Texts

- The Norton Anthology of Poetry, ed. Ferguson, Salter, and Stallworthy
- John Hollander, Rhyme’s Reason
- Allen Grossman, The Sighted Singer
- Mary Kinzie, A Poet’s Guide to Poetry
- There will also be a number of articles and short texts on reserve for you at the Latte site for the course.

Week 1 (January 13, 15, 16)

Introductory

1. From the Latte site (under “What is Verse?”)
   (a) Pope, from “Essay on Criticism”
   (b) “Grim Limericks”
   (c) all of the extracts in the handout “What is Verse?” especially
      i. Pater, from The Renaissance
      ii. Cummings, “l[a]
      iii. Brooks, “We Real Cool”
      iv. Lowell, “After the Surprising Conversions”

2. Kinzie, Chapters 2, 3

3. Hollander pp. 1–21

Week 2 (January 22, 23, 27)

Epitaphs, Proverbs, and Epigrams

1. From the Norton Anthology of Poetry
   (a) Kipling, “Epitaphs of the War”
   (c) Herrick, “Upon Prue, His Maid,” “Upon Scobble,” “To the Sour Reader,” “Upon Julia’s Breasts,” “Upon Julia’s Clothes”
   (d) Blake, “The Clod and the Pebble,” “A Question Answered,”
(e) Coleridge, “Epitaph”

(f) Jarrell, “Death of the Ball Turrett Gunner”

2. From the Latte site (under “What is Verse?”)

   (a) Selected epigrams of J.V. Cunningham and Timothy Steele

3. Hollander pp. 22–37

**Epitaph Assignment:** (ungraded) Write an epitaph. It may be for yourself or for some fanciful person, but it must have the strong closure and pointedness of a good epitaph. Then write a brief commentary (100 words or so) explaining how it works.

Due: Week 2, session 1

**Week 3** (January 29, 30, February 3)

**Verse as an Oral Technology I (Greece)**

From the Latte site (under “Homeric Oral Poetry”)

1. Discussion of the mantras “Om Mani Padme Hum”

2. Extract from the Code of Hammurabi

3. A page of traditional Irish spells

4. Homer, Iliad (tr. Butler) from Bk II (Catalogue of Ships)

5. Homer, Odyssey (tr. Lattimore) from Bk XI (The Descent to the Underworld)

6. Chapters 3, 4, 8 and 9 of Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato*

7. Chapters 2 and 3 of Walter Ong, S. J., *Literacy and Orality*

8. Walter Ong’s article “African Talking Drums and Oral Noetics”

**Week 4** (February 5, 6, 10)

**Verse as an Oral Technology (Israel)**

1. From the Latte site (under “Biblical Poetry”)


   (b) Adele Berlin, “Reading Biblical Poetry”, from Berlin and Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*

   (c) Biblical texts from Genesis, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, and Job

2. from *The Sighted Singer*, “Summa Lyrica”

3. from the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*:
(a) Smart, from *Jubilato Agno*
(b) Whitman, “Song of Myself” secs 1, 5, 6

**Curse Assignment:** (ungraded) Write a curse. Make it four lines or so long, and let it show some of the features of Oral poetry we have been discussing. Then write a brief commentary (100 words or so) explaining how it works.  
*Due: Week 4, session 3*

**Week 5** (February 12, 13, 24)
**Alliterative Verse Before and After the Norman Conquest**

1. From the Latte site (under “Alliterative Verse”)
   (a) Two extracts from *Beowulf* (tr. Heaney), “Grendel Advances.”
   (b) “Lay of the Last Survivor.”
   (c) Caedmon’s Hymn (see also the translation in the Norton Anthology of Poetry)
   (d) Extract from the Middle English *Pearl*

2. from the *Norton Anthology*
   (a) Extract from William Langland, *Piers Plowman*
   (b) Hopkins, “The Windhover”
   (c) Wilbur, “Junk”

**Week 6** (February 26, 27, March 3)
**Metrics and Metric Systems**

1. Hollander pp. 37–60

2. Kinzie Chapters 7, 8

3. from the Latte site (under “Metrics”)
   (a) Otto Jespersion, “Notes on Metre”
   (b) Morris Halle and Samuel J. Keyser, “The Iambic Pentameter”
   (c) John Hollander, “The Metrical Frame”
Week 7 (March 5, 6, 10)

Sonnets


3. George Gascoigne, “For That He Looked Not upon Her”

4. Samuel Daniel, from Delia

5. Michael Drayton, from Idea

6. Sir Philip Sidney, from Astrophil and Stella

7. Edmund Spenser, from Amoretti

8. Kinzie, Chapter 9

9. Hollander, pp. 60–70

Sonnet Scansion, Recitation and Paper: Commit a sonnet from The Norton Anthology of Poetry to memory. You will recite it to me in my office sometime during Week 8. When you come for your recitation, bring a scansion of the sonnet, with all of the stressed and unstressed syllables marked. (Be prepared to discuss any anomalies.) I will have extra office hours if you cannot make my regular office hour for recitation. Next you will write a brief paper (5–6 pp.) analyzing that sonnet, which will be due to your writing group at session 2 of Week 8, with a revised draft due to me at session 2 of Week 9.

Week 8 (March 13, 13, 17)

Sonnets II

1. William Shakespeare, from Sonnets

2. John Donne, from Holy Sonnets

3. Lady Mary Wroth, Sonnets


7. Kinzie, Chapter 4, 5
**Week 9** (March 19, 20, 24)

**Sonnets III**

1. from the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*
   - (a) George Meredith, from *Modern Love*
   - (b) Robert Frost, “The Silken Tent”
   - (c) E.B. Browning, from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*
   - (d) D.G. Rossetti, from *The House of Life*
   - (e) Hopkins, “I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, not Day”
   - (f) William Butler Yeats, “Leda and the Swan”
   - (g) Edna St. Vincent Millay. “I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed,” “I Dreamed I Moved Among the Elysian Fields”

2. from the Latte site (under “Sonnets”)
   - (a) John Hollander, from *Powers of Thirteen*
   - (b) William Wilborn, “Little Lazarus”
   - (c) Marie Borroff, “Understanding Poetry”

**Week 10** (March 26, 27, 31)

**Blank Verse**


2. William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed A Few Miles above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour July 13, 1798”

**Blank Verse Paper** Take a brief passage of blank verse and develop a coherent, complete, and pointed reading of that passage, making some perception or point of view about it clear which might not be obvious to other people who have read the poem, but which they will recognize the truth of once you develop it. This will be another brief (5–6 pp.) paper, due to your writing group at Session 3 of Week 10, and to me at Session 3 of Week 11.

**Week 11** (April 2, 3, 7)

**Blank Verse II**

1. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses”

2. Robert Browning, “Fra Lippo Lippi”


4. Wallace Stevens, “Sunday Morning”
Week 12 (April 9, 10, 14)
Villanelles, Sestinas other Repeating Forms

2. Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”
3. Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art”
5. Elizabeth Bishop, “Sestina”

Forms paper Take a poem in one of the forms described in the last two weeks of the term and develop a coherent, complete, and pointed reading of that passage, making some perception or point of view about it clear which might not be obvious to other people who have read the poem, but which they will recognize the truth of once you develop it. This will be another brief (5–6 pp.) paper, due to me on the last day of class.

Week 13 (April 23, 24, 28)
Terza Rima and Ottava Rima

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, “Complaint to His Purse”
2. Percy Bysshe Shelley, “The Triumph of Life” (on the Latte site)
3. Robert Frost, “Acquainted with the Night”
4. T. S. Eliot, from “Little Gidding”
5. Richard Wilbur, “First Snow in Alsace”
6. Philip Larkin, “Sad Steps”
7. George Gordon, Lord Byron, from Don Juan
8. William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” “Among School Children”

Policies

1. Disability If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the course instructor immediately.
2. Attendance and Participation Attendance in this course is required. A student with more than two unexcused absences should expect to fail the course. Participation in the class discussion is required, so come to class prepared to
speak. There may well be classes at Brandeis in which you can coast for much of the term and recover yourself by heroic efforts at the end, but this isn’t one of them. It’s best to plan to work steadily. Also, be sure to bring your text to class every day so that you can follow the discussion.

3. **Extensions** You must contact me no later than the class before a paper is due to receive an extension. I will not grant extensions on the due date of the paper. Late papers will be docked in proportion to their lateness.

4. **Academic Honesty** You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 5 of the *Rights and Responsibilities* handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.