

# English 131: Poetry and Drama

Tues/Thurs. 10:00-11:15, Clark 312

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Instructor: Ms. Rachel Hoag  
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Office Hours: T-Th 9:00-9:50  
--or by appointment

**Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce students to two literary genres, poetry and drama, that often get overlooked in favor of fiction and non-fiction. Poetry and drama present different challenges to analyses than fiction. To familiarize ourselves with the conventions of these literary forms, we will read a wide range of styles, with the goal of exposing students to many of the foundational works of poetry and drama. Beyond acquainting students with canonical texts in these genres, the course reading will also encourage students to become comfortable reading works that are often perceived as “dense” or “difficult” through crafting careful, deliberate strategies for reading and analyzing texts. Through this critical reading, we will hopefully explore ways in which verse and drama add to, reflect, and enhance the human experience in all its pain, humor, and beauty.

## Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the conventions, terms, and techniques of poetry and drama across a wide range of time periods, cultural contexts, and textual forms.
- To demystify often complex genres, encouraging students to engage with and not feel intimidated by works in each genre that seem archaic, challenging, or dense. To understand that there are often conflicting interpretations of a work of literature, and that through careful, close reading one can make these works accessible.
- To familiarize students with the disciplinary norms and critical strategies for literary reading.
- To craft compelling, argumentative analyses of a work from each genre using the close, critical reading skills practiced in class.
- To understand the ways that both poetry and drama encourage readers to look carefully and critically at our selves, our world, and the way we interact with others.

## Required Texts:

Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*. New York: Signet Classics, 2009.  
ISBN: 9780451531247

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove Press, 2011.  
ISBN: 9780802144423

Gardner, Janet E. *Reading and Writing about Literature*. New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2012.  
ISBN: 9781457606496

Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. Ed. Russ McDonald. London: Penguin Classics, 2001.  
ISBN: 9780140714630

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. New York: Signet Classics, 2012.  
ISBN: 9780451531896

**Additional Resources Needed:**

One pack of 3x5 index cards

A binder or notebook with a folder for organizing class materials

**Assignments/Grading:**

Final Exam:	30%
Midterm Exam:	25%
Poetry Explication:	20%
Quizzes/Assignments:	15%
Participation	10%

A+ 98-100	A 94-97	A- 90-93
B+ 87-89	B 84-86	B- 80-83
C+ 77-79	C 74-76	C- 70-73
D+ 67-69	D 64-66	D- 60-63

**Policies and Procedures:**

**Attendance:** Your active participation forms a core component of this course. As such, your attendance is required. Personal situations and required university events may, on a rare occasion, make it impossible for you to be in class. For these reasons you are allowed 2 absences. The third absence will compromise your grade as much as one full letter. **Students who miss 5 classes will fail the course.** Exceptions to this policy are rare, reserved for truly extenuating circumstances, and must be arranged personally between the instructor and the student.

**Lateness:** Class will start on time each day. Students are expected to be there, prepared to begin when I am. If you accumulate more than 3 tardies you will be docked an absence. If you are over 20 mins late for class you will be marked absent for the day.

**Cheating/Plagiarism:** The WVU academic community and our classroom community values and assumes your honesty. Any violations of academic honesty may result in the failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or other penalty at the discretion of the instructor. Students are expected to be familiar with the sections on Academic Honesty in the University Student Conduct Code, available at: <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>

**Computers and Cell Phones:** You are welcome to bring laptop computers and other electronic devices that support your educational endeavors into the classroom. If, at any time, these devices become a distraction to me or other members of the class you will be asked to put them away. All mobile phones must be turned off or set to a silent mode and stored in a bag or purse during class. If you must take a phone call due to an emergency please quietly excuse yourself from the room.

**Office Hours and Email:** My office hours are completely open to you, and I am also available by appointment in addition to those hours. Please feel free to email anytime but note two things: 1. I do not look at writing via email, if you would like to discuss a specific thing you are working on, come see me. 2. I make every effort to respond to student e-mails promptly (within 24 hours), but I generally do not check e-mail after 6 p.m. E-mails received in the evenings will receive a response sometime the next business day.

**Inclusivity/Students with Disabilities:** The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services. The phone number 304-293-6700 and e-mail is [access2@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:access2@mail.wvu.edu). Access the website at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu>.

**University Resources for Students:** The Carruth Center provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges. Carruth Center resources can be accessed at their office in Health and Physical Education building on the Evansdale campus or through their website at <http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps>. Additionally, Title IX makes it clear that sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence are unacceptable. If you or someone you know has been assaulted, you can find appropriate resources here: <http://titleix.wvu.edu/>

**Writing Studio:** The Eberly Writing Studio is a resource that can support you in all aspects of the writing process. It is located in G02 Colson Hall. I encourage students to visit the studio and work with a consultant on any of the writing assignments for this class.

