

Fall 2023

STS-403 (638): Independent Study

Calista McRae

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STS 403 638: Independent Study

Tuesdays, 1:40 PM, Cullimore 408

Instructor: Calista McRae

Office hours: Mondays 11:30-12:30 in Cullimore 408, by appointment; email me to set up a time.

Other days in person or by Zoom, by appointment (again, email me).

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1. Course Description

A broad survey of English-language poetry, from about 1600 to the present.

2. Course Goals

- Observe, describe, and analyze poetry in detail, through close attention to a poem's formal elements
- Continue to improve the accuracy and concision of your writing
- Better understand relations between poetry and the world more broadly
- Recognize some of poetry's contributions to human emotional and intellectual life

3. Prerequisites. ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher.

4. Required Texts

You do not need to buy any books – poems, handouts, and other readings will come by email.

5. Assignments

Individual log of notes and annotations:	35%
A long final paper	35%
Participation	30%

The notes and annotations: essentially, keep notes in whatever form you prefer—it can be by hand, or in Google Docs, a .doc file, or anything of that nature. The notes can be informal; it might be most helpful to start with rough thoughts (from words and allusions you look up, to questions you have, to lines you inexplicably like) but to also aim to include, before the Tues. meeting, a paragraph or two of more coherent thoughts. I may also give you some specific questions to address. The annotations can be messy: the more the better. (What exactly you mark up the poem for will depend on the poem: in some poems, it may be mostly syntax, or rhyme; in other it might be to get down the various resonances of the words. Often it will be some combination of these and other features, along with your own initial reactions.) You don't have to show me the notes each week, though I would review them at the end of the semester, and am happy to look at earlier weeks, to give you a sense of how you're doing.

The long final paper: aim for ten pages, on a set of poems (anywhere from one poem to three or four, probably) that you decide you want to spend more time with. You could pick several poems by one poet—e.g., if you're interested in Dickinson, you could go off and read more poems by her. Or you could pick several poems by different authors on a similar subject. We can discuss more as your interests become clear.

Participation mainly consists of coming to the meetings with reactions, questions, thoughts—ready to talk about whatever poems you focused on that week. For your chosen poems, you should have read the short (page-length or less) ones at least five times, carefully (for the longer poems, like those by Pope, Dryden, and Brooks, you should read once or twice, but then find some shorter sections to concentrate on).

6. Grading

Work will be evaluated according to NJIT's grading scale:

A = 100-90 (*superior*) B = 86-80 (*very good*) B+ = 89-87 (*excellent*)
C+ = 79-77 (*good*) C = 76-70 (*acceptable*) D = 69-60 (*minimum*)
F = 59-0 (*inadequate*)

7. Submitting Work

Email is fine; no need for hard copies. Please include your name and an interesting title at the top of your paper. Use 1-inch margins and double-space. You can use MLA or APA or whatever other style you prefer, but be consistent and clear.

8. Late Work

Extensions are possible; they require 24 hours' notice. Without an extension, the grade of late work will go down by three points per day (e.g., from an 85 to a 82). I do accept late work until the last day of classes, and it is almost always better to turn in work late than not at all.

9. Plagiarism

Here is NJIT's statement on academic integrity:

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>. Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

More guidelines, for this class:

If your work uses the idea or language of any other person—in a paper or any other work assigned—make that use clear to your reader by citing clearly and thoroughly. A Works Cited page at the end isn't enough; in the paper itself, right at the moment you use an idea or quote, you need to signal the particular use. That is, there needs to be a signal right at the end of the sentence that used somebody else's fact or idea or wording. And if you borrow somebody's wording, put it in quotation marks. Here is a very short overview of the main problem I see in HSS seminars, [accidental plagiarism](#).

In general, do not use student essays found online as sources, and do not use Shmoop, Sparknotes, Rapgenius, etc. as sources, because they are terrible. Wikipedia can be a useful start, but you need to track down the original source of whatever useful material you find there. If you do use any of these as sources, again, make your use clear.

