ENGL 5410: Studies in the British Renaissance

Seventeenth Century English Lyric Poetry

Prof. Jeff Doty

Tue-Thur 11:00-12:20 p.m. // Auditorium 201

Office: Language 407H

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:30

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**Course Description**

This course explores the lyric poetry in England from 1600-1660 — a tradition which features timeless expressions of desire and love, probing meditations on divine love and spiritual longing, heartbreaking elegies for friends and children, and philosophical inquiry into the good life as well as the physical laws of the universe. We will focus on the artistry of poems through attention to form. *Form* is a capacious term that includes that which gives shape, or restraint, to the arrangements of language and ideas we call *poems*:

line, sentence, & meter and rhyme and stanza;

figures of speech and rhetorical arrangement;

set patterns such as the sonnet, and other ways to structure turns;

emotive modes such as the elegy and ode; and

something to communicate, or as Milton puts it, *the sense drawn out variously from one verse to another.*

Most poems in this period unfold as like arguments, so we will attend to the thinking poems do, how they assert or embody claims about the world or their authors. The course concludes with in-depth reading of eleven poets. We will explore how our poets received and altered existing poetic forms, developed individual styles, and used verse as a medium of religious, erotic, political, and personal expression. Often we will also read a poem by a contemporary writer that echoes or counterpoints our 17 c. poets in an interesting way.

**Course Goals**

* Develop a formal vocabulary for discussing lyric poetry
* Learn the reception history of this verse, including the usefulness (and potential distortions) of labels such as Petrarchan, metaphysical, devotional, and cavalier.
* Consider contemporary poems as part of a continuous lyric tradition
* Develop close reading skills and writing skills as appropriate to graduate study in English
* Gain skill in and enjoyment from the civil practice of discussing art and ideas with other people, live and in person

**Required Books**

* *Seventeenth-Century Lyric Poetry, 1603-1660* (Norton Critical Edition), edited by John Rumrich and Gregory Chaplain
* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form: An Exploration into the Formal Imagination of Poetry* (Ecco)
* Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* (FSG)
* Course pack I will provide

**Assignments**

Detailed instructions to come, but here is an overview:

**Notes (or Microessays) (20% x 3).** Reading poetry well begins with the art of noticing. You will submit 3 sets of notes, about 4-7 entries each (some will be responses to prompts that I provide). These should be concise, well-crafted paragraphs of 200-350 words each about small, interesting things you notice about poems on the syllabus: things that call our attention to the artistry and intelligence behind its making (such as prosody, sound, grammar, and diction). Notes will be easy to write if you annotate poems as part of your daily reading habit.

**Poem memorization (10%).** You will memorize a poem of 14+ lines from the syllabus and recite it in my office, where we will also discuss the poem one-on-one. Must be completed no later than 10/31.

**Options for final assignment (30%):**

**Scholarly Paper:** A traditional scholarly paper of 10–12 pages (excluding works cited) that is thesis-driven, features close reading, and engages with criticism on the topic (a minimum of five scholarly sources). *Recommended for PhD students, students wanting a writing sample for grad school applications or for ENGL 5670: Scholarly Writing, and for students who enjoy research.*

**Craft Essay:**The course will conclude with your submission of a craft or ‘poet-critic essay’ (e.g. see the essays from *Green Thoughts, Green Shades*). It must also be in dialogue with a minimum of five sources, which can be theory, craft, or literary or historical scholarship. *Recommended for creative writing students.*

**Editing an Anthology Section on a Poet:** Curate and introduce a poet’s work (as if for a poetry anthology). You will select and edit up 15-18 poems that should represent the poet by what you choose to be his or her most representative and best work. ‘Edit’ means that you will research the poem’s earliest textual state, which might be in manuscript or a printed edition, and to resolve any ‘cruxes’ (errors from misprinting or scribal mistake). You will also decide how much to modernize grammar and punctuation. Then you will write footnotes for the poems, keeping in mind your audience (undergraduate students). Page layout and typography are also important. The texts of your poems will be supported by two short essays: (1) an introduction to the poet’s life, work & style, and (2) a “textual note” that describes the *textual condition* of your poet’s work and how you came to make your editorial choices. *Recommended for students interested in teaching, textuality/bibliography, and research. This option is more labor intensive than the other options, and it requires careful attention to detail.*

**Attendance**

Because class discussions is *the primary activity* of the course, attendance is important and therefore mandatory. More than **3 absences** **will result in a lowering of your final grade**. See Canvas for full policy.

