



**Course No.: 4040286**

**Course Name: Introduction to Poetry**

מבוא לשירה

**Year: 2021-2022**

**Instructor: Annie Kantar Ben-Hillel**

**Program: The Program in Humanistic Studies**

**Academic Credits: 2**

*Please note: This is an enrichment course. The course and your grade will appear on your final transcript under a separate title for enrichment courses. The grade will not enter into your average toward your degree, and the credit hours will not count toward your degree.*

**Format: Class**

**Course Duration: Semester B, 2 weekly academic hours**

**Prerequisites: This course requires a native level of English speaking, listening, reading and academic writing. Completion of the Natives English course or successful performance on speaking and writing assessments conducted by the English Program is a pre-requisite for registering.**

**Office Hours: Sundays 12-13 or by appointment**

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“Whether we share the Greek poet’s belief that ‘sometimes it is a pleasure even to be a madman,’ or Plato’s that ‘the man in control of his senses knocks in vain on poetry’s door,’ or Aristotle’s that ‘no great genius has ever existed without a dash of lunacy’—whatever the truth, only the mind that is roused can utter something momentous that surpasses the thoughts of other men.” –Seneca

“It is true that the unknown is the largest need of the intellect, though for it, no one ever thinks to thank God.” –Emily Dickinson

“Things must expect to come in front of us  
A many times—I don’t say just how many—  
That varies with the things—before we see them.

One of the lies would make it out that nothing  
Ever presents itself before us twice.  
Where would we be at least if that were so?  
Our very life depends on everything's  
Recurring till we answer from within."

-Robert Frost, "Snow"

## About the Course

Poems allow us to identify and experience, in slow-motion, ideas and inclinations that often get lost in the maelstrom of daily life. In our course, we will deep-dive into English-language poems and explore how through syntax, music, image and other devices, they cast their imaginative spells and awaken us to broader, subtler, and richer ranges of feeling and thinking. With the understanding that one of poetry's most powerful functions is in its ambiguity—its capacity to evoke several ideas or emotions at once—we will read poems that relate to timeless subjects and come to understand from the inside-out how poems embody and enact complexity. In so doing, we will become better writers and thinkers ourselves.

During the course, you will also keep a Commonplace Book in which you will record lines from poems and other pieces of language that move you, and at the end of the course, you will elaborate on a brief selection in a collaborative document with your peers.

## Course Objectives

On completing this seminar, students will:

- Understand, appreciate and enjoy the variety of ways **ambiguity** functions in poetry;
- Recognize how elements of poetic craft such as image, metaphor, prosody, and rhyme **animate** the ideas of a poem;
- Gain a sense of various **literary movements** in English-language poetry, from its Anglo-Saxon roots and into modern and contemporary contexts;
- Understand deeply the ways by which form and content **interact** in symbiosis;
- Be able to **write** nuanced essays about poetry (and by extension, literature in general), and **converse** thoughtfully on the experience of a poem.

## Requirements

Preparation for Class (completion of readings, short assignments, keeping of Commonplace Book): 10%

Recitation of Poem (5%) and Reflection (15%, 1-2 pages): 20%

Mid-semester Paper: Thematic Close Reading (3-4 pages): 25%

Commonplace Book Sharing (written): 10%

Final Paper (5-6 pages): 35%

*Students are encouraged to revise their mid-semester and final papers and are invited to turn in a revision up to a week after receiving my feedback. The grade will constitute the average of the two drafts.*

## **Detail of Lessons and Required Readings**

Subject to changes based on the needs of the class.

Poems imitate and illuminate life. Defying neat categories, a poem is an experience; it never “means” one thing. As such, you may notice as you prepare for class that a poem could easily fit under headings other than the one I chose. My hope is that grouping these poems thematically will help individual poems and poets brush shoulders with one another in ways they might not were they grouped chronologically or otherwise. For each lesson, you will closely read two poems that we will discuss in class. The additional poems will broaden your historical context and deepen your familiarity with specific poets and will be useful for writing your papers. Please read those, as well, prior to each lesson.

