

English 719E, Lyric Theory and Early Modern Poetics

Section 0101, Wed 3:30-6:00pm, Tawes Hall 3252

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Office hours: Mondays 11:30-1:30pm and by appointment
Tawes Hall 3228

Over the past decade, the so-called "new lyric studies" has launched a lively debate about the incoherence of the lyric as a genre before the twentieth century. This course introduces students to this ongoing conversation, including readings by Virginia Jackson, Jonathan Culler, Drew Milne, and Craig Dworkin. At the same time, we will read widely in the genres of early modern English poetry that can be construed as "lyric," asking how they challenge later scholarly assumptions and historical narratives. And we will explore why and how leading scholarship on early modern poetry--including work by Heather Dubrow, Arthur Marotti, Roland Greene, and Derek Attridge--differs so substantially from the tenor of the current scholarly conversation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetics.

Required texts:

- *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (John Hopkins UP, 2014), ISBN: 9781421412009
- *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse*, ed. Emrys Jones (Oxford UP, 2009), ISBN: 9780199561339
- *The New Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Oxford UP, 2008), ISBN: 9780199556298

Check www.bookfinder.com and www.amazon.com for used copies. All additional required reading will be available for download via ELMS course reserves.

I run a need-based scholarship program for textbooks; to apply, please see me after class or in my office hours.

What to expect:

Reading lyric poetry is unlike reading narrative. On the one hand, it's necessary to read lyric slowly, to re-read, and to adjust your sense of scale, moving in and out of very close engagement with individual lines and words. On the other hand, it's possible to move quickly and easily through lyric poems, gathering a brief sense of their shape and feel.

I would like you to move between these two reading strategies in this course. Each week, I have assigned a broad swath of early modern verse in addition to an essay or chapter of critical theory. I expect you to read breezily through this poetry--to "loaf" through it at your ease, as Whitman might say. I also expect you to hone in on a few individual poems that you find especially intriguing, re-reading them closely.

You should plan to move through all of the poetry by Sunday each week. After you finish, please choose **one poem** on which to focus for your weekly blog assignment. Ask what is "lyrical" about your selection, and, for

longer poems, try to focus on an individual stanza or part. I'd like you to consider how your selection connects to the critical theory for the week, and I'd like you to think about how it connects to other poems and other poets. But make sure to devote detailed attention to one particular poem or part of a poem.

By Monday night, post 500-1000 words here:

<https://lyrictheory.school.blog/>

The blog is intended as the basis for class discussion, a place for that discussion to continue outside of class, and a forum for you to develop your seminar paper. You may draw connections to other weeks, but remember to focus on a selection for the upcoming week. Please engage with critical theory regularly and substantively over the course of the semester. And please use your posts to connect to or draw from work that you are doing on your seminar paper.

Make sure that your posts are online **by the end day on Monday**. This will give everyone the chance to read and think about what you say. These weekly deadlines are important: I use your blog posts to structure class discussion, and we all need time to read them. After the posts are up, you should re-read the poems your classmates choose and comment on at least one peer's post (of your choosing) each week.

Your writing on the blog will help you work toward an 18-20pp.seminar paper, **due May 18**. A 5-page precis of this paper will be **due March 30**, en lieu of your blog post for that week. The precis may take the form of a position paper, an extract from your paper in progress or even an outline--the important thing is that it give a concrete sense of where you are headed with the seminar paper. Then, please plan to give a brief presentation of your seminar paper topic **in class on April 15**.

Please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester if you have a disability that requires accommodation or a hardship that would be helpful to discuss.

Assessment:

Your grade will be based on your work on the blog, your participation in class, and your seminar paper. Please remember to keep up with the blog: this will be a significant factor in your final grade.

Diversity and inclusion:

It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, political affiliation, marital or family status, education, and any other legally protected class. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know

of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other students or student groups.

Your pronouns, gender, race, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, are your choice to disclose and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you all to do the same.

Course schedule:

January 29: **Introductions**

- Wyatt, "They flee from me"

February 3: Blog post due by midnight

February 5: **What is lyric theory?**

- Oxford 16C: 1-113
- Jackson and Prins, General Introduction to *The Lyric Theory Reader*

February 10: Blog post due by midnight

February 12: **What is the lyric genre?**

- Oxford 16C: 113-211
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 1
- Genette, "The Architext"

February 17: Blog post due by midnight

February 19: **What is the lyric genre? (part 2)**

- Oxford 16C: 211-297
- Culler, "Lyric, History, and Genre"
- Suggested: selection from Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (course reserves)

February 24: Blog post due by midnight

February 25, 2-6pm: **SYMPOSIUM ON LYRIC FORM**

February 26: **What is poetic world-making?**

- Oxford 16C: 297-391
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 7
- Heidegger, "Poetically Man Dwells"
- Suggested: selection from Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking: Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics* (course reserves)

March 2: Blog post due by midnight

March 4: **What are the origins of lyric?**

- Oxford 16C: 392-506
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 2
- Dubrow, "Lyric Forms"

- Suggested: Roland Greene, "Sir Philip Sidney's Psalms, the Sixteenth-Century Psalter, and the Nature of Lyric" (course reserves)

March 9: Blog post due by midnight

March 11: **What are the origins of lyric? (part 2)**

- Oxford 16C: 507-603
- Vendler, selection from *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*
- Suggested, selection from Attridge, *The Experience of Poetry: From Homer's Listeners to Shakespeare's Readers* (course reserves)

-- Spring Break! --

March 23: Blog post due by midnight

March 25: **How is lyric gendered?**

- Oxford 16C: 603-749
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 9
- Vickers, "Diana Described"
- Suggested: Spahr, Introduction to *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*

March 30: Seminar paper precis due on the blog

April 1: **What are the politics of lyric?**

- Oxford 17C: 1-94
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 6
- Milne, "In Memory of the Pterodactyl"
- Suggested: Marotti, "Love Is Not Love: Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order" (course reserves)

April 6: Blog post due by midnight

April 8: **What are the politics of lyric? (part 2)**

- Oxford 17C: 94-197
- Gourgouris, "The Lyric in Exile"
- Suggested: selection from Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics* (course reserves)

April 13: Blog post due by midnight

April 15: **Presentations**

April 20: Blog post due by midnight

April 27: **What are possibilities of lyric?**

- Oxford 17C: 197-303
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 8

- Dworkin, "Lyric and the Hazard of Music"
- Suggested: selection from Hyman, *Impossible Desire and the Limits of Knowledge in Renaissance Poetry*

April 29: Blog post due by midnight

May 4: **What are possibilities of lyric? (part 2)**

- Oxford 17C: 303-405
- Jackson and Prins, Introduction to Section 10
- Damrosch, "Love in the Necropolis"
- Suggested: selection from Kunin, *Herbert, Love Three* (course reserves)

May 6: Blog post due by midnight

May 11: **Conclusions**

- Oxford 17C: 405-517

May 18

- **Seminar paper due: upload to ELMS by midnight**