

# Introduction to Poetry

Professor Merrill Cole

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English 200, Section 001

Spring Semester 2018

Office: Simpkins 109

Hours: M, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

TTh, 3:15 – 4:45 p.m.

TTh, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Simpkins 14

*No prerequisites.*

## Texts

Addonizio, Kim. *Tell Me*. ISBN: 9781880238912

Hughes, Langston. *The Weary Blues*. ISBN: 0385352972

*The Norton Anthology of Poetry. Shorter Fifth Ed.* ISBN: 9780393979213

*There will be poems to download from my webpage (not WesternOnline).*

## Introduction to the Introduction to Poetry

Marianne Moore's famous poem, "Poetry," begins, "I too dislike it." Certainly many people would agree, not considering that their favorite rap or song lyric is poetry, or perhaps forgetting the healing words spoken at a grandparent's funeral. We often turn to poetry when something happens in our lives that needs special expression, such as when we fall in love, contemplate death, or want to speak at a public event. It is true that poems can be difficult, but they can also ring easy and true. Poems may cause us to think hard and lead us to feel something deeply.

This course offers a broad introduction to poetry, across time and around the globe. For most of the semester, the readings are organized around formal topics crucial to understanding poetry, such as imagery, irony, and free verse. The course also attends to traditional verse forms, which are not only still in use today, but also help us better to understand non-traditional poetry. Toward the end of the semester, we shift focus toward poetry books, looking at Langston Hughes' 1926 *The Weary Blues* and Kim Addonizio's 2000 *Tell Me*.

Although Marianne Moore recognizes that many people "dislike" poetry, she insists that "one discovers in / it after all, a place for the genuine." William Carlos Williams concurs:

Look at  
 what passes for the new.  
 You will not find it there but in  
 despised poems.  
 It is difficult  
 to get the news from poems  
 yet men die miserably every day  
 for lack  
 of what is found there.

All the same, Frank O'Hara jokes, "Nobody should experience anything they don't need to, if they don't need poetry bully for them."

## Course Objectives

This course assist students in becoming engaged and competent readers of poetry. At the same time, Introduction to Poetry develops the ability to formulate and develop interpretive arguments, and to respond creatively. It brings issues of social justice, including those involving race, gender, sexuality, and class, to bear on the study of poems, celebrating the diversity of both poems and people.

## Requirements

Introduction to Poetry involves three five-page essay assignments and two creative assignments. You will receive instructions for each, and you have the option of rewriting all except the last. *Upload all assignments and homework to WesternOnline*. If I don't have assignments at the beginning of class, they will be counted late; and late homework will receive zero credit. Writing should be paginated and double-spaced in a standard-sized font.

Students will be responsible for leading small group discussions on a rotating basis. When it is your turn, prepare four typed, double-spaced questions for discussion and send them to me *by email* before the beginning of the class. You need to have your own copy in class, electronic or print. Please keep in mind that the best discussion questions aren't general — "What's the tone of this poem?" — but specific: "Why does the speaker Mary Jo Salter's 'Hiroshima' figure the glass shard as a tongue in line 42?" Some questions are too simple and obvious, like "Who's the speaker in W.B. Yeats' 'Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop'?" Better to focus in on textual specifics: "What does Jane mean when she claims that 'Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement'" (ll. 15-16)?

There will also be in-class and homework exercises.

Absences will not be taken lightly, only excused with a doctor's note or other suitable documentation. Please refer to <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for student rights and responsibilities. Everyone *must* actively participate. Lack of participation will damage your grade. This means doing the homework, completing the readings, and joining in class discussion.

After the second week of classes, students who come to class without *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* will be asked to leave.

## Grading

Participation	10%
Homework	10%
Discussion Questions	10%
Creative Assignments	20%
First Essay	10%
Second Essay	20%
Third Essay	20%

Unless excused, late essays receive a one-time, one-letter grade reduction (2:01 p.m. on the due date is late). I will grant an extension for almost any reason, but only if the student contacts me *at least 24 hours in advance*. Plagiarism will result in an "F", and I will report the student for academic discipline. See WIU's Policy on Academic Integrity at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. *Unexcused absences will affect the participation grade, and four of them is an automatic "F" for the course.* Do not expect an "A" if you don't talk regularly in class.

Please take the opportunity to meet with me in Simpkins 109, during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings and your writing. If something about the course bothers you, please don't wait until the end, when it is too late to change it.

## The Writing Center

The University Writing Center can assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The tutor's job is to add another voice in response to your writing. The one-on-one assistance available at the Writing Center can help with generating ideas, suggesting organization, and even working through grammatical issues. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3rd Floor, West Side). It's also in Simpkins 107, two doors from my office. Call for an appointment (298-2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment to your session. For more information on other locations, see [www.wiu.edu/uwc](http://www.wiu.edu/uwc).

## Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

## Discrimination Policy

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: [http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

## Schedule

Week 1: January 16 & 18  
Introduction to the Course.

Week 2: January 23 & 25  
Tone & Irony.

Week 3: January 30 & February 1  
Words. Saying & suggesting. Syntax.

Week 4: February 6 & 8  
Imagery.

Week 5: February 13 & 15  
Metaphor & Figurative Language.

**First Creative Assignment due Tuesday, February 13.**

Week 6: February 20 & 22  
Stanza & Ballad.

Week 7: February 27 & March 1

**First Essay Due on Tuesday, February 27.**

Alliteration, Assonance, & Rhyme.

Week 8: March 6 & 8

Sound & Meter.

**Spring Break.**

Week 9: March 20 & 22

Meter. Closed and Open Forms.

Week 10: March 27 & 29

Symbol, Allegory, Parable, & Archetype.

Week 11: April 3 & 5

Identity. Experimental poetry.

**Second Essay Due on Thursday, April 5.**

Week 12: April 10 & 12

*The Weary Blues.*

Week 13: April 17 & 19

*The Weary Blues.*

Week 14: April 24 & 26

*Tell me.*

Week 15: May 1 & 3

**Second Creative Assignment due Tuesday, May 1.**

*Tell Me.*

Final Exam Week

**Final essay due on Monday, May 7 at 2:00 p.m. (Due Friday, May 4 by midnight if you want comments).**