

# Topics in Poetry: The 20th Century: Major Themes and Voices

Course Code: ENG227  
Monday & Thursday 12:00-13:15  
Room A009  
Spring Semester 2019  
Department of English  
University of Cyprus

**Course Leader:** Dr Evy Varsamopoulou  
**Office Hours:** Monday 14:00-15:00 & 16:30-17:30  
Thursday 10:00-12:00  
(Other times & days available by appointment)  
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will take a critical and comparative approach to modern poetry in English and in English translation in the twentieth century. The focus will be on poetry from the UK, Ireland and the USA by poets who have achieved significant critical recognition as well as popular acclaim. The selection aims to give some idea also of the diversity of voices (writing in English) not only in these three states but also in some countries of the British Commonwealth. It also will consider the effects of major events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century on lyrical poetry, language and the individual in a wider European context by the inclusion of works by Fernando Pessoa and Paul Celan. The course lecture programme is generally arranged on the basis of movement, period, theme, but also gender, religion or ethnic background, where these last two are overtly foregrounded in the poet's work. In addition to close reading of the poems, the lectures will also consider relevant theoretical and historical issues.

## COURSE AIMS

1. To develop awareness and appreciation of the particularities and diversity of modernist and post-modernist poetry.
2. To develop critical and analytical ability in reading twentieth century poetry.
3. To understand key theoretical and critical approaches to poetry in the twentieth century.
4. To critically understand the significance of historical events and issues as shaping forces of poetics and aesthetics.
5. To reflect on the ways in which poetic language differs from other uses of language and to evaluate different definitions of poetry.
6. To acquire skill in communicating personal readings of poetry in academic essays and verbal exchanges (in class).

## Coursebook

Varsamopoulou, Evy, ed, *Twentieth-Century Poetry: Major Themes & Voices*, 2019.

### **Recommended Text**

Ferguson, M., M.J. Salter & J. Stallworthy, eds, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, Fourth Edition (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996).

## Programme of Sessions

### Week One: *Modernity & Modernism*

Monday (14/01/19): Introductory: Modernity & Modernism

Thursday (17/01/19): Robert Frost, 'The Road Not Taken', 'Nothing Gold Can Stay', 'Fire and Ice'.

### Week Two: *Modernisms*

Monday (21/01/19): e e cummings, 'O sweet spontaneous'; Dylan Thomas, 'The Force that Drives the Flower'

Thursday (24/01/19): Wallace Stevens, 'Of Modern Poetry'

### Week Three: *Modernisms*

Monday (28/01/19): Marianne Moore, 'To a Snail', 'Poetry'

Thursday (31/01/19): William Carlos Williams, 'A Sort of Song'

### Week Four: *Imagism; T.S. Eliot*

Monday (04/02/19): H.D., 'Oread' & Ezra Pound, 'In a Station of the Metro'

Thursday (07/02/19): T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'

### Week Five: *T.S. Eliot*

Monday (11/02/19): 'The Hollow Men'

Thursday (14/02/19): 'The Hollow Men', 'The Waste Land' (excerpt)

### Week Six European Modernism: Focus

Monday (18/02/19): Fernando Pessoa, 'The Tobacconist'

Thursday (21/02/19): Fernando Pessoa, 'The Tobacconist'

### Week Seven: History, Myth, Art

Monday (25/02/19): W.B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming'

Thursday (28/02/19): W.H. Auden, 'Musée des Beaux Arts',

Week Eight: WWI Poetry

**Monday (04/03/19): Mid-term Test**

Thursday (07/03/19): Isaac Rosenberg, 'Break of Day in the Trenches'; Wilfred Owen, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'

Week Nine: Paul Celan & The Limits of Language

**Monday (11/03/19): No Class – Public Holiday**

Thursday (14/03/19): Paul Celan, 'Death Fugue', 'Speak You Also', 'Radix, Matrix'

Week Ten: Adrienne Rich & Sylvia Plath

**Monday (18/03/19): Adrienne Rich, 'Diving into the Wreck'**

Thursday (21/03/19): Sylvia Plath, 'Ariel'

Week Eleven: Ted Hughes

**Monday (25/03/19): No Class – Public Holiday**

Thursday (28/03/19) Ted Hughes, 'Pibroch'

Week Twelve: Ted Hughes

**Monday (01/04/19): No Class – Public Holiday**

Thursday (04/04/19): Ted Hughes, 'Wodwo'

Week Thirteen: The Harlem Renaissance & The Black Arts Movement

**Monday (08/04/19): Langston Hughes, 'The Backlash Blues'**

Thursday (11/04/19): Audre Lorde, 'Story Books on a Kitchen Table', 'Revolution Is One Form of Social Change'

Week Fourteen: Post-Colonial & Indigenous Poets

**Monday (15/04/19): Wole Soyinka, 'Telephone Conversation'; Agha Shahid Ali, 'The Dacca Gauzes'**

Thursday (18/04/19): N.Scott Momaday, 'The Eagle-Feathered Fan'; Leslie Marmon Silko, 'Prayer to the Pacific'

**Attendance of all lectures, seminars and tutorial sessions is compulsory according to UCY rules. During seminar sessions, students may be asked to work alone, in pairs or in small groups to discuss selected poems.**

ASSESSMENT (3 components)

A) **Presentation.** Weighting: 10%. Students will have **5 minutes** to present a reading of a poem, or section of a longer poem, which may be a) a brief analysis of their own focusing on any aspect of the poem's use of language b) a presentation of the cultural historical conditions to which the poem owes its genesis, or c) the critical reception of the poem.

