

Hum/En 35  
Beginning with Poems  
Tentative Syllabus  
Fall 2022  
George Pigman

*Catalog Description*

Why begin the study of literature with poems? Written words are the building blocks of literature, and poetry, in Coleridge's famous equation, is "the best words in the best order." To be understood and appreciated, poetry requires a close attention to words and their ordering as they are read and reread. All good literature requires such attention, but, practically speaking, poetry provides the best way to acquire the art of rereading because of its shorter forms. More importantly, poetry can be the most emotionally intense and satisfying of literary forms. We will read a small number of poems written in English from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries from several genres—sonnet, ode, elegy, verse epistle, satire, villanelle—and on several subjects—love, death, and politics. Poets will include William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and William Butler Yeats.

*Requirements and Procedures*

Since it is impossible to understand and appreciate a poem without understanding what its words mean, the first few classes will begin with a quiz about one or more words from the day's reading. You need to learn how to use the most important reference work for the study of English literature, the *Oxford English Dictionary*. After two or three weeks, the daily quiz will concern the poems. By noon of the day of each class you must send me by **email** a question on a poem. I will choose from your emails for a short quiz, which will take place at the beginning of class.

You must write three essays, the first two approximately 1,250 words long and the third, approximately 1,500 words long. The first essay is due October 9 at 11:59 pm, the second, November 13 at 11:59 pm, and the third, December 8 at 11:59 pm. If you'd like me to read a draft of your essay before submitting it to be graded, I'll try to do so provided that you send it to me a couple of days before it is due.

Roughly two-thirds of your grade will be based on the essays, and the other third on your quizzes and participation in class. You must receive a passing grade on all of the essays to pass the class.

The easiest way to communicate with me is by **email**, but I am happy to speak to you in person by appointment. My office is 208 Dabney.

*Recommended Text*

*The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 6th edn., ed. Margaret Ferguson, Tim Kendall, and Mary Jo Salter (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018). If you choose not to use this book, you are responsible for finding the assigned poems and bringing them to class.

## *Writing Matters*

Caltech's Hixon Writing Center offers a number of resources that you may find useful for supporting your writing in this class, including tutorial support that allows you to discuss a work-in-progress with a professional or peer tutor. You can learn more about the Center, how to make an appointment with a tutor, and about their other resources on their [website](#). This [video](#) provides a good introduction to the center.

Plagiarism is a serious offense against the Caltech honor code and against the scholarly community at large; you should become thoroughly familiar with "[Avoiding Plagiarism: Guidelines and Expectations for Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Caltech](#)."

## Schedule

- September 27 How to use the *OED*; William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 1–3, 18, 20
- September 29 William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 12, 15, 20, 29, 30, 33, 35, 55, 60, 65, 71
- October 4 William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* 73, 76, 87, 94, 97, 106–7, 116, 126, 129, 130, 135, 138, 144, 146
- October 6 Robert Herrick, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time”; Edmund Waller, “Go, lovely rose,” Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”; Aphra Behn, “The Disappointment”; John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, “The Imperfect Enjoyment”
- October 11 John Donne, “The Good-Morrow,” “The Sun Rising,” “The Canonization,” “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” “The Flea,” “Batter my heart, three-personed God,” “Hymn to God My God, in My Sickness”; George Herbert, “Love” (III: “Love bade me welcome”)
- October 13 Thomas Wyatt, “Stand Whoso List,” “Mine Own John Poins”; John Milton, “I Did but Prompt the Age,” “To the Lord General Cromwell,” “On the Late Massacre in Piedmont”; Andrew Marvell, “An Horatian Ode”
- October 18 Ben Jonson, “On My First Son,” “On My First Daughter”; John Milton, “Lycidas” (helpful notes at [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading\\_room/lycidas/text.shtml](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml)), “Methought I Saw”
- October 20 Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”; Thomas Hardy, “The Voice”; William Butler Yeats, “Easter 1916,” W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”
- October 25 Percy Bysshe Shelley, “To a Skylark”; John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”; Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Windhover”; Thomas Hardy, “The Darkling Thrush”
- October 27 Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess”; Alfred Tennyson, “Ulysses”; Richard Howard, “Nikolaus Mardruz to his Master Ferdinand, Count of Tyrol, 1565”
- November 1 Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”
- November 3 Emily Dickinson 39, 68, 112, 124, 145, 202, 259, 260, 269, 314, 320, 339, 340, 348, 359, 372, 383, 409, 411, 445. These are the numbers in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R. W. Franklin (Cambridge, 1998). Facsimiles of the manuscripts of Dickinson’s poems are available at <http://www.edickinson.org>. I urge you to look at facsimiles of the poems you like because Dickinson’s presentation of her poems (hardly any were printed in her lifetime) is interesting and idiosyncratic.
- November 8 Writing workshop at Hixon Writing Center. You must have completed a draft of your second essay by November 7 at 5 pm for this peer-review workshop.
- November 10 Emily Dickinson 479, 533, 588, 591, 620, 740, 764, 781, 782, 788, 895, 905, 935, 1096, 1108, 1263, 1489, 1577, 1773, 1788

- November 15 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," "Pied Beauty," "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," "Felix Randal," "Spring and Fall," "Not, I'll not, carrion comfort," "No Worst, There Is None," "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark," "My Own Heart Let Me More Have Pity On," "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord"
- November 17 W. B. Yeats, "No Second Troy," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death," "The Scholars," "The Second Coming," "A Prayer for My Daughter," "To Be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Leda and the Swan," "Among School Children," "Byzantium," "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," "Lapis Lazuli," "Long-Legged Fly," "The Circus Animals' Desertion"
- November 22 T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; W. H. Auden, "Lullaby," "As I Walked Out One Evening"
- November 29 William Empson, "Villanelle" (pdf); Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"; Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"
- December 1 Philip Larkin, "Toads," "Church Going," "An Arundel Tomb," "The Whitsun Weddings," "MCMXIV," "Talking in Bed," "High Windows," "The Trees," "Sad Steps," "The Explosion," "This Be The Verse," "Aubade," "Love Songs in Age" (pdf), "Faith Healing" (pdf), "Dockery and Son" (pdf)