Reading Poetry IDSEM UG 1420-001  
Spring 2016, January 25-March 21  
1 Washington Place - 401  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45  
Professor Lisa Goldfarb

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Poetry is an art that can express our deepest feelings and thoughts about our human experience. Too many of us, however, encounter poetry timidly. We wonder how we can make meaning of poetic words and rhythms so distinct from those we use in our daily lives. In this course, we will work at developing poetic sensibilities, not by digging to find clues to the mysterious meanings of poems, but by gaining an understanding of how to read poetry as a language within a language. We will study how the concentrated language and sounds of poetry help us to grapple with the shades and subtleties of our own experience. We will read many poems ranging from early English lyrics, popular ballads, and Shakespeare’s sonnets, to modern and contemporary poems, as well as poems originally written in other languages.

LEARNING GOALS
• Students will develop an understanding of the genre of lyric poetry and master a variety of forms particular to the lyric in Anglo-American poetry.  
• Students will learn a variety of critical strategies for the close reading of poetic texts (linguistic, aesthetic, historical, philosophical).  
• Students will develop familiarity with poetry from a variety of traditions: European (east and west); African, and Asian poems will be studied alongside the Anglo-American works.  
• All students will learn to orally present their readings of both poetic and musical texts to the class in informal and formal presentations.  
• Students will master critical writing and conventions of comparative poetic analysis.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Edward Hirsch: How to Read and Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry (Harcourt)  
Helen Vendler: Poems-Poets-Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology (Bedford/St.Martin’s)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS
I have also ordered a short guide to verse forms in English entitled Rhyme’s Reason: A Guide to English Verse, by John Hollander. This book is strongly recommended.

All books have been ordered and should be available at the NYU Bookstore.
Please also bear in mind that I will be handing out and posting on NYU classes supplementary materials related to individual poems and poets during the semester. These supplementary readings will, from time to time, arise out of our class discussions.

**COURSE ROUTINES: READINGS AND WRITING**

Reading Poetry is designed to present students with a wide spectrum of poems and critical essays about lyric poetry, and to help students to develop comfort with poetry as well as strategies for the reading of poetry. For each class students will be expected to have read five poems **closely**. I have assigned four additional poems for the week, from which students will choose one on which to concentrate in weekly writing assignments. As you will see on the syllabus, there are also important weekly readings about poetry drawn from the assigned texts.

As writing about poetry helps us to read more closely, each student will write very brief response to each poem (one sentence). Responses should be typed and brought to each class to be shared with the group. In addition, students will write a longer, more detailed extended observation (no more than one page) to the one poem per week on which they choose to focus. If students would like to memorize and recite a poem in place of or as part of the longer weekly assignments, we can certainly make arrangements. Students are strongly encouraged to learn how to recite poetry, and weekly assignments are a perfect way to learn how to master this art. Both short and extended written observations will be collected at the end of each week.

There will two formal papers (5 pages) to be submitted during the course of the semester. Please bear in mind that all written work must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, and documented according to the *MLA Handbook*.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Please be sure to use as regular resources Hirsch’s chapter “The Glossary and the Pleasure of the Text” (265-323) for a handy list of poetic terms and definitions and Vendler’s Appendices (653-679). Both texts will help you to gain a vocabulary for describing and analyzing poems. (We will be speaking at greater length about this in class.)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

*Reading Poetry* is a seminar course that develops through class discussion. It is crucial students attend class regularly and arrive on time. If students cannot attend class, due to illness or emergency, please call or email me in order to be prepared for the next class. Participation in class is vital to the success of the class, as is the timely submission of all written work, both weekly assignments and formal papers.
Grades are based on the quality of all of students’ written work; informal and formal papers, as well as the quality of your class participation. Please note that excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) can jeopardize the course grade.

Grades will be calculated as follows:
Class participation: 25%
Informal papers: 25%
Paper #1 – 25%
Paper #2 – 25%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

OFFICE HOURS
My office is in room 604 (1 Washington Place – 6th floor) and my office phone number is 998-7325. You can also reach me most easily by e-mail at lg3@nyu.edu or lisa.goldfarb@nyu.edu

Spring Office Hours:
Monday: 2:00-5:00, by appointment
Tuesday: 9:30-10:30, 2:00-3:00
Thursday: 9:30-10:30, 2:00-3:00

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 – The Language of Poetry: The Lyric

January 26
- Introduction to the lyric
- Poems for preliminary discussion:
  - Rilke – From Sonnets to Orpheus (handout)
  - Seamus Heaney – “From the Frontier of Writing” (Paine, 74-75)

January 28
- Reading: Vendler, “The Poem as Life” (3-15); “The Poem as Arranged Life” (27-64)
- Poems for discussion: Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (Vendler, 574); Dickinson, “The Soul selects her own Society” (Vendler, 453); Paul Lawrence Dunbar, “We Wear the
Mask” (Vendler, 460); John Keats, “This living hand” (Vendler 507); Pablo Neruda, “Poetry” (Paine, 163)
• Additional poems: Dickinson, “The Brain—is wider than the Sky” (Vendler, 452); William Blake, “Ah Sun-flower” (Vendler, 393); Neruda, “Poet’s Obligation” (Paine, 161); Borges, “Chess” (Paine, 141-142)

WEEK 2 – Poems of Love and Beauty

February 2
• Reading: Hirsch, “Message in a Bottle” (1-31); “A Made Thing” (31-46); Vendler, “Poems as Pleasure” (77-99)
• Poems for discussion: Edmund Spenser, “Sonnet 75” (Vendler, 597-598); Shakespeare, Sonnet 116 (Vendler, 574); John Donne, “Breake of Day” (Vendler, 454-455); Faiz Ahmed Faiz, “Don’t Ask Me for That Love Again” (Paine, 413-414); Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “How Do I Love Thee? (Vendler, 298-299)

February 4
• Reading: “Of Knowledge and Pleasure Globalized” (Paine, Introduction);
• Additional poems: Breyten Breytenbach, “Padmapani” (Paine, 364); Robert Lowell, “Obit” (Paine, 26-27); Seamus Heaney, “An Artist” (Paine, 74); Eugenio Montale, “The Lemon Trees” (Paine, 272-273)

WEEK 3 – The Poetic Voice

February 9
• Reading: Edward Hirsch, “At the White Heat” (46-61); Helen Vendler, “Constructing a Self” (179-196)
• Poems for discussion: Emily Brontë, “No Coward Soul Is Mine” (Vendler, 404); Whitman, from “Song of Myself” (Vendler, 627-629); Yeats, “Among Schoolchildren” (Vendler, 645); Robert Creeley, “When I Think” (Vendler, 449-450); Audre Lorde, “Hanging Fire” (Vendler, 521)

February 11
Poems for discussion: Emily Dickinson, “Much Madness is divinest Sense” (Vendler, 452); Carolos Drummond de Andrade, “Residue” (Paine, 184-187); Anna Akhmatova, “The Muse” (Paine, 224); César Vallejo, “Intensity and Height” (Paine, 178); Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man” (Vendler, 600)
• Additional poems: William Carlos Williams “Spring and All” (Vendler, 634); Eliot “Preludes” (Vendler, 461); Dylan Thomas, “In My Craft or Sullen Art” (Vendler, 617)
WEEK 4 – Poems of Places, Real and Imagined

February 16
• Reading: Vendler, “Describing Poems,” 111-138
• Poems for discussion: Elizabeth Bishop, “At the Fishhouses” (Vendler, 388); A.R. Ammons “The City Limits” (Vendler, 372); Hart Crane, “To Brooklyn Bridge” (Vendler, 448); Stevens, “The Idea of Order at Key West” (Vendler, 598);

