

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

READINGS IN WORLD LITERATURE

Spring 2021

Humanities (HUMA) 11200

Tue/Thu 9:40 to 11:00 am

Instructor:

Prof. Sascha Ebeling (office hours by appointment, ebeling@uchicago.edu)

Writing intern:

Chelsea Cornelius (ccornelius@uchicago.edu)

Understanding World Poetry

Reading poetry is for everyone! This course is an introduction to the study of poetry, providing both the technical knowledge and tools useful for appreciating poetry, as well as an overview of the history of world poetry. We will read and discuss some of the finest and most memorable poems ever written. These will include examples of classical, medieval and modern European poetry in Latin, Greek, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Czech, by some of the most famous European poets (such as Horace, Petrarch, Spenser, Goethe, Schiller, Coleridge, Pushkin, Baudelaire, Rilke, Garcilaso de la Vega, and Mácha), but also examples from non-European languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit and Tamil. The temporal range will be from ancient Indian poems composed about 1500 BCE to poems about the civil war in Sri Lanka written in 2015. All explanations and discussions will of course be in English, but for most poems we will look at the original language text as well as English translations by ourselves and others (which will provide us with the opportunity to discuss issues of translations as well). The course is intended for anyone interested in exploring poetry in a less familiar language, and no language skills will be a prerequisite. But we will also be glad to welcome students (or speakers) of any of the above languages who would like to share their specific language skills with us and who might benefit from an opportunity to see how poetic texts function in their respective languages. Participants with little or no prior experience of reading poetry will be introduced to the various possibilities of examining a poetic text, while more advanced readers may profit from the wide comparative perspective adopted in this course.

Course objectives and learning goals for students

In this class students will:

- be introduced to the history of world poetry from a wide range of traditions and geographical locations, beginning with texts from ancient India and ending with modern and contemporary poetry
- learn basic techniques for analyzing poetry, examining both form and content
- learn to read poetry in translation and think critically about translation
- learn to think critically about poems, based on close reading

Course policies

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to attend **every** zoom session, to be on time, and to be present in mind, body, and spirit. Reading assignments must be completed in advance of class. This helps you get the most out of the course and provides an enjoyable discussion environment. In other words, a warm body in front of a camera is not enough for attendance. Failure to attend our synchronous online sessions will impact your grade. There may be a **maximum of two** absences for which you do not need to excuse yourself. Please save these two sessions for situations of major life disruption.

Please study the poems assigned for each week carefully in advance for discussion in class. Attendance at our online class sessions, careful preparation of the readings, and active participation in class discussions and in the writing seminar that accompanies this course are expected of all students and will count for 50% of the grade. Note that your participation in class discussions and in the writing seminar as well as your written assignments will form the basis of your final grade.

Class Format

The general meeting pattern is that we will meet on Zoom twice a week for a live discussion, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Some of our Thursday sessions, however, will be conducted asynchronously: In these cases you should use our class time to complete the annotation exercise(s) as announced. Weekly reading assignments – normally only consisting of specific poems to prepare – must be completed before our meetings.

Assignments

There will be 2 written assignments (papers) throughout the quarter the deadlines of which are listed above. Each essay will count 25% towards the final course grade.

Additionally, depending on the size of the class and on how the discussion evolves, every student might be asked to give **an oral presentation in class**, e.g. on the life and works of a particular poet or on a particular period of literary history.

Writing Seminars

As in Autumn and Winter, participating in your writing seminars fulfills the requirements of HUMA 11200 and ATTENDING THESE SEMINARS IS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE.

Further Explanations of Course Components

Engagement—Overview:

- Plan to read and to read carefully. Use the list of “Conversational Moves” (below) to help make this a good conversation. Over the quarter, use as many of the conversational moves as you can. I may ask you to reflect on your use of these and what you have learned from shaping the discussion in these ways. Plan to participate in the live discussions. Please try to say something each time.
- Please be sure to stay in contact should anything interfere with your class participation. I will not know what is going on unless you tell me. So please make me aware of tech issues, illness, personal circumstances, etc. and we will try to find workarounds and ways to adapt to circumstances where that is needed.

Conversational Moves¹

- Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person has said.
- Ask a question or make a comment that encourages someone else to elaborate on something that person has said.
- Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions. Make this link explicit in your comment.
- Make a comment indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case.
- Contribute something that builds on or springs from what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts.
- Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions and that touches on a reoccurring theme in the discussion.
- Ask a cause-and-effect question – for example, “Can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place, such and such a thing will occur?”
- Find a way to express appreciation for what you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.
- Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.

Academic integrity

1. In this course, students are expected to produce original work. This means that all sources used in written work (including articles, books, chalk posts) should be properly cited. The College's statement on academic integrity defines plagiarism as “[submitting] the statements or ideas or work of others as one's own,” and makes clear that the penalties for plagiarism “may range up to permanent expulsion from the University of Chicago.” In this class, the penalty for plagiarism will be a failing grade. In the unfortunate event that a student is suspected of plagiarism, I will follow the guidelines set forth in The University of Chicago Student Manual. Go to <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/Policies#Honesty> for more information. If you are concerned as to what precisely constitutes plagiarism, refer to Doing Honest Work in College, which you received during your Core courses, or please ask me.
2. Please note that an important element of academic integrity is fully and correctly attributing any materials taken from the work of others. Feel free to consult with me before completing assignments if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others. More generally, please familiarize yourself with the [University's policy on academic honesty](#), which applies to this course. Of course, I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise regarding this matter, I will forward all related materials to the Office of the Provost for further review and action.
3. The [University policy on academic honesty](#) is central to the ideals that under gird this course. Students are expected to be independently familiar with the policy and to recognize that their work in the course is to be their own original work that truthfully represents the time and

¹ From Brookfield & Preskill, 2005. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco Jossey-Bass.

effort applied. Violations of the policy are taken seriously and will be handled in a manner that fully represents the extent of the policy and that befits the seriousness of its violation.

4. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the [University's policy on academic honesty](#). Instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Office of the Provost for adjudication.

Disability accommodations

I am committed to creating an inclusive and accessible classroom environment for all students. Students who need disability accommodations should present the necessary paperwork to me at the beginning of the quarter. For further information, visit the University's [Student Disability Services Office](#) website. The University of Chicago welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the student disability services office, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, the disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, visit the SDS website at: <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/requesting-reasonable-accommodations>.

Online conduct and culture

Please default to the following rules unless otherwise instructed:

(1) First and foremost: **Recording** video or audio, downloading, taking screenshots, and/or disseminating images/audio or live Zoom sessions, including still images of anyone in this class—myself included—is **explicitly forbidden**. The classroom is designed to be a safe space where people can freely exchange ideas, even controversial ones, without any fear of permanent documentation.

(2) **Do not share the link** to the Google course document (if any) or to our zoom meetings with anyone outside this class (this includes not posting them on social media and not sharing with family members).

(3) Muting Your Microphone – **Please make sure you mute your microphone when you're not speaking**; this will cut down on the background noise and show the speaker's video uninterrupted. **Headphones** can help with privacy and might improve sound quality. **Phones should be turned off** or put away, and all notifications and **extraneous noise-making applications** should be turned **off** for all sessions.

(4) If needed, use Speaker View – This will mean that you see only the image of whoever is currently talking. It'll use much less bandwidth than 'gallery view' (which shows you the full class all at once).

(5) Close Unneeded Applications – When you're in a synchronous class meeting, close all other applications on your computer (email, streaming services, downloads / uploads, other high-bandwidth activities). Not having anything apart from Canvas / Zoom open will mean you'll experience less lag in the video.

(6) Private Messaging/Sensitive Information – According to some recent reporting on Zoom chats, it is believed that even private messages between individuals or between the instructor and individual students will be included in the chat transcript and the Zoom recording. With this in mind, it is recommended that students **do not send sensitive information or questions via the messaging in Zoom** and instead use email to directly speak with the instructor if needed. This also applies to students wanting to speak privately with other students.

(7) **Students should keep their video on** for the duration of all sessions unless otherwise instructed. Again, please alert faculty in advance if there is a reason this is not possible. If video cannot be maintained for technical reasons, please actively participate in the class with audio comments or questions. **Remember that everyone can see you**, what you are doing and anybody who happens to be in your background :-)

Course Readings

Course Readings

All class readings, both primary and secondary texts, will be provided on the CANVAS page for this class. Please study the texts carefully in advance for discussion in class.

Additionally, students are required to familiarize themselves with basic technical terms used to analyze poetry by reading *A Guide to the Theory of Poetry* by Manfred Jahn which is available online at <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/ppppp.htm>.

Finally, I recommend the following reference work:

Greene, Roland et al. (eds.). 2012. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Fourth Edition. Princeton University Press. [Make sure you consult **this latest edition, not the older versions.**]

Course Calendar

Week 1

Introduction: How to read poetry

TUE – SYNCHRONOUS online meeting

Some of the guiding questions for our first session are:

What is poetry?

What is gained from reading poetry; why should we do it?

What technical knowledge may be useful for reading and appreciating poetry?

How can we find a way into the vast corpus of “world literature”?

Students read:

- Manfred Jahn, Guide to the Theory of Poetry (available online at <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppp.htm>, or as a pdf file on CANVAS)

THU – ASYNCHRONOUS

Assignment: Annotation exercise with Hypothes.is (on CANVAS)
(I will explain how this works in our first class session)

Week 2

Ancient Worlds

India (Poetry in Vedic and Classical Sanskrit, Tamil):

Vedic (Hymns to Ratri, Ushas, Creation)

Bhartrhari, Amaru

Sangam poems

China:

Tang Poems

Latin and Greek Poetry:

incl. Horace, Catullus, Sappho

Week 3

Medieval Worlds

Carmina Burana (Medieval Latin)

The Poetry of the Trobadors (Old Occitan)

Tamil poetry of South India: Tirukkovaiyar, Periyapuranam (verses 1, 2, and Nandan episode)

Japanese Haiku

Paper #1 assigned

Week 4

Renaissance and Baroque

Petrarch

Gryphius

Ronsard

Spenser

Garcilaso

Week 5

The Eighteenth Century: Enlightenment and Early Romanticisms

Schiller

Goethe

Pushkin

Coleridge

Leopardi

Week 6

The Nineteenth Century: Romanticisms and “Decadence”

Mácha

Byron

Tennyson

Baudelaire

Verlaine/Rimbaud

Paper #1 due

Week 7

Early Twentieth-Century to World War II

Dada, German Expressionism

Rainer Maria Rilke

Guillaume Apollinaire

Endre Ady

Georg Trakl,

Joan Salvat-Papasseit

Federico García Lorca

Juan Ramón Jiménez

Poems of the Great War

Paul Celan

Paper #2 assigned

Week 8

Love Poetry of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Rilke

Pablo Neruda

Pedro Salinas

Reiner Kunze

Erich Fried

Andri Peer

Jaroslav Seifert

(and others TBA)

Week 9

Contemporary Political Poetry: Tamil Poems about Sri Lanka’s War

Paper #2 due

Week 10

Final Discussion

TUE – **NO CLASS** (reading period)

THU – Final discussion