**Office Hours**

If there are aspects of the readings that you’d like to go over in more depth or things you would like to understand better, please come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to meet with me. Office hours are a resource for you.

**Civility & Attention Management (see Canvas PPT for more details)**

* Please be on time.
* Please put your phone (and any other devices, including laptops, that send and receive communication) away – not on the table, on your lap, or on top of our bag etc., but away – before the start of class. It is an act of social courtesy to give your professor and classmates your undivided attention.
* Unless you make advanced arrangements with me, do not use laptops or tablets in class.
* Because traffic in and out of the room is distracting, please keep your seat for the duration of the class (unless you are experiencing some emergency).

**Late Wor****k** is subject to a penalty of 5 points off per day.

**AI Policy**

If you want to use AI to help with your preparation for class discussions, that is fine. I have found it helpful in diagramming complicated sentences. It may, or may not, be helpful in identifying rhetorical figures or with scansion. Nor do I prohibit you using AI tools to check grammatical or stylistic aspects of your writing. In such cases, though, you must ask AI to *identify* rather than *correct* or *rewrite* your work. The ideas and the words and the order of the words that you submit for evaluation must be your own.

**Standard UNT Policies on** **Academic Integrity** **and Disability Accommodation:** see Canvas.

**SCHEDULE**

*Notes on reading the schedule.*

1. *NCE = assigned reading in the* Seventeenth-Century British Poetry **N**orton **C**ritical **E**dition
2. *c.p. = assigned reading in the course pack*
3. *Journal articles are not in the course pack. You’ll need to access these three readings through the library (via links on Canvas) and print them out.*

I. POEMS AND POETRY TERMS

8/19 FORM

John Donne, The Flea

* *Criticism:* Henry Oliver, on Close Reading and ‘To Daffodils’ (emailed)
* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form, ‘*Introduction’ and ‘One’ (1-25)

8/21 THEORY

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 [Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?]

Andrew Marvell, Damon the Mower (NCE 584)

* *Criticism:* Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric,* ‘An Inductive Approach’
* *Homework:* prepare a document that identities key terms from the Culler reading. Then work back through the Shakespeare sonnet and the Marvell poem, identifying, where appropriate, how these concepts emerge.

8/26 LINE & SYNTAX

John Donne, The Sun Rising (NCE 25)

Ben Jonson, My Picture Left in Scotland (NCE 132)

George Herbert, Sin [I] (NCE 241)

Andrew Marvell, Bermudas (NCE 538)

Lady Hester Pulter, The Revolution (c.p.)

* *Criticism:* Robert Pinsky, “Syntax and Line” from *The Sounds of Poetry*
* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form,* ‘A Note on Numbers’ (109-114) and‘Difficult Forms’ (353-363)

8/28 RHETORIC & RHYME

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 94 [Those that have the power to hurt] (c.p.)

John Donne, To His Mistress Going to Bed (NCE 46)

Ben Jonson, “Epitaph on S.P., a Child of Q. El. Chapel” (NCE 90)

George Herbert, “A Wreath” (NCE 288)

Katherine Phillips, Against Love (NCE 667)

* *Criticism:* Brad Leithauser, “Rhyme and Rhyme Decay” from *Rhyme’s Rooms* (13 pages)
* *Resource (handout/canvas):* Handlist of Rhetorical Terms
* *Resource (web):* Browse Michael Thune’s *Structure & Surprise* website, which lists and gives examples of different poetic *turns*.

**Sample note (#1) due.** *Upload to Canvas dropbox before class*

9/2 STRESS & METER

*scan each of the assigned poems prior to class*

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 1 (c.p)

John Donne, *Holy Sonnet* 6. Death be not proud… (NCE 72)

Lady Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 16 [Am I thus conquered?] (NCE 170)

Robert Herrick, “Upon Julia’s Clothes” (NCE 214)

George Herbert, “The Storm” (NCE 271)

Margaret Cavendish, A Posset for Nature’s Breakfast (c.p.)

* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, “A Note on Stress” and “How to Scan a Poem” (393-412)
* *Optional criticism:* George T. Wright, from *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art* (Canvas)
  + *More detailed method, including attention to secondary stress and headless lines*
* *Optional criticism:* Derek Attridge “Rhythm in English Poetry: Beat Prosody” (Canvas)
  + *An alternative system of reading for rhythm focused on* beats *rather than* stress*. Recommend if you are curious or discontented with traditional scansion.*

9/4 MEANING AS FORM (‘*the sense drawn out variously from one verse to another’ –* Milton)

*scan each of the assigned poems prior to class*

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 20 (c.p.)

Lady Hester Pulter, This was Written in 1648 When I lay in with my son John… (c.p)

Andrew Marvell, The Garden (NCE 553)

* *Criticism:* Derek Attridge, “Meaning in Movement: Phrasing and Repetition” (31-49)

*Attridge argues that meaning in poems is patterned along a hierarchy of:*

anticipation, arrival, extension

*and that poems move between these by sequences that are:*

equative *(pause and repeat),* additive *(analogy),* progressional *(striking new experience)*

9/9 STYLE

*scan each of the assigned poems prior to class*

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 30 (c.p)

John Donne, *Holy Sonnet* [Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?] (152 in Hass)

George Herbert, The Flower (NCE 280)

Anne Bradstreet, Upon Some Distemper of the Body (c.p.)

Margaret Cavendish, Of Many Worlds in This World (NCE 620)

* *On Writing:* Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* (1-55)

9/11 STYLE

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 76 (c.p.)

Lady Mary Wroth *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 40. False hope . . . (NCE 172)

Robert Herrick, Delight in Disorder (NCE 185)

George Herbert, Jordan [I] (NCE 247)

Margaret Cavendish, Wherein Poetry Chiefly Consists (c.p.)

* *On Writing:* Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* (55-85)
* *Essay:* Tony Judt, “Words” (c.p.)

**1st set of Notes due 9/12 by midnight**

II. SOME FORMS

9/16 SONNET

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 29 [When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes] (147 in Hass)

* Sonnet 116 [Let me not to the marriage of true minds] (146 in Hass)

John Donne, *Holy Sonnet* 5 [I am a little world made cunningly] (153 in Hass)

George Herbert, Redemption (NCE 237; Hass 156)

John Milton, Sonnet 18: On the Late Massacre in Piedmont (Hass 158)

* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form*, “Sonnet” (121-132)
* *Contemporary poem:* Terrance Hayes, American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin [“I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison”] (c.p.)
* *On Writing:* Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Several Short Sentences about Writing* (85-149)

9/18 ODE

Ben Jonson, Cary-Morrison Ode (‘To the Immortal Memory . . . ) (NCE 140)

Richard Lovelace, “The Grasshopper. Ode” (NCE 494)

Andrew Marvell, “An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland” (NCE 556)

* *Criticism:* Jonathan Culler, “Lyric Address”, *Theory of the Lyric* (c.p.)
* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form*, “Ode” & “Reading the Ode” (209-246)
* *Contemporary poem:* Paisley Rekdal, “Pear”

9/23 CARPE DIEM

Ben Jonson, “Song: To Celia” (NCE 104)

Robert Herrick, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” (NCE 195)

Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (NCE 543)

George Herbert, “Virtue” (NCE 258)

* *Ancient poem:* Horace, Epistles 1.11 (c.p.)
* *Criticism:* Ramie Targoff, “Carpe Diem” from *Posthumous Love* (c.p.)
* *Contemporary poem:* Ada Limon, “[The Conditional](https://poets.org/poem/conditional)” (c.p.)

9/25 ELEGY

Ben Jonson, “On My First Son” (NCE 85)

Anne Bradstreet, “On My Dear Grandchild Simon Bradstreet” (c.p.)

Lady Hester Pulter, “Upon the Death of my Dear and Lovely Daughter, Jane Pulter” (c.p.)

Margaret Cavendish, “Upon the Funeral of My Dear Brother, Killed in These Unhappy Wars” & “An Elegy upon the Death of My Brother” (c.p.)

Katherine Philips, “Epitaph. On Her Son H.P. at St. Sith’s Church” (667)

* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form*, “Elegy” (293-298)
* *Contemporary poem:* Robert Hass, “August Notebook: A Death” (c.p.)

9/30 EMBLEM

Ben Jonson, “The Hourglass” (NCE 132)

George Herbert, “The Altar” (NCE 227)

Richard Lovelace, “The Snail” (NCE 500)

Lady Hester Pulter, “Emblem 37. Behold how many cobwebs doth invest” (c.p.)

Andrew Marvell, “On a Drop of Dew” (NCE 535)

Richard Crashaw, “To the Noblest and Best of Ladies, the Countess of Denbigh” (NCE 474)

* *Contemporary poem:* Mark Doty, “A Display of Mackerel” (c.p.)

III. SOME POETS

10/2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*not in coursepack. For an online critical edition, see* <https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b6025647>

Sonnet 15. When I consider everything that grows

Sonnet 56. Sweet love, renew thy force

Sonnet 60. Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore

Sonnet 65. Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea

Sonnet 129. The expense of spirit in a waste of shame

Sonnet 138. When my love swears that she is made of truth

* *Contemporary poem:* Zaffar Kunial, “The Lyric Eye” (c.p.)

10/7 JOHN DONNE

To Sir Henry Wotton (NCE 59)

The Indifferent (NCE 26)

The Apparition (NCE 36)

The Good Morrow (NCE 23)

The Canonization (NCE 26)

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning (NCE 36)

The Relic (NCE 41)

* *Criticism:* Ramie Targoff, Introduction to *John Donne: Body and Soul* (c.p.)

10/9 JOHN DONNE

A Valediction: Of Weeping (NCE 31)

A Nocturnal upon St Lucy’s Day, Being the Shortest Day (NCE 33)

Holy Sonnet 2. Oh my black soul (NCE 70)

Holy Sonnet4[At the round earth’s imagined corners, blow] (NCE 71)

Holy Sonnet 5 [If poisonous minerals] (NCE 71)

Holy Sonnet 7 [Spit in my face, you Jews] (NCE 72)

Holy Sonnet10 [Batter my heart] (NCE 73)

* *Criticism:* Carl Phillips, “On the Road with Donne: An Idiosyncratic Pilgrimage” (c.p.)
* *Contemporary poem:* Carl Phillips, “Wild is the Wind” (c.p.)
* *Optional but Recommended Criticism:* Richard Strier, “John Donne Awry and Squint: The Holy Sonnets, 1608-1610’” (canvas)

**2nd Set of Notes due**, Friday 10/10, 11:59pm

10/14 JOHN DONNE

Holy Sonnet 17. Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt (NCE 74)

Holy Sonnet 19. Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one (NCE 74)

Good Friday 1613. Riding Westward (NCE 75)

A Hymn to Christ, at the Author’s Last Going into Germany (NCE 77)

* *Criticism:* Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form,* “John Donne & the Meditative Lyric” (247-53)
* *Contemporary poem:* Kimberly Johnson, “The Story of My Calamities” (c.p.)

10/16 BEN JONSON

On my First Daughter (NCE 85)

Inviting a Friend to Supper (NCE 89)

To Penshurst (NCE 97)

To Heaven (NCE 120)

An Epistle Answering to One That Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben (NCE 137)

To the Right Honourable, the Lord High Treasurer of England. An Epistle Mendicant. 1631 (c.p.)

* *Criticism:* Linda Gregerson, from *Green Thoughts, Green Shades,* “Jonson and the Loathèd Word” (c.p.)
* *Contemporary poem:* Thom Gunn, “An Invitation” from *Collected Poems* (c.p.)

10/21 LADY MARY WROTH

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 1 [When night’s black mantle] (all sonnets in c.p.)

