Poetry in Crisis

ENG-L205: Introduction to Poetry

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Office Hours:
Class Time: **Room:**

Course Description

"...in the end we go to poetry for one reason, so that we might more fully inhabit our lives and the world in which we live them, and that if we more fully inhabit these things, we might be less apt to destroy both."
Christian Wiman, former editor of *Poetry* magazine

Our course begins with the audacious premise that poetry matters in times of crisis. Ranging from the personal to the planetary, crisis has always served as an origin point for poetry. In this course, we will interrogate why, how, and to what end poetry engages with disaster, emergency, tragedy, and tipping points of various kinds. We will begin by acquiring a working knowledge of poetic forms and devices, studying how poets create meaning and elicit affective responses from readers. Using these analytical tools, we will go on to study a variety of poems from across time and around the world, examining the role of poetry in representing and navigating crises.

As this is an Intensive Writing Course, as well as an introduction to poetry, we will use the writing process as a vehicle for developing our critical thinking about poetry. This course will introduce you not only to the vocabulary, forms, and elements of poetry but also to the principles of research-based, analytical writing. To meet the requirements for an IW course, we will be doing a great deal of writing—a minimum of 5000 words, to be exact. Writing assignments are due at midnight on Sunday (almost) every week, so please plan your schedules accordingly. With that said, however, the relationship between reading and writing is much like breathing: in order to exhale (write), we must first inhale (read). As this is a poetry course, we will not have copious amounts of reading assigned for a single class meeting. Rather, the expectation is that you will take time to read the poems carefully and thoughtfully, in preparation to meaningfully engage in class discussion. Ultimately, your grade in this course will depend substantially on your preparation and engagement, as well as your writing.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The course fulfills the College of Arts and Sciences (CASE) Intensive Writing (IW) and the General Education Arts & Humanities Breadth of Inquiry (CASE A&H) requirements. As such, we will work together this semester to achieve the following objectives and outcomes, all of

which support the rigorous standards of CASE IW and IUB General Education requirements for Breadth of Inquiry in the CASE A&H:

Critically read and interpret poetry.
Meeting this objective means you'll be able to:

1. summarize the main ideas or arguments of a given text
2. demonstrate critical reading skills, including paraphrasing passages, identifying and defining unfamiliar language or details, annotating as you read, and reading texts multiple times
3. analyze the way the formal literary elements function within a piece of poetry, including rhyme, rhythm, imagery, and figurative language
4. apply close-reading techniques to specific passages to reveal relationships in the language and details that drive the text's meaning
5. make claims about the way a poem (including both its text and subtext) addresses issues beyond its pages (this could include how a poem speaks to a general theme and/or how it responds to a specific social/cultural/historical issue)

Write analytical arguments about poetry.
Meeting this objective means you'll be able to:

1. construct clear, effective, rigorously revised arguments supporting a central claim
2. provide and analyze relevant evidence in support of claims
3. use proper protocols and conventions of academic writing, including correctly citing sources according to MLA guidelines and avoiding plagiarism
4. demonstrate appropriate awareness of audience, including who your readers are and in what context they will be reading your work
5. contribute to an intellectual discussion about poetry or poems by appropriately interpreting and respectfully responding to the ideas of others (this could mean responding to classmates and/or responding to critics or theorists)

Demonstrate a critical understanding of genre.
Meeting this objective means you'll be able to:

1. recognize key generic features of poetry
2. construct arguments about a poem's use of generic conventions

Coursework

Required Texts

All required texts (poems, essays, and glossary terms) will be provided via Canvas or online resources.

Other Required Materials

In addition to the readings, you will need the following in order to participate in this course:

- Computer or tablet
- Materials for writing by hand (paper, pencil, etc.)

Written Assignments

As this is an intensive writing class, expect to be writing intensively (and, ideally, with intensity!). Nevertheless, the goal is quality, not merely quantity. The assignments are designed to help you acquire and hone skills that will equip you for a variety of communication situations that require careful analysis and sustained thought. These assignments fall into one of three categories:

1. **Long Essays.** You will be assigned two long essays this semester, the first of which will be 1200 words minimum, and the second 1500 words minimum (2700 words total). Both will ask you to respond to relevant course inquiry questions in the form of an analytical argument: you will analyze one or more poems, demonstrating a firm grasp of poetic devices, foundational writing skills, and critical thinking in order to support your thesis statement. The second essay will additionally entail a research component, asking you to enhance your own analytical argument by putting it in conversation with other writers and scholars.
2. **Short Essays**. You will be assigned three short formal essays of no less than 600 words each (1800 words total). Each essay must be argument-driven and supported by a close reading of one or more poems from our syllabus. Because these are short essays, the emphasis is on depth over breadth: these lower-stakes assignments give you the opportunity to focus on one or two important skills as preparation for the longer essays.
3. **Revision Portfolio**: This final assignment will ask you to extensively revise a piece of formal written work that you completed for this class—any of the Long Essays or Short Essays. The final version should include at least 500 words of new writing. The portfolio will also include a brief reflection assignment explaining the choices you made in the revision, as well as a visual aid that you will prepare for your final presentation.

There will be additional informal assignments including annotations, discussion posts, and in-class activities. These assignments help you practice the reading, writing, and analytical skills necessary for the formal writing assignments.

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas, except for the annotations, which you will bring to class on the day they are due.

For all formal writing assignments (Long Essays, Short Essays, and the Revision Portfolio), I will provide detailed assignment sheets on Canvas well in advance of the due date—be sure to

read these, refer to them often as you complete the assignment, and meet with me in office hours if you have any questions about the assignment. All formal writing assignments must also be formatted according to MLA guidelines. For resources on MLA formatting and citation, please see the Purdue OWL website (link on Canvas).

The grading schema is as follows:

Assignments	**Grade Percentage**
Long Essays (1 and 2)	30%
Short Essays (1-3)	30%
Revision portfolio (revised essay, reflection, and presentation)	10%
Annotations, discussion posts, homework, daily journal prompts, and in-class activities	30%

Schedule

Prelude "Things Fall Apart": Poetry in Crisis		
Week 1	*Introduction to poetry, introduction to the course*	
Mon 1/12	Assigned readings ● "The Second Coming" - William Butler Yeats	Assignments due: None
Wed 1/14	Assigned readings ● Course syllabus and schedule	Assignments due: None
Fri 1/16	Assigned readings ● "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" - W.H. Auden	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Sun 1/18	Writing assignments due: none	
Unit 1 "Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?": Poetry and the Self		
Week 2	*Writing the self*	
Mon 1/19	MLK Day - No class	Assignments due: None
Wed 1/21	Assigned readings ● "Introduction to Poetry" - Billy Collins ● **Essay:** "How to Read a Poem" - Edward Hirsch (link on Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 1/23	Assigned readings ● "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" - T.S. Eliot OR "Song of Myself" (parts 1 and 3) - Walt Whitman	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Sun 1/25	Writing assignments due: Discussion Post	
Week 3	*Love and relationships*	
Mon 1/26	Assigned readings ● "Sonnet 29" - William Shakespeare ● "Love Sonnet XVII" - Pablo Neruda ● **Essay**: Excerpt from "Learning the Sonnet" by Rachel Richardson ● **Glossary Terms** (Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class) In-class work: introduce SFE1

Wed 1/28	Assigned readings ● "Phase One" - Dilruba Ahmed ● "Those Winter Sundays" - Robert Hayden ● "Again and Again" - Rainer Maria Rilke ● "The Orange" - Wendy Cope ● "On Receiving Father at JFK after His Long Flight from Kashmir" - Rafiq Kathwari ● **Podcast episode**: *Poetry Unbound* (link on Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 1/30	Assigned readings: ● **Essay:** "The Poetic State of Mind" - Matthew Zapruder	Assignments due: Thesis statement for short formal essay 1 In-class work: ● Thesis statement workshop ● Paragraph workshop
Sun 2/1	Writing assignments due: "What Is a Poem?" (short formal essay 1)	
Week 4	*Identity*	
Mon 2/2	Assigned readings ● "Trophic Cascade" - Camille Dungy ● "Queer Facts About Vegetables" - Oliver Baez Bendorf ● "All My Friends Are Finding New Beliefs" - Christian Wiman ● "Dear World" - Paula Gunn Allen ● **Essay**: "on Negative Capability" - John Keats (Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Wed 2/4	Assigned readings ● "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" - Gerard Manley Hopkins ● "[...]" - Fady Joudah ● **Glossary terms** (Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 2/6	Assigned reading: ● **Essay** on Fady Joudah's work *[...]* - Gemini Wahhaj	In-class work: Workshop on organizing and outlining
Sun 2/8	Writing assignments due: "Comparative Analysis of Poetic Devices" (short formal essay 2)	
Week 5	*Death and grief, loss and regret*	
Mon 2/9	Assigned readings	Assignments due: Annotations (due at

	• "Kookaburras" - Mary Oliver • "Wild Geese" - Mary Oliver • "One Art" - Elizabeth Bishop • "Meadow" - Seán Hewitt • "Tears, Idle Tears" - Alfred, Lord Tennyson	the beginning of class) In-class work: Introduce Long Essay 1
Wed 2/11	Assigned readings • "O Captain! My Captain!" - Walt Whitman • "Funeral Blues" - W.H. Auden • "Glory" - Gbenga Adesina • "Mourners" - Ted Kooser • **Glossary terms** (Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 2/13		In-class work: • Select poems for LE1 • Proposal workshop
Sun 2/15	Writing assignments due: Long Essay 1 Proposal	
Unit 2 "Lend Me Your Presence and I Will Lend You Mine": Poetry and the Human		
Week 6	*What does it mean to be human?*	
Mon 2/16	Assigned readings • "What Is It to be Human?" - Waldo Williams • "Perhaps the World Ends Here" - Joy Harjo • "What the Living Do" - Marie Howe • **Glossary Terms**	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Wed 2/18	Readings due: none	Assignments due: full rough draft of Long Essay 1 In-class work: Essay 1 Peer review
Fri 2/20	Readings due: none	In-class work: • Workshop on revising and proofreading • Workshop creative titles
Sun 2/22	Writing assignments due: Long Essay 1	
Week 7	*Humans and technology*	
Mon 2/23	Assigned readings • "Man and Machine" - D.H.	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)

	Lawrence ● **Essay:** excerpt from *Redstart* - Forrest Gander	
Wed 2/25	Assigned readings ● Podcast episode: Poetry Unbound, episode on Carmen Giménez's poem, "Ars Poetica" (Canvas) ● Choose an "Ars Poetica" poem to read and annotate ● **Glossary terms** (Canvas)	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 2/27	Assigned readings: none	In-class work: Introduce SFE3
Sun 3/1	Writing assignments due: nothing	
Week 8	*Humans and nature*	
Mon 3/2	Assigned readings ● "Ode to Autumn" - John Keats ● "Ode to the Maggot" - Yusef Komunyakaa ● "Little Citizen, Little Survivor" - Hayden Carruth ● **Glossary Terms**	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class) In-class work: Brainstorming for SFE3
Wed 3/4	Assigned readings ● "Thank You" - Ross Gay ● "Sonnet/Violets" - Alice Dunbar-Nelson ● "Carmel Point" - Robinson Jeffers ● "Instructions on Not Giving Up" - Ada Limón	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class) In-class work: Annotations for SFE3
Fri 3/6		In-class work: write SFE3
Sun 3/8	Writing assignments due: Handwritten Essay (short formal essay 3)	
Unit 3 "Perhaps These Are Not Poetic Times": Poetry of Witness		
Week 9	*Poetry of witness*	
Mon 3/9	Assigned readings ● **Essay:** "The Politics of Poetry" - Jay Parini ● **Essay excerpt:** Introduction to *Against Forgetting* - Carolyn Forché	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Wed 3/11	Assigned readings	Assignments due: Annotations (due at

	● "For Saundra" - Nikki Giovanni	the beginning of class)
Fri 3/13		In-class work: flash debate
Sun 3/15	Writing assignments due: none	
Happy Spring Break!		
Week 10	*Poetry and war*	
Mon 3/23	Assigned readings ● "Dulce et Decorum Est" - Wilfred Owen ● "i sing of Olaf glad and big" - e.e. cummings ● "Seventh Eclogue" - Miklós Radnóti ● "A German Officer Plays Chopin" - Anna Świrszczyńska	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Wed 3/25	Assigned readings ● "What is Home?" - Mosab Abu Toha ● "We Lived Happily During the War" - Ilya Kaminsky	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class) In-class work: select poems for Long Essay 2
Fri 3/27		In-class work: Workshop on conducting academic research and evaluating source credibility
Sun 3/29	Writing assignments due: LE2 proposals due	
Week 11	*Poetry and racism*	
Mon 3/30	Assigned readings ● "Let America be America Again" - Langston Hughes ● "Yet Do I Marvel" - Countee Cullen ● "Litany for Survival" - Audre Lorde	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Wed 4/1	Assigned readings ● "Letter to the Local Police" - June Jordan ● "A Small Needful Fact" - Ross Gay ● "Elliptical" - Harryette Mullen	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class) In-class work: student-led discussion
Fri 4/3	Assigned readings ● **Scholarly Article:** "Black Feminism…" - Stephen Dillon	In-class work: workshop on reading, annotating, and summarizing an academic article
Sun 4/5	Writing assignments due: "Poetry in Conversation"	

Week 12	*Poetry and colonialism*	
Mon 4/6	Assigned readings ● "How to Write a Poem in a Time of War" - Joy Harjo ● "Obligations 2" - Layli Long Soldier ● "Cry Your Tears" - John Trudell	
Wed 4/8	Assigned readings: none	Assignments due: full rough draft of Long Essay 2 In-class work: Essay 2 Peer review
Fri 4/10	Assigned readings: ● "Anointed" - Kathy Jetnil Kijiner ● "Praise Song for Oceania" - Craig Santos Perez	In-class work: workshop on revising and proofreading
Sun 4/12	Writing assignments due: Long Essay 2	
Unit 4 "Preparing for the Incomprehensible": Poetry for Imagining		
Week 13	*Speculative poetry*	
Mon 4/13	Assigned readings ● **Essay**: "Introduction to Speculative Poetry" from SFWA	
Wed 4/15	Assigned readings ● Excerpts from *M. Archive: After the End of the World* - Alexis Pauline Gumbs	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 4/17	Assigned readings ● Excerpts from *M. Archive: After the End of the World* - Alexis Pauline Gumbs	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Sun 4/19	Writing assignments due: none	
Week 14	*Imagining otherwise*	
Mon 4/20	Assigned readings ● "Good Bones" - Maggie Smith ● "Sometimes" - Sheenagh Pugh ● "Place" - W.S. Merwin ● **Essay:** "Poetry and Poets in a Time of Crisis" - Matthew Zapruder	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)

Wed 4/22	Assigned readings ● "And Then It Was Less Bleak Because We Said So" - Wendy Xu ● "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" - Wendell Berry ● "The Excrement Poem" - Maxine Kumin	Assignments due: Annotations (due at the beginning of class)
Fri 4/24		In-class work: Workshop revision plans, presentations, and visual aid
Sun 4/26	Writing assignments due: Revision plan	
Week 15	*Presentations*	
Mon 4/27	No readings	In-class work: Presentations
Wed 4/29	No readings	In-class work: Presentations
Fri 5/1	No readings	In-class work: OCQs and final revision workshop
Sun 5/3	Writing assignments due: Revision portfolio	