POETRY AND THE HUMAN

What is poetry and why do we do it? This three-quarter sequence examines the practice of poetry as a form of communication, linguistic innovation, and embodied presence. How is poetry as language and action different from other forms of activity? What is the role of poetry in society, in regard to memory, performance, storytelling, and history; ritual and creation; knowledge and formation of selfhood; institution and revolution? This course addresses these questions in the poetry of different eras and peoples, including works of Homer, Sappho, Catullus, Rumi, John Donne, Gwendolyn Brooks, Louis Zukofsky, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Anne Carson, N. Scott Momaday, Claudia Rankine, and others. It provides students with skills in the close reading of texts and performance and a grasp of the literary, philosophical, and theoretical questions that underpin the humanities. In the Spring students may take a third quarter of Humanities or shift into a related Arts Core course (CRWR 18200).

HUMA 18200 – POETRY AND THE HUMAN III

Spring: object, narrative, events

In the Spring Humanities course (object/narrative/events), we consider the poem first as an object that expresses the processes of writing and the materiality of the body, then as a way of shaping a life narrative, finally as a staged and sonic event that mediate our external and internal worlds.

Books and Course Reader

The following books – in order of when we will be reading them – are available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore, 5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue or from amazon.com, and have also been put on reserve at the Regenstein Library.

- Emily Dickinson, *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope Poems* (New Directions)
- Sophocles I: *Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus* (University of Chicago Press)
- Athol Fugard, *Statements* (Theatre Communications Group)
- Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* (W. W. Norton & Company)

All other readings can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas.

Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

• Event:

• In Class and Poem Recitation

Attendance and participation are critical (10% of grade), since the quality of the course depends upon your expressing your ideas and hearing those of your classmates. Please speak up to voice your thoughts, no matter how incomplete they may be. Reading and other assignments must be completed carefully by class. Unexcused or repeated absences will adversely affect your grade. Absences will be excused only for sickness, emergencies, or truly unavoidable conflicts.

You should each memorize a short poem of your choice (c. 10–25 lines) and recite it in class (10% of grade, pass/fail). This poem can be from the syllabus or otherwise, but please choose a published poem. Please sign up for your preferred day using the Canvas Scheduler, and confirm your poem with me at least two days before your recitation.
• **On Canvas**
By 10pm of the evening before each class meeting, please post a comment or question about a passage from the reading under the “Discussion” on our Canvas webpage (10% of grade), in response to a broadly stated question. There will be no formal requirement to respond directly to other posts, but you are strongly encouraged to take note of and engage with each other’s comments.

• **Written Work and Writing Seminars**
You will be required to complete three essays (20%, 20%, 20% of grade, respectively) this term. These are to be submitted as Word documents as uploads to Canvas, with a title that includes your last name. Work handed in after the due date may be penalized for lateness. **Please upload all written assignments to our Canvas site as Word documents.**

**Schedule**

**Week 1: poems and bodies I**

Tuesday: Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art” (as published and drafts)  
E. B. Voigt, “A Moment’s thought”

Thursday: Emily Dickinson, *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope Poems*  
poems and essay (Bervin or Werner)

**Week 2: poems and bodies II**

Tuesday: Emily Dickinson, *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson’s Envelope Poems*  
poems and essay (Bervin or Werner)

Thursday: select Old English riddle-songs (with introduction and notes)  
Allen Grossman, “Inscription” from *Summa Lyrica: A Primer of the Commonplaces in Speculative Poetics* (with introduction)

assignment 1: proposal due for extended paper

**Week 3: poems and bodies III**

Tuesday: John Donne, “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” “The Extasie,” “At the round earth’s imagin’d corners,” “Death be not proud,” “Batter my heart”

Thursday: Pablo Neruda, “Body of a Woman,” “I Have Gone Marking…,” “Tonight I Can Write…,” “Ars Poetica”  

Sunday: first draft of extended research paper due by midnight.

**Week 4: poetic narratives I**

Tuesday: Sophocles, *Antigone*
Thursday: Athol Fugard, *The Island*

**Week 5: poetic narratives II**

Tuesday: Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf*

Thursday: Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf*, continued

**Week 6: poetic narratives III**

Tuesday: Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell*

Thursday: Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell*, continued

**Week 7: lyric events I**

Tuesday: William Shakespeare, Sonnet 65, 73, 94 and 129

Thursday: Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God's Grandeur,” “As kingfishers catch fire,” “Spring and fall,” “I wake and feel the fell of dark”


**Week 8: lyric events II**

Tuesday: Hart Crane, “Praise for an Urn,” “Voyages,” “The Broken Tower”

Thursday: W. B. Yeats, “Ego Dominus Tuus,” “Easter 1916”

W. H. Auden, “In Memory of Sigmund Freud”

**Week 9: lyric events III**

Tuesday: Wallace Stevens, “The Man on the Dump,” “The Snow Man,” The Man with the Blue Guitar”

Thursday: Wallace Stevens, “The Poems of Our Climate,” “Final Soliloquy for the Interior Paramour”

Sunday: second draft of extended paper due by midnight

**Week 10**

Sunday: final extended essay due by midnight