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 4 [Forbear dark night]

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 18 [Which should I like better of]

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 22 [Like to the Indians]

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 70 [Poor love in chains and fetters]

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 97 [Juno still jealous of her husband Jove]

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* 101 [No time, no room, no thought or writing can]

* *Contemporary poem:* A. E. Stallings, “Silence” (c.p.)

10/23 ROBERT HERRICK

The Argument of his Book (NCE 181)

The Bad Season Makes the Poet Sad (NCE 209)

Corinna’s Going A-Maying (NCE 189)

Discontents in Devon (NCE 184)

The Hock-Cart (NCE 55)

Ceremonies for Candlemas Eve (NCE 217)

The Hag (NCE 210)

The Bellman (NCE 223)

The White Island, or Place of the Blest (NCE 223)

* *Contemporary poem:*Geoffrey Hill, “Harmonia Sacra” (c.p.)

10/28 GEORGE HERBERT

Easter Wings (NCE 239)

Affliction (I) (NCE 241)

Prayer (I) (NCE 243)

The Temper (I] (NCE 245)

Artillery (NCE 273)

* *Contemporary Poem:* Zaffar Kunial, “Prayer” (c.p.)

10/30 GEORGE HERBERT

Affliction [IV] (NCE 260)

The Pulley (NCE 277)

The Collar (NEC 276)

Aaron (NCE 283)

Love (III) (NCE 291)

* *Contemporary Poem:* Li-Young Lee, “Nativity” (c.p.)

**Poem recitation must be completed by 10/31**

11/4 LADY HESTER PULTER

*Not in coursepack. Print out/read these poems from* <https://pulterproject.northwestern.edu/#poems>

On the Horrid Murder of That Incomparable Prince

Oh my afflicted, solitary soul

Aletheia’s Pearl

Of a Young Lady at Oxford, 1646

Made when I was not well

When British Brennus

* *Contemporary Poem:* Jane Kenyon, “Let Evening Come” (c.p.)

11/6 ANNE BRADSTREET

An Epitaph on My Dear and Ever Honoured Mother, Mistress Dorothy Dudley (all poems in c.p.)

Before the Birth of One of Her Children

To My Dear and Loving Husband

In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet

Deliverance from a Fit of Fainting

Upon My Son Samuel, His Going for England, Nov. 6, 1657

[Here follow some verses upon the burning of our house . . .]

* *Contemporary poem:* Sophie Cabot Black, “What I Meant to Say Was” (c.p.)

11/11 JOHN MILTON

Lycidas (398)

* *Criticism:* Hass outlines ‘Lycidas’ in *A Little Book on Form* (303-309)

11/13 JOHN MILTON

L’Allegro (NCE 388)

Il Penseroso (NCE 392)

Sonnet 19 [When I Consider How My Light is Spent] (NCE 406)

Sonnet 23 [Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint] (NCE 407)

* *Contemporary poem:* Geoffrey Hill, “Lachrimae Amantis” (c.p.)

**3rd set of notes due, 11/14 by 11:59 pm**

11/18 MARGARET CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

*Not in coursepack. Print out/read these poems from* <https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/>

A Dialogue betwixt Man and Nature

A Dialogue betwixt Peace and War

Clasp [‘When I did write this book’]

The Hunting of the Hare (NCE 620)

* *Criticism*: Alice Fulton, from *Green Thoughts, Green Shades*, “Unordinary Passions: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle”

11/20 MARGARET CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

*Not in coursepack. Print out/read these poems from* <https://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/>

The Motion of Thoughts

The Circle of the Brain Cannot be Squared

The Circle of Honesty Squared (plus 3 prose paragraphs)

The Arithmetic of Passions

Nature’s Landscape

A Heart Dressed

A Description of a Shepherd and Shepherdess’ Life

* *Contemporary Poem:* Corey Marks, “The Rock That Is Not a Rabbit” (c.p.)

--- THANKSGIVING WEEK ---

12/2 ANDREW MARVELL

The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn (540)

The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers (546)

The Mower Against Gardens (547)

The Mower to the Glowworms (550)

The Mower’s Song (551)

* *Contemporary poem:* Zaffar Kunial, “Foxglove Country” (c.p.)

12/4 t.b.a : review or paper workshop

12/9 **Final project due by 5:00 pm**