When it comes to citations, do not trust in Grammarly (and I strongly recommend never, ever paying for Grammarly; if you want to improve your writing, ask me for suggestions and plan to go to the Writing Center as often as possible). Also, don't use an AI.

10. Accessibility/Accommodations

If you think you may have any difficulties related to the format or materials of this course, or if you would like to discuss any accommodations that might be helpful, please contact me at the start of the semester. If you have a documented disability, or if you think you might have a disability, you should also be in touch with OARS (Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, <https://www.njit.edu/accessibility/>) either to request an official accommodation or to discuss requesting one.

11. The Writing Center

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute remote or in-person appointments with writing tutors, who can help with planning, structuring, or refining essays. To make an appointment, visit <https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/schedule-appointment>. Please bring the rubric/handout, so the consultant can see how you'll be graded. And please ask them to fill out a Writing Center report and send it to me, so that I know you are going and give you credit for making that effort.

12. Some resources that might be interesting or useful:

[The Online Etymology Dictionary](#)

[The New Yorker poetry podcast](#)

[The Slowdown: another poetry podcast, mostly contemporary poetry](#)

[Interlibrary Loan](#): ILL can get you just about any major poetry book that might interest you

John Hollander, [Rhyme's Reason](#) (handbook on poetic forms, like the sonnet and the limerick)

13. Draft Schedule

The readings will change, depending on your interests.

Week 0. September 5. Getting started: English before “modern English.” No reading due before meeting; in the meeting, we will glance at *Beowulf* and Chaucer, and read Shakespeare (Sonnet 73).

For background: Diction handout. Empson, “bare ruined choirs” passage

Week 1. September 12. Early modern poets and poetic form. Donne, Herbert, Shakespeare, Jonson. Skim each of the poems below; pick three to annotate, to write about a paragraph of rough thoughts, and to discuss in class; email me with your picks by Monday night. (You can also find another poem by one of these poets.)

Donne: [Holy Sonnet: Death, be not proud](#), [A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy's Day](#), [Song](#), [The Flea](#), [The Apparition](#), [The Sun Rising](#). Optional: [Bio](#) and general intro.

Herbert: [The Collar](#); [Love \(III\)](#). Optional, [Introduction to his poetry by Helen Vendler](#)

(which doubles as a useful sample of reading a poet very closely).

Shakespeare: any one sonnet, aside from 73.

Jonson: [Ode to Himself](#), [Inviting a Friend to Supper](#), [On my First Son](#); [On My First Daughter](#).

Week 2. September 19. Milton, Marvell.

Syntax/grammar handout and scansion handout.

Read:

Milton, from *Paradise Lost*, [book II](#): the long debate of the fallen angels. You're also welcome to look through other sections.

Marvell: [To His Coy Mistress](#), [The Garden](#), [The Character of Holland](#)

Week 3. September 26. Pope, Dryden, Wheatley, Bradstreet. Continuing with syntax and pentameter.

Pope: [Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot](#) with annotations. [Guide to the poem by Stephanie Burt](#).

Dryden: [Mac Flecknoe](#); [To the Memory of Mr. Oldham](#)

Phyllis Wheatley: [On Being Brought from Africa to America](#)

Anne Bradstreet: [Before the Birth of One of Her Children](#), [The Author to Her Book](#)

Week 4. October 3. Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, Blake.

Week 5. October 10. Dickinson, Tennyson, Browning. (Arnold?)

Week 6. October 17. Yeats, Eliot, Hopkins. (Hardy? Housman?)

Week 7. October 24. Moore, Hughes, Frost, TBD. [Langdon Hammer's Open Yale](#) lectures might be good for some of these poets.

Week 8. October 31. Auden, Brooks (*In the Mecca*).

Week 9. November 7. Bishop, Lowell, Berryman, Plath, Larkin, O'Hara

Week 10. November 14. Clifton, Mullen, Capildeo, Hong, Hayes, TBD. We can return to some of these poