

# POETRY! / ENGLISH 2401/

~AN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSE~

**Course Materials:** All readings will be available on HuskyCT in pdf format or as a hyperlink to its home online.

**Course Description:** *“A study of the techniques and conventions of the chief forms and traditions of poetry in English.”*

**Professor:** Darcie Dennigan /// [darcie.dennigan@uconn.edu](mailto:darcie.dennigan@uconn.edu) /// 818-497-3135

Office hours: Tuesdays, 9-11am. Please sign up for a slot here: [Office hours sign-up link](#)

**Course Objectives:** *By the end of the session, students should be able to take a poem they've never seen before and be able to*

1. Analyze its syntactic structures, diction, enjambments, and other prosodic choices
2. Ask original and penetrating questions about the poem
3. Connect the poem to another poet, form, or tradition we've studied
4. Connect the poem to another kind of text or media
5. Read it aloud with intention and authority, paying attention to its particular rhythms
6. Bring together their analyses and observations in a piece of vibrant writing about the poem, being aware of the difference between summary and synthesis

This course is designed to provide you with an “*introduction*” to POETRY. But I will be teaching poems, not poetry– *your job will be to take our talks and your writings on the individual poems and figure out some things about POETRY...*

## SEVEN THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND EVERY TIME YOU READ A POEM:

✨ Poet Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge says: “Well, poetry is a very concentrated form and you have to slow down to read it.”

👉 Poet M. Nourbese Philip says: “In caring for this thing—language—that makes us beings who are human, in caring for the lowly comma or period, for the syllable or phoneme, for where they’re placed, we begin, I think—I hope—to care for others. Care and attention—take care and pay attention is what I believe the craft of poetry to be about—paying attention and taking care.”

✨ Poet Alice Notley says: “It's like reading them is going on at the same as writing them. All of the existence of the poem is going on at the same time. You're writing it and you're reading it and other people are reading it and all of that is one thing.”

👉 Poet Bruce Cohen say: “Poems have secrets the poet knows nothing of.”

✨ Poet Theodore Roethke defines a poet as “someone who is never satisfied with saying one thing at a time.”

👉 Poet Douglas Kearney says: “All poems are performing something.”

✨ Poet David Lehman says of form: “The stricter the form—the more cumbersome its rules and requirements—the more liberating it is for the imagination. The conscious mind is occupied with solving a puzzle, and this gives the unconscious a chance to shoot directly onto the page. This is why sonneteers liken that venerable form to a prison cell of infinite liberty. In these chains you shall be free.”

## ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS STUFF!

You will make Flipgrid videos and have online Google doc chats with fellow students.

And how will I interact with you?

- Twice- weekly course announcements;
- Weekly mini-lecture on [one or more of the quotations on page 2](#)
- Sharing via email weekly highlights from the group talks and discussion threads;
- regularly scheduled office hours and/or online help sessions;
- Emails previewing or reviewing cool or difficult content;
- Posing questions to you about the reading
- Personalized feedback on your weekly writing assignments

Weekly Time Commitment: Expect to dedicate 42-56 hours per week to this course. This expectation is based on the various course activities, assignments, and the University of Connecticut's policy regarding credit hours. More info: [Online Student website](#).

*\*\*This kind of winter course is fast-moving. If you're going to be late handing something in, or if you feel that you're falling behind, be in touch as soon as you can.*

\*\*Assignments more than two days late risk losing points.

Student Authentication and Verification: UConn is required to verify the identity of students who participate in online courses. Verification and authentication of student identity in this course will include:

1. Secure access to the learning management system using your unique UConn NetID and password.
2. Additional Methods: possible Flipgrid videos
3. Video presentation in which you display your photo ID

**Plagiarism and other forms of nefariousness:** Don't. Please. You'll be missing out on everything we might learn together. *“When you use another’s ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, will result in failure for the entire course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs. For University policies on academic honesty, please see UConn’s Responsibilities of Community Life: The Student Code and the Office of Community Standards: <http://www.community.uconn.edu>”.*

**Needs and Accommodation:** If you need accommodations for your abilities or learning style, I will be glad to work with you. If you need help with anything else, please talk with me.

## Graded work:

**READING JOURNALS (2) 20%** (Each overall journal is worth 10% of your grade)

**Due Wednesday (weeks 1 & 2) at 5pm**

**Please label each section of your journal with the corresponding item number- each journal element is worth 20% of that journal's grade**

1. First impressions of & questions about SIX of the poems (20%)
2. ANALYSIS notes: Pick ONE poem and break it into pieces... (20%)
3. Talking in detail about one literary device in ONE poem. (20%)
4. Notes on/interactions with at least two other students' reading journals (20%)
5. PLUS at least two of these (20%)

Connections between poems; connections between any online interviews & essays and the poems; connections to outside texts/media; connections to your life, obvious and not obvious ones; drawings of poems; notes on what happened when you read the poems aloud to other people; notes on what happened when you read the poems aloud in the woods, or to the ocean, or to an animal...

**Video recordings of you reading at least one poem from each week's readings. 20%**

Please upload these to HuskyCT discussion board. Please consider listening and commenting on others' recordings. (Possible ways to upload the video: Via Google Slides OR By uploading a video from your phone onto Google Drive or Youtube) \*\*If you recommend a better way to do this, please let us know!

*Grading: Full credit for three poems recorded and uploaded by Wednesday at 5pm each week.*

**Synthesis Essay: 20%** // Due at end of Week 1

**Original poem in closed form: 20%** // Three drafts of two original poems in a closed or traditional form of your choice: due at end of Week 2

**Video presentation : 20%** //Due at end of Week 3

## SCHEDULE // December 30, 2024 - January 17, 2025

I suggest the following schedule for your work on Week 1:

12/30, Monday:

1. Make a Flipgrid intro video: <https://flip.com/77e49afb> (Join code *a749efa0*)
2. Respond to at least two other students' videos
3. [Read through the poems. They're all linked below](#)
4. Type first thoughts in reading journal– your impressions, connections, questions, observations of these poems.
5. Make this reading journal a Google doc– please turn on sharing permissions!
6. Post a link to your evolving reading journal on the HuskyCT discussion board.
- 7.

12/31, Tuesday:

1. Read others' reading journals and their first impressions
2. Watch Professor Dennigan's short video on analyzing poems.
3. Pick at least one poem to analyze in detail according to the video.
4. Then consult this [list of literary devices](#) (note that it continues on for three more pages!). What kinds of devices do you see in this poem?
5. Type these analyses in your reading journal.
6. PLUS at least two of these:  
Find connections between 2 or more poems for this week; find connections between any online interviews with the poets and their poems; make connections to outside texts/media; make detailed and substantive connections to your life, obvious and not obvious ones (not simply "This poet lost their grandmother and I did too"; make drawings of poems; note what happened when you read the poems aloud to other people; note what happened when you read the poems aloud in the woods, or to the ocean, or to an animal...

Wednesday : happy new year! No class

Thursday, 1/2:

Read the Edward Hirsch and Langston Hughes essays

Record your connections in your reading journal.

Check out other students' journals- leave them some comments.

Also record those comments in your own reading journal for credit.

Synthesize all your reading notes into one [SHORT ESSAY- guidelines here](#)

Friday, 1/3::

Finish this essay and post it on HuskyCT as a Google doc.

Remember to turn on sharing permissions!

Choose between a live online conference with prof dennigan about your work or audio feedback... If you choose a live conference, be sure to [sign up on Nexus](#).

Week 1: 20 poems to read// 2 essays

Read Paul Celan:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58210/why-this-sudden-at-homeness>

<https://poets.org/poem/death-fugue> ...

<https://poets.org/poem/aspens-tree>

Read Langston Hughes

<https://scalar.lehigh.edu/african-american-poetry-a-digital-anthology/langston-hughes-johannesburg-mines-1925>

<https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/good-morning-revolution>

<https://notesofblackmen.wordpress.com/2013/10/09/cafes-3-am-by-langston-hughes/>

Read Mahmoud Darwish (translated by Fady Joudah):

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52553/i-have-a-seat-in-the-abandoned-theater>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52556/if-i-were-another>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52550/the-horse-fell-off-the-pole>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52552/the-cypress-broke>

And two by Fady Joudah:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/58647/the-floor-is-yours>

[https://poems.com/poem/and\\_out\\_of\\_nowhere\\_a\\_girl\\_receives\\_an\\_ovation/](https://poems.com/poem/and_out_of_nowhere_a_girl_receives_an_ovation/)

Read Gerard Manley Hopkins:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44389/as-kingfishers-catch-fire>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44399/pied-beauty>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44400/spring-and-fall>

Gwendolyn Brooks

<https://poets.org/poem/we-real-cool>

<https://poets.org/poem/paul-roberson>

<https://poets.org/poem/bean-eaters>

<https://poetrysociety.org/poetry-in-motion/speech-to-the-young-speech-to-the-progress-toward-among-them-nora-and-henry-iii>

Frank O'Hara

<https://www.ronnowpoetry.com/contents/ohara/TrueAccount.html>

<https://poets.org/poem/why-i-am-not-painter>

<https://poets.org/poem/poem-lana-turner-has-collapsed>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/26538/meditations-in-a-n-emergency>

Read "[Some Notes on Organic Form](#)" by Denise Levertov

Read "[The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain](#)" by Langston Hughes

## Week 2: FORMS WEEK!

With a few exceptions, last week we read lyric poetry...

lyric poetry== shortish poems with a single speaker (of course, there is so much more to that definition, as the Edward Hirsch reading told us!)

This week, we're reading poems written in a some traditional poetic forms...

Jan 6th & 7th: Reading journal-

Spend the days reading the poems, any accompanying short essays, & watching the videos

- Make notes on what you're observing and what you wonder.
- This week, you don't need to make a note on every single poem; instead, aim to make detailed notes on ten of them
- Aim for specificity-
- *I'd much rather know what you think than what Google thinks! That said, if a poem inspires you to do some web searching on it, great- just include your sources in your notes.*

JAN 8th: Wednesday: Reading journal AND poem drafting

Now, ANALYZE: can you break down /do a close reading of three poems from this week's list?

- Where do you see one line or phrase or word meaning multiple things?
- Where do you see the form and the content fitting together perfectly? Or where does the content strain against the form?

AND... begin writing two poems- see Prof Dennigan's morning email for advice on how you might start these.

Partners for poem feedback assigned via morning email too!

**AIM TO HAVE YOUR READING JOURNAL DONE BY 5PM TODAY**

JAN 9th: Thursday: Write second draft of each poem/ comments on your partners' drafts

Read Prof Dennigan's morning email with Elizabeth Bishop's villanelle drafts.

Write your second draft of both poems. These drafts should start to take the shape of your chosen forms.

**AIM TO EXCHANGE DRAFTS OF POEMS WITH YOUR PARTNER(S) by 1pm**

**AIM TO GIVE FEEDBACK TO YOUR PARTNERS ON THEIR POEM DRAFTS BY 5pm**

JAN 10th: Friday: Turn in ALL THREE DRAFTS of TWO ORIGINAL POEMS in TRADITIONAL FORMS

Optional: Sign up for a Nexus slot to meet with Professor Dennigan and discuss your poems.

## WEEK TWO READING LIST

### Sonnets!!

"A sonnet is a moment's monument," says Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

[What makes a sonnet a sonnet?](#) AND... Watch this [short video on the history of the sonnet](#)

### English/Shakespearean sonnets

- [What to Say Upon Being Asked to Be Friends](#), by [Julian Talamantez Brolaski](#)
- [Fruit Don't Fall Far](#), by [Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven](#)
- ["Dim Lady"](#) by Harryette Mullen (and [you may want to read this too](#) to better get the joke! Or, is it a joke??)
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### Are these actually sonnets?

- ["Those Winter Sundays"](#) by Robert Hayden
- ["\(silenced\)"](#) by Olena Kalytiak Davis
- ["Red Wand"](#) by Sandra Simonds
- ["Sonnet"](#) by Cathy Park Hong
- ["American Sonnet..."](#) by Terrence Hayes // [Hear Hayes read some of his sonnets and talk about them here!](#)
- ["Haunted Sonnet"](#) by Hoa Nguyen
- ["American Sonnet 51"](#) and ["American Sonnet 91"](#) by Wanda Coleman
- ["\[you jerk you didn't call me up\]"](#) and ["Sonnet Welcome"](#) by Bernadette Mater
- Hear Mayer read ["Sonnet Welcome"](#)

### A syncopated sonnet:

- Tyehimba Jess, ["Millie and Christine McKoy"](#)
- [Less reading](#) this "syncopated sonnet"!
- [Less talking about writing these syncopated sonnets](#) about the conjoined McKoy twins

### Abecedarians!

[Read more about abecedarians here](#)

- ["Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination of Anglikan Seraphym Subjugation of a Wild Indian Rezervation"](#) by Natalie Diaz
- ["Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination before a Diagnosis Can Be Determined"](#) by torrin a. greathouse
- ["American Abecedarian"](#) by Joshua Bennett

- [“Broken Abecedarian for America”](#) by Jessica Kim

### Wakas!

...a poem in thirty-one syllables, arranged in five lines, of 5/7/5/7/7 syllables respectively.