### **Meeting 1: Beauty & The Sublime**

Cole, Peter. “Tutelary”: <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/tutelary/>  
Plath, Sylvia. “Poppies in October” in *Collected Poems of Sylvia Plath*, ed. Ted Hughes. New York: Harper Perennial, 2015, p. 83.

### **Meeting 2: Beauty & The Sublime**

Blake, William. “The Tiger”: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43687/the-tyger>  
O’Hara, Frank. “The Day Lady Died” in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1617.  
Plath, Sylvia. “Black Rook in Rainy Weather” and “Tulips” in *Collected Poems of Sylvia Plath*, ed. Ted Hughes. New York: Harper Perennial, 2015, p. 56 and 98.  
Stevens, Wallace. “Poems of Our Climate” in *Collected Poems: Wallace Stevens*, ed. Beyers and Serio. New York: Vintage, 2015, p. 205.

### **Meeting 3: Joy**

Cummings, E.E. [in Just—]: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47247/in-just>  
Hall, Donald. “Summer Kitchen” in *Joy*, ed. Christian Wiman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, p. 34.  
Wright, James. “A Blessing” in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1639.

### **Meeting 4: Joy**

Gunn, Thom. "Yoko" in *Joy*, ed. Christian Wiman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, p. 104.

Schuyler, James. "February" and "Poem." *The Collected Poems of James Schuyler*. New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 1993, p. 4 and 154.

In preparation for your poem recitations, please listen to at least two poems from any of the following readings:

Peter Cole and Taha Muhammad Ali, reading from *So What*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPVwPI152rg>

Reading by Peter Cole: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9o92tZgGrU>

Lithub's List: <https://lithub.com/some-of-the-best-of-online-poetry-as-read-by-actual-poets/>

Poetry Out Loud website: <https://www.poetryoutloud.org/competing/listen-to-poems/>

Poetry for All podcast: <https://poetryforall.fireside.fm/>

**Meeting 5: Reading of *The Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Ted Hughes, together out loud.** Please make an effort to stay an extra 45 minutes from the time class usually ends.

*Since there will be no reading homework between lessons 4-5, this would be a good week to read ahead, if you wish, and/or to begin practicing for your recitations.*

### **Meeting 6: Consciousness & Conscience**

**DUE: Recitation of a poem (recorded), uploaded to Moodle with 1-2 page reflection**

Auden, W.H. "Musee des Beaux Arts" in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1366.

Baker, David. "Murder." <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46508/murder>

Cole, Peter. "Improvisation on Lines by Isaac the Blind." *Things On Which I've Stumbled*. New York: New Directions, 2008, p. 3.

Kelly, Brigit Pegeen. "Song." *Song*. New York: Boa, 1994, p. 3.

### **Meeting 7: Consciousness & Conscience**

**DUE: Please listen to at least two of your peers' poem recitations and comment on Moodle.**

Dickinson, Emily (selections). *The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1960.

Levin, Phillis. "Meditation on A and The." *Mercury*. New York: Penguin, 2001, p. 73.

Levis, Larry. "Anastasia and Sandman." *The Breadloaf Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, eds. Michael Collier and Stanley Plumly. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999, p. 165.

Stevens, Wallace. "Sea Surface Full of Clouds." *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Vintage, 1982, p. 98.

## Meeting 8: Ambition

### DUE: Midterm Paper

Arnold, Craig. "Hot." *Shells*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 5.

Herbert, George. "The Pulley": <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44370/the-pulley>

Gilbert, Jack. "Failing and Flying": <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48132/failing-and-flying>

Horace (Trans. by Robert Pinsky). Ode 11.20 in *Horace: The Odes*, ed. J.D. McClatchy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 155.

Milton, John. "When I consider how my light is spent" in *The Penguin Book of the Sonnet*, ed. Phillis Levin. New York: Penguin, 2001, p. 81.

Sexton, Anne. "The Ambition Bird." *Mercies*. United Kingdom: Penguin, 1986, p. 161.

## Meeting 9: Love

Drayton, Sonnets from "Idea" (5: <https://www.bartleby.com/358/707.html> and 11: <http://eng-poetry.ru/english/Poem.php?PoemId=8840>).

Hayden, Robert. "Those Winter Sundays" in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1425.