February 18
• Poems for discussion: Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro” (Vendler, 561); Allen Ginsberg, “America” (Vendler, 471); Neruda, “Ode to the Lemon” (Paine, 159-160); Antonio Agostinho Neto, “The Grieved Lands” (Paine, 353); Seamus Heaney, “Bogland” (Paine, 67-68); Robert Frost, “Mending Wall” (Vendler, 147)
• Additional Poems: Neruda, “Amor America” (1400) (Paine, 158-159); Bishop, “Brazil, January 1, 1502” (Vendler, 41-42); Shuntaro Tanikawa, “Two Tokyos” (Paine, 462)

• PAPER #1 DUE

WEEK 5 – Particular Moments, Time, and History

February 23
• Reading: Hirsch, “Poetry and History: Polish Poetry after the End of the World” (172-191); Vendler, “History and Regionality” (239-255)
• Poems for discussion: Auden, “September 1, 1939” (handout); Derek Walcott, “Sea Grapes” (Paine, 84-85); Wolcott, “Tomorrow, Tomorrow” (Paine, 94); Akhmatova, “In 1940” (Paine, 235-236); Wislawa Szymborska, “Under a Certain Little Star” (Paine, 304-305)

February 25
• Poems for discussion: Dickinson, “There’s a certain Slant of light” (Vendler, 454); Cho Pyong-Hwa, “One Wintry Day” (Paine, 483-484); John Keats, “To Autumn” (Vendler, 169); Whitman, “I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing” (Vendler, 199); Czelaw Milosz, “Encounter” (Paine, 303)
• Additional Poems: Shelley, “Ozymandias” (Vendler, 577); Zbigniew Herbert, “Transformations of Livy” (Paine, 257-259); Whitman, “Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night” (Vendler, 629); Mahmoud Darwish, “On Our Last Evening on this Land” (Paine, 577-578)

WEEK 6 – Poems of Tribute and Remembrance

March 1
• Reading: Hirsch, “Five Acts” (116-156)
• Poems for discussion: Auden, “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” and “In Memory of
Sigmund Freud” (handout); Robert Hayden, “Frederick Douglass” (Vendler, 489); Anna Akhmatova, “Requiem” (Paine, 226-235); Paul Celan, “Aspen Tree” (Paine, 244)

March 3
• Poems for discussion: Lowell, “For the Union Dead” (Vendler, 266); Arnold, “Shakespeare” (Vendler, 377); H.D. “Helen” (Vendler, 486); Seamus Heaney, “Funeral Rites” (Paine, 68-71); Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (Vendler, 344)
• Additional Poems: Emily Bronte, “Remembrance” (Vendler, 404); Paul Laurence Dunbar, “Robert Gould Shaw” (Vendler, 460); Yusef Komunyakaa, “Boat People” (Vendler, 511); Yehuda Amichai, “Seven Laments for the War-Dead” (Paine, 469-474)

WEEK 7 – The Play of Language and Innovative Forms

March 8
• Reading: Vendler, “The Play of Language,” (153-167); Hirsch, “Re: Form” (192-225)
• Poems for discussion: Stevens, ”Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (Vendler, 604); Marianne Moore, “Poetry” (Vendler, 541); Bishop, “Sestina” (Vendler, 391-392); Shuntaro Tanikawa, “Landscape with Yellow Birds” (Paine, 459); Langston Hughes, “The Weary Blues” (Vendler, 502-503)

March 10
• Poems for discussion: Ginsburg, “Sunflower Sutra” (Vendler, 300); Williams. “This is Just to Say” (Vendler, 634); Wallace Stevens, “The Emperor of Ice-Cream” (Vendler, 173); Stevens, “Anecdote of the Jar” (Vendler, 265); Marianne Moore, “England” (Vendler, 538)
• Presentations of student papers and poetic recitations
• Review of course with discussion of favorite poems

• PAPER #2 DUE