[Excerpts from “The Trees Witness Everything”](#) by Victoria Chang

[Watch Chang read some wakas from this book](#)

[Read more about wakas here](#)

### Villanelles!

–[Read the rules here.](#)

“[Letter to My Blackout](#)” by Maria Hummel

“[One Art](#)” by Elizabeth Bishop

“[Villanelle](#)” by Michael Luis Medrano

“[The Waking](#)” by Theodore Roethke

“[After the Auction, I Bid You Goodbye](#)” by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

“[Heartless Humor Blues](#)” by Raymond Antrobus (is he breaking too many rules?!)

## Week 3: “Attack of the Difficult Poems!”

*NO poem is “difficult”! I mean it.*

Especially when you are NOT reading to “decipher” the poem, especially when you are NOT reading for ONE FIXED meaning!

I’m calling this week, “Attack of the Difficult Poems” because your readings and assignments were inspired by the book of the same name by Charles Bernstein. In that book, he says, “*difficulty* means more layers with which to grapple and therefore more opportunities for a multilevel engagement with a poem.”

That’s all! For us, this week, difficulty just means that— lots of different ways to engage with these books.... Reading various lyrics poems and poems written in traditional forms has prepared you for these poets, who are making new forms of poetry, new ways of writing.

Suggested Agenda:

### MONDAY

Pick ONE of these six poetry collections:

Giovanni Singleton, [American Letters](#)

Kim Hyesoon, [Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream](#)

CA Conrad, [The Book of Frank](#)

Anne Boyer, [Garments Against Women](#)

Renee Gladman, [Calamities](#) (scanned in two parts: [ONE](#) and [TWO](#) (it’s not the longest book either-- the scanner just split it up for some reason))

John Ashbery, [Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror](#)

Read it. In one sitting. Or in many short sittings. Take notes as you read or take notes when you're done.

IT'S A LOT OF READING.

START WITH RECORDING YOURSELF READING 1-3 PAGES. BEFORE YOU "ANALYZE," JUST LISTEN...

Make THESE KINDS OF NOTES:

#### INTUITIVE

Please do not, do not say what you think any particular poem "means"!

(-Not unless you also want to say two other things it might mean...)

What do you feel and where do you feel it?

What lines or words or phrases are you drawn to? (even out of context! You do NOT have to "understand" them?)

What kinds of things do you wish you could Google in or about the poems? (But don't Google them)

Does this seem like "poetry" to you? If so, where? Why or why not? What do you think poetry can or should have? How has your idea of poetry evolved over the last few weeks?

#### ASSOCIATIVE

Where does your brain go when you read these poems?

What do they make you think of/about?

What do they make you picture in your head?

What texts or media do you connect to any line or page in this book?

Personal stories are fine too... whatever associations you make are great!

Your notes do not need to be complete sentences! They can be fragments/weird half-thoughts...

## TUESDAY:

Continue reading the book!

Keep making intuitive and associative connections

Today, also choose 2-3 other ways to engage the book from this list:

- AMBIENT notes : What “surrounds” these poems... ? Describe the light, the temperature, the air quality, the landscape in which these poems might be existing... There is no right answer here... Let your mind wander... Maybe there’s even music or a film or a video game playing in the background of these poems?
- You might draw some things you see?
- Rank your favorite pages and give rambling reasons for why you like them
- Or rank your most unfavorite pages and give rambling unkind reasons for why.
- Do a Homolinguistic translation: “Take a poem and translate it "English to English" by substituting word for word, phrase for phrase, line for line, or "free" translation as response to each phrase or sentence.” source:  
<https://writing.upenn.edu/bernstein/wreading-experiments.html>
- Write a poem composed entirely of phrases lifted from the poems in this book. (also taken from  
<https://writing.upenn.edu/bernstein/wreading-experiments.html>)
- Take two poems from the book and rewrite them to include your name and information from your day.
- Take two poems from the book and read them aloud to two different people and let them say whatever they want about the poems. Record what they say.
- Google party: let yourself Google six references in the book that you noted on Monday... let yourself go down many rabbit holes...

Wednesday:

Reading journal must be posted by 12 pm today. I'm sorry, but I cannot make exceptions this week, as the grading turnaround for the registrar is very tight.

Begin working on your presentation.

