Course Objectives

Poetry, like all writing, is an attempt to communicate. Interpreting poetry, then, requires that we do our best to understand what the poet is trying to communicate to us. Because poetry is often indirect communication, using figurative language and appealing to the senses more than to logic and reason, it may seem difficult to understand at first. In this course, we will do our
best to make interpreting poetry feel as familiar and instinctive as listening to music or reading fiction.

All poetry is a response to its particular historical context, a communication to a particular audience at a particular time, but the very best poetry also transcends that context and speaks to all of us in our time.

Class Business

Attendance

Because understanding the poetry we read is reliant upon participation in active discussions, attendance is an important aspect of this class. Therefore you will be allowed a maximum of three absences. Your final grade will drop three points for each absence after the third. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.

Deadlines for Assignments

Assignments are due on Canvas on the date specified on the itinerary.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Since the primary objective for this course is that you learn to interpret poetry easily, you should not be looking up interpretations of the poetry we read, even if it is readily available.

Oxford has an Honor Code, and turning in any assignment for any course means you are agreeing to abide by that Code. It is your responsibility to know and understand that Code, which is in the College Catalog.

Requirements and Grading

All work will be graded and every assignment will count towards the final grade. I grade on a plus/minus scale. Your final grade for this course will be figured as follows:

- 50% Five 4-page papers on poetry (see sidebar)
- 25% Participation and presentations
- 25% Final Exam
Itinerary

JANUARY
16  Definition of Poetry
21  Renaissance sonnets (Wyatt "They Flee"; Sidney "Loving"; Spenser "One Day"; Drayton; Shakespeare "Look in thy glass," "Shall I Compare Thee," "That time of Year," and "My Mistress' Eyes" in IP
28  Donne; Marvel; Herrick; all in IP
30  Shakespeare

FEBRUARY
1    Shakespeare
4    Shakespeare
11   **Emoji papers due:** Presentations
13   presentations
18   Gray: “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” IP
27   Whitman

MARCH
4    Millay
6    Millay; **Comparison Paper due**
11-15 **SPRING BREAK**
18   Harlem Renaissance
20   Harlem Renaissance
25   **Song analysis due:** presentations
27   Presentations

APRIL
1    Frost
3    Ammons, Short Poems
8    Ammons, “Corson’s Inlet”
10   Oliver
15   Oliver
17   Billy Collins
22   Billy Collins
24   **Meme papers due:** Presentations
29   Presentations