## Meeting 10: Love

Li Po, trans. Ezra Pound. "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter" in *The New Directions Anthology of Chinese Poetry*, ed. Eliot Weinberger. New York: New Directions, 2003, p. 73.

Li Po, trans. William Carlos Williams. "Long Bannister Lane" in *The New Directions Anthology of Chinese Poetry*, ed. Eliot Weinberger. New York: New Directions, 2003, p. 74.

Sidney, Sir Philip. "Astrophel and Stella (1)":

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45152/astrophil-and-stella-1-loving-in-truth-and-fain-in-verse-my-love-to-show>

Shakespeare, William. Sonnets 73 and 116 in *The Penguin Book of the Sonnet*, ed. Phillis Levin. New York: Penguin, 2001, p. 46 and 48.

Wyatt, Sir Thomas. "Who so list to hounte I know where is an hynde":

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45593/whoso-list-to-hunt-i-know-where-is-an-hind>

## Meeting 11: God & Devotion

Herbert, George. "Prayer" in *The Penguin Book of the Sonnet*, ed. Phillis Levin. New York: Penguin, 2001, p. 75.

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. "Carrion Comfort," "God's Grandeur," and "The Windhover" in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1062, 1064, and <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur>

## Meeting 12: Mortality

### DUE: Final Paper (Draft 1)

Bishop, Elizabeth. "Sestina" in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. New York, Norton and Co., 1999, p. 1412.

Graham, Jorie. "At Luca Signorelli's Resurrection of the Body." *The Dream of the Unified Field*. New York: Ecco Press, 1995.

Levin, Phillis. "In a Haystack." *Mercury*. New York: Penguin, 2001, p. 67.

Merwin, W.S. "For the Anniversary of my Death":

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43118/for-the-anniversary-of-my-death>.

Pound, Ezra. "The Seafarer." <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44917/the-seafarer>

Pound, Ezra. "And the days are not full enough."

<https://web.cs.dal.ca/~johnston/poetry/daysnotfull.html>

### **Meeting 13: Mortality**

#### **DUE: Commonplace Book Sharing (Selection)**

Stern, Gerald. "The Dancing": <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57177/the-dancing>

Stern, Gerald. "Behaving Like a Jew." *This Time: Collected Poems*. New York: W.W.

Norton, 1998, p. 31.

Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself" (Section 6). *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Random House, 1941, p. 35.

**Final drafts of the final paper are due at the end of exams period. (Grade to be averaged with first draft.)**

### **Recommended Reading**

*These books are available in the Shalem College library:*

Boland, Eavan and Strand, Mark. *The Making of a Poem*. New York: Norton, 2005.

Conarroe, Joel. *Six American Poets*. New York: Random House, 1991.

Ferguson, Salter and Stallway. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. New York, Norton and Co., 2005.

Hall, Donald. *Goatfoot Milktongue Twinbird: Interviews, Essays and Notes on Poetry: 1970-76*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978.

Hirsch, Ed. *Poet's Choice*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2005.

Lehman, David. *Oxford Book of American Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Perrin, Christine. *The Art of Poetry*. Pennsylvania: Classical Academic Press, 2007.

*Websites for reading in modern and contemporary poetry:*

The Academy of American Poets: <https://poets.org/> - Though not especially welcoming in its layout, this website offers an array of interesting writers and resources on poetry.

The Bennington Review: <https://www.benningtonreview.org/> - A recently revived literary journal that features excellent work.

On the Seawall: <https://ronslate.com/> - A relatively new and beautifully curated fully online literary journal.

The Paris Review: <https://www.theparisreview.org/> - The Paris Review also has a weekly blog newsletter where you can read their iconic interviews and other interesting material. (The rest is available only to subscribers.)

Plume Poetry: <https://plumepoetry.com/> - a high quality, free, fully online literary journal of contemporary poetry.

Poetry Magazine: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/> - One of the oldest literary journals in the United States, which, thanks to a large endowment, now provides all its current and past issues for free online, along with a wealth of podcasts and prose on poetry.

Poetry Daily: [poetrydaily.org](http://poetrydaily.org) - a new poem each day to your inbox.

Verse Daily: [versedaily.org](http://versedaily.org) – a new poem each day to your inbox.