**B. There are two written assessments:**

1) Week Eight: Mid-Term Test. Weighting: 40%

2) Final Exam: 3 Hour Exam. Two critical essays, each of which will include a comparative analysis of two or more poems on the syllabus: Word Length: Approximately 800-1,000 words. Weighting 50%

Assessment Instructions:

**Note:** Here are four crucial evaluation guidelines. Please take these into consideration in order to do your best in the presentation:

- I) All presentations **MUST STRICTLY CONFORM TO THE TIME LIMITS**. Therefore, it is advisable that students rehearse their presentations before coming to class.
- II) All presentations should aim towards **clear** and **well-structured** communication.
- III) All readings of the poems **must substantiate their claims** by argument **and** reference back to the actual poem.
- IV) When giving the presentation, speak loudly and articulate clearly (this will prevent you speaking too quickly and becoming inaudible or/and incomprehensible). Also, try to maintain some eye-contact with your audience if you are reading from notes or a continuous text.

**Absence from the mid-term or exam can only be for very serious reasons, such as hospitalisation or death in the family and notification must be given in advance. Evidence must be provided for cause of absence.**

RECOMMENDED CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cady Edwin Harrison & Budd, Louis J. (eds), *On Frost* (Duke UP, 1991)
2. Childs, Peter, *Modernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000)
3. Eagleton, Terry, *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)
4. Herbert, W.N. and Matthew Hollis, eds, *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry* (Bloodaxe Books, 2000)
5. Markey, Janice, *A New Tradition? The Poetry of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Adrienne Rich: A Study of Feminism and Poetry* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988)

6. Matterson, Steven & Darren Jones, *Studying Poetry* (Hodder Arnold, 2000)
7. Moody, Anthony David (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot* (Cambridge UP, 1994)
8. Lennard, John, *The Poetry Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
9. Lentricchia, Frank, *Modernist Quartet* (Cambridge UP, 1994)
10. Nicholls, Peter, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995)
11. Perloff, Marjorie, *Poetic License: Essays in Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1990)
12. Rainey, Lawrence, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1998)
13. Roberts, Philip Davies, *How Poetry Works* (London: Penguin, 2000)
14. Surette, Leon, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill UP, 1993)
15. Underhill, Hugh, *The Problem of Consciousness in Modern Poetry* (Cambridge UP, 1993)

#### Selected Further Bibliography

- Baker, Houston A., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, 1987.
- Beach, C., *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 2003.
- Bekker, H., *Paul Celan Studies in His Early Poetry*, 2008.
- Binckes, Faith, *Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde*, 2010.
- Blakeney, W.L., *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics, and the Past*, 2002.
- Burger, Peter, *The Decline of Modernism*, 1992.
- Bush, Ronald, ed, *T.S. Eliot: The Modernist in History*, 1991.
- Chinitz, David E. & McDonald Gail, eds, *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, 2014.
- De Jongh, James, *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and The Literary Imagination*, 1990.
- Del Caro, A., *The Early Poetry of Paul Celan: In the Beginning Was the Word*, 1997.
- Dowson, J., *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939: Resisting Femininity*, 2016.
- Emig, Rainer, *Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures, and Limits*, 1995.
- Eystensson, Astradur, *The Concept of Modernism*, 1990.
- Filreis, Alan, *Modernism from Right to Left: Wallace Stevens, The Thirties & Literary Radicalism*, 1994.
- Harwood, John, *Eliot to Derrida: The Poverty of Interpretation*, 1995.
- Holland, Eugene W., *Baudelaire and Schizoanalysis: The Sociopoetics of Modernism*, 1993

- Jackson, K. D., *Adverse Genres in Fernando Pessoa*, 2010.
- Levenson, Michael H., *Modernism*, 2011.
- McDonald, Gail, *Learning to Be Modern: Pound, Eliot and the American University*, 1993.
- Oser, Lee, *The Ethics of Modernism: Moral Ideas in Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Beckett*, 2007.
- Rainey, Lawrence, ed, *Modernism: An Anthology*, 2005.
- Ramazani, Jahan, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*, 1994.
- Ruthven, K.K., *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic*, 1990.
- Sadlier, D.J., *An Introduction to Fernando Pessoa: Modernism and the Paradoxes of Authorship*, 1998.
- Schmidt, Michael, *Reading Modern Poetry*, 1989.
- Schwartz, Sanford, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth-Century Thought*, 1985.
- Sherry, Vincent, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*, 2004.
- Smethurst, J.E., *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance*, 2011.
- Steinman, Lisa Malinowski, *Made in America: Science, Technology, and the American Modernist Poets*, 1987.
- Stubbings, Diane, *Anglo-Irish Modernism and the Maternal: From Yeats to Joyce*, 2000.
- Sultan, Stanley, *Eliot, Joyce, and Company*, 1987.
- Tobias, R., *The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan*, 2006.
- Underhill, Hugh, *The Problem of Consciousness in Modern Poetry*, 1992.
- Walsh, Rebecca, *The Geopoetics of Modernism*, 2015.

**Recommended Internet Sites**

<http://www.poets.org>

<http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk>

<http://www.poetrymagazine.org>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>