### **Student Expectations:**

- **Preparedness/classroom engagement:** As university students and members of the classroom community, students are expected to have completed all of that day's readings and writing assignments prior to class. Please bring copies of assigned readings to class as well as any notes you may take so that you can be actively involved in classroom discussions.
- **Timeliness of Work:** In a nutshell, late work is unacceptable and will not be accepted. Students are expected to turn in assignments on time and in the format specified in the assignment. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted in lieu of hard copies.
- **Classroom Courtesy:** Our classroom will be one of mutual respect where even though we may possess (and encourage) differing opinions, those views are expressed in appropriate, constructive ways. This courtesy extends to course communication, where students and the instructor are expected to communicate in a professional manner. This means e-mail communications should be formatted professionally (including greeting, complete sentences, and a closing with your name). We will, from time to time, be working with material that contains explicit content and language. Such content can present a challenge to readers and to class discussion. Your reactions to such material are welcomed as part of a robust, classroom-appropriate conversation.

## Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to alter assignments and deadlines as necessary.

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings	Due
T 8/18	Course Info/Intro to Poetry	n/a	
H 8/20	Poetic devices— structure/rhythm	Read: <i>RAWAL</i> Ch. 1-2. Week 1 Poems (e-campus) Glossary definitions (e-campus)	
T 8/25	Poetic devices—sound	Read: Week 2A (e) Glossary Definitions	
H 8/27	Poetic devices—figurative language Poetic devices— tone/voice	Read: “Figures of Speech” pg. 110- 114 (e) Read: Week 2B (e) Glossary Definitions	NC1
T 9/1	No class	Week 3A (e) Short writing assignment TBA	
H 9/3	Poetic devices—tone/voice	Week 3B (e) Glossary Definitions	NC2
T 9/8	Ode	Read: “Ode” from <i>The Making of a Poem</i> pg. 240. Week 4A (e) Glossary definitions	
H 9/10	Elegy	Elegy: “Elegy” from <i>The Making of a Poem</i> pg. 167-168. Week 4B (e) Glossary definitions	NC3
T 9/15	Love/erotic poetry	Week 5A (e) Glossary definitions	
H 9/17	Poetic form—sonnets	Read: “The Sonnet” from <i>The Making of a Poem</i> pg. 55-59. Week 5B (e) Glossary definitions	NC4
T 9/22	Poetic form—free verse	Read: “Open Form” from <i>An Introduction to Poetry</i> p. 217-221 (e). Week 6A (e) Glossary definitions	
H 9/24	Current/Contemporary voices	Selections from Philip Metres’ <i>Sand Opera</i> and Simon Armitage’s <i>Seeing Stars</i> (e)	NC5

T 9/29	Poetry wrap-up/Midterm Prep	Metres and Armitage continued	
H 10/1	Midterm Exam		
T 10/6	Intro to drama	No reading assigned—work on your close reading.	Poetry Explication
H 10/8	Short drama	<i>RAWAL</i> Ch. 7—including <i>Trifles</i> by Susan Glaspell Glossary Definitions	NC6
T 10/13	No class—fall break		
H 10/15	Short drama	“What is drama?” from <i>The Seagull Reader</i> (e) <i>Wit</i> by Margaret Edson (e) Glossary Definitions	NC7
T 10/20	Greek drama	Read: “Introduction to Aristophanes and <i>Lysistrata</i> ” from <i>The Bedford Introduction to Drama</i> p. 154-157 (e) <i>Lysistrata</i> (entire play)	
H 10/22	Greek drama	Continue with <i>Lysistrata</i> Glossary Definitions	NC8
T 10/27	Renaissance drama	Read: “Introduction” from <i>The Annotated Shakespeare</i> (e) <i>Othello</i> (Acts 1-2)	
H 10/29	Renaissance drama	<i>Othello</i> (Acts 3-4)	NC9
T 11/3	Renaissance drama	<i>Othello</i> (Act 5) Glossary Definitions	
H 11/5	Victorian drama	Read: “Introduction to Oscar Wilde” from <i>The Bedford Introduction to Drama</i> pg. 779-781 (e). <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> (Act 1)	NC10
T 11/10	Victorian drama	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> (Act 2-3) Glossary Definitions	
H 11/12	Victorian drama	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	NC11
T 11/17	Theater of the absurd	Read: “The Theater of the Absurd” from <i>The Bedford Introduction to</i>	

		<i>Drama</i> pg. 1220-1221 Waiting for Godot (entire play)	
H 11/19	Theater of the absurd Guest lecture: David Young from Duquesne University	Godot continued Glossary Definitions	NC12
T 11/24	Thanksgiving—no class		
H 11/26	Thanksgiving—no class		
T 12/1	20 <sup>th</sup> century theater—World Drama	Wole Soyinka <i>Death and the King's Horseman</i> (e)	
H 12/3	20 <sup>th</sup> century theater— African American drama	August Wilson <i>Fences</i> (e)	NC13
T 12/8	Final Exam—in class portion		
H 12/10	Final Exam (essay portion due) 3-5 p.m.		