the Subway"; Mitsuye Yamada, "To the Lady"
Naomi Shihab Nye, "Gate A-4"
- 12/6 Concluding remarks

THANKS FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND BEST WISHES FOR THE FUTURE!