Department of English
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ENGE2390 – Reading Poetry
Time and venue TBA

Professor: Prof. Collier NOGUES
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Description:

This course introduces students to the in-depth study of the pleasures of poetry. We will read poems together from a wide range of historical and geographical contexts, including Hong Kong and our near neighbors Singapore and the Philippines, exploring how poets have turned English to their own purposes. We will organize our explorations by focusing on form. What makes a poem *a poem* and not something else? How have poets made the most of the tension between the tight container of poetic form and the slipperiness of language? How have poets imagined the relationship between form and content, and to what personal, social, or ideological ends? These are some of the questions we will ask and seek to answer. Throughout our explorations, you'll find your most useful tools to be your curiosity, your ear for music, and your willingness to be happily surprised by your own and your classmates' insights.

Learning outcomes:

Upon the successful completion of this course, you will have:
- become more confident reading, asking questions of, and interpreting poems new to you, using the vocabulary of poetry criticism;
- become familiar with the affordances and limitations of inherited forms (e.g., the sonnet) as well as of free verse and the formal innovations of 20th and 21st century poets;
- honed your close reading skills with particular attention to the features of poetic language;
- practiced structuring a compelling argument in oral presentations as well as formal essays; and
- developed an appreciation of what is often called the "difficulty" of poetry as, rather, an invitation to pleasurable engagement.

Learning activities:

The learning activities in this course will take a variety of forms. During lectures, I will present to you model analyses of poems you have read in preparation for class. We will also build close readings together as a full class and in small groups, and you will also have opportunities to develop your own thinking in individual writing tasks. Tutorials will be interactive, offering you the chance to practice your close reading skills collaboratively with a small group of peers, and to present your

insights to each other in an oral presentation. Out-of-class activities include reading and taking careful notes on assigned poems, craft essays, and literary criticism in preparation for lecture and tutorial; working with other tutorial members to compose and structure your group presentation; conducting research; and developing your analysis skills in a formal essay.

Key concepts:

Topics	Contents/fundamental concepts
Poetic forms and modes	Inherited forms, incuding sonnet, villanelle, syllabics, ballad and blues; Recently invented forms, including erasures, prose poems, golden shovels, and list poems; Modes of apostrophe, witness, documentary, dramatic monologue, ekphrasis, and experimental translation; Multimedia and multimodal practices.
Poetic terminology	The common vocabulary used by poetry readers and critics to describe poems and their effects, including prosody, tension, concreteness and abstraction, figurative language, pattern and variation, rhythm and meter, speaker/ addressee relation, and association and surprise, among others.
Reading and listening skills	How to read poetry out loud, and how to listen actively.
Close reading and argumentation	How to write insightfully and compellingly about poetry.

The following workload schedule per week may help you allocate your time this term:

Lecture	Interactive tutorial	Reading	Writing	Preparing for assignments/ examinations/ tutorial activities
In class	In class	Out of class	Out of class	Out of class
2 hrs	1 hr	2 hrs	1 hr	2 hrs
M	M	M	M	M

All elements, both in and out of class, are mandatory.

Assessment Scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
In-class Participation	Because interpreting literature is a skill best practiced collaboratively with other interested, engaged readers, this course values active and curious engagement in all class discussions and writing activities, in both lecture and tutorials.	10%

Group Presentation	Once in the semester during weeks 5-12, you'll offer a 15-minute group presentation in your tutorial about an element of poetry. A list of elements from which to choose, and further guidelines, will be provided. Your presentation will include a 2-4 page handout. This assignment will assess your ability to build on the skills you have practiced in class, developing your own insights and structuring them argumentatively for an audience of your peers.	20%
Mid-term Exam	Week 7. The mid-term exam will be open-book and open-note. It will assess your understanding of the poetic vocabulary and analysis skills we have practiced in lecture and tutorial, by applying those skills and vocabulary to poems new to you.	30%
Final Paper	Due in Reading Week after our last class meeting. You will apply what you have learned about analyzing and interpreting poetry as you generate an extended exploration (6-8 pages) of two or three poems, by one or two poets we have read together, with particular attention to the formal choices made by the poet/s.	40%

Required texts (subject to revision):

All texts will be provided via Blackboard or in-class handouts.

X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, *An Introduction to Poetry*, thirteenth edition. Pearson, 2010 (excerpts).

Amorak Huey and W. Todd Kaneko, *Poetry: A Writers' Guide and Anthology.* Bloomsbury, 2018 (excerpts).

Poems by: William Shakespeare, George Herbert, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Marianne Moore, Robert Browning, W. H. Auden, Sylvia Plath, Langston Hughes, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, Carolyn Forché, Terrance Hayes, Chen Chen, Louise Glück, Claudia Rankine, Allison Benis White, Joshua Ip, Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, and Nicholas Wong, among others.

Recommended texts:

The Poetry Foundation's website, particularly its learning resources:
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn

eLearning/Course Announcements:

We will be using Blackboard Learn as the eLearning platform in this course. Blackboard Learn will be used for a) dissemination of course materials such as readings, discussion questions, assignment prompts, and rubrics, b) supplementary class discussion, and c) d) course announcements.

You can access Blackboard Learn at: https://elearn.cuhk.edu.hk/

A demonstration of how to access Blackboard Learn to post and respond to announcements, download resources, and use the discussion forums will be given in the first lecture.

Feedback for evaluation

At the end of the course, students will be asked to complete Course Evaluations for both the lectures and tutorials for the course. Both your instructors and the department value this information highly, as it allows us to understand what we are doing well and how we can improve. We use your feedback to revise our teaching methods and course content. During the semester, I and the TAs welcome student feedback via direct communication (via email or in person). Midway through the term, there will also be an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback via a Surveymonkey survey.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/ . With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Statement:
I declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged. I also acknowledge that I am aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the website
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Name   Student ID

_____   _____

Grade descriptors

Course Grade Descriptors:
Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes.
Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The 'A' grade should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes.
Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a

manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level WELL.

Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade B- / Good (Minus): GOOD performance on all learning outcomes, OR GOOD performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C+ / Adequate (Plus): VERY ADEQUATE performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SOMEWHAT SUSTAINED manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C / Adequate: ADEQUATE performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C- / Adequate (Minus): SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE performance on A NUMBER OF learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to SOMEWHAT apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the BARE basic requirement at this level.

Grade D+ / Pass (Plus): BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on A FEW learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade D / Pass: ALMOST BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on VERY FEW learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in very few areas while responding very minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand what the task requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.