PRESENTATION TOPIC:

Charles Bernstein argues that “literary works do not exist only or even primarily, on the page.”

Make an argument for your chosen book existing in one other concrete place in the world.

Does it exist in conversation with another poem or book or piece of music, or art etc?

Does it exist in conversation with a day in history or one article from the newspaper?

Does it exist as music you hear in your head as you walk? (This is where recording yourself reading a page might come in...)

Does it exist as a cat's paws, a caterpillar's skin?

OR.....?

This is hard, because I'm asking you to think flexibly and creatively...

But I believe that this is the most important piece of writing you'll do for this course.

You've written a straight analytical essay, and you've written poems- now you have to write something that has no right answer, and that blends creative and scholarly impulses.

Consider reading one or both of these essays about reading poems:

[Charles Bernstein, excerpt from \*Attack of the Difficult Poems\*](#)

[Lyn Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure”](#)

## THURSDAY:

- Turn in your presentation by 5pm.
- It should be posted as a link to a video.
- It should be between 8-10 minutes long.
- It need not be PowerPoint! Really, think beyond PowerPoint!
- It can simply be a video of you, speaking. Or perhaps there will be other images...!
- It should include a compelling title.
- It should include lines from at least six of the pages/poems in the book...
- It should clearly address the topic, which is, once again:

Charles Bernstein argues that “literary works do not exist only or even primarily, on the page.”

Make an argument for your chosen book existing in one other concrete place in the world.

- And then you're done.

*SO much work, in SO little time... Thank you for all your energy, and efforts!*

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT ONE: "PART FOR WHOLE" ESSAY

Some of you may hit upon fantastic questions about the poems, and IF YOU CLEAR IT WITH ME FIRST, you can take another angle with this essay:

1. Choose 1-2 lines from any poem we have read this week and explain how they contribute to at least two different readings of the whole poem. Remember the Roethke idea!
2. You can quote other bits of the poem as you go, to explain your point, but center your discussion around the lines you start from.
3. This is NOT a traditional five-paragraph essay. Skip a boring introduction and get right to the discussion. Also skip a conclusion that merely sums up or restates what you said.
4. Your paper should be between 650-750 words

Process:

Do a freewrite– write for 15 minutes without stopping (try it!) about the lines you chose... everything is allowed in a freewrite/don't censor where your brain wants to go.

Then take a break. Go for a walk/play with an animal/do something away from a screen.

Then come back and give yourself about five minutes to start drafting answers to these questions:

Where in the poem do your lines come?

Are there rhymes or alliteration or meter? Where else do these appear?

Are any of the lines enjambed in your poem? How does the enjambment create multiple meanings?

Are there words that are repeated, here or elsewhere? Do they change in meaning?

Is there a metaphor or another figure of speech here that is developed elsewhere?

Is there a theme or symbol or idea here that is related to others or repeated elsewhere?

Is there an allusion to another literary work? Another part of the same poem?  
Are your lines a statement, an exclamation, a question, part of a dialogue?  
Do they use first, second, or third person (I/you/he she)?  
Do they address the reader or another audience? Is this deliberately unclear?  
What other literary devices seem crucial in these lines?

You will NOT use all of the notes you make on those questions in your essay. The point of brainstorming is to gather lots of material. And then- you make choices.

Start the essay with your chosen lines in the opening paragraph, then develop your idea about their role in the poem across the whole paper.

Once you have a reading of the whole poem via these lines, go back and look at the lines again- what is a SECOND, alternative reading of the poem via these lines?

The key thing is to base what you say in evidence from the poem.

Perhaps conclude with: why does this matter? Is there a mystery about this poem or your chosen lines that your investigation deepens? (Don't let the mystery be solved, only deepened!)

**Due Friday, JANUARY 3rd by NOON EST- upload via HuskyCT!**

Preferred format: Google doc with sharing permissions turned on

## **GRADING RUBRIC**

Freewrite- (include at beginning of your paper) (5 pts)

Compelling title that makes me want to read your paper (5)

At least five pieces of specific, detailed analysis of your poem (50 pts / 10 pts each)

Explanation of at least one literary device contained in your chosen lines (this can be part of the analysis above (10 pts)\*\*

A clear argument about how your chosen lines are a microcosm for two different readings of the whole poem (20 pts)

A conclusion that does not summarize or restate (5 pts)

An obvious effort to get to your points and to remove any superfluous talking or repetition and meeting the page range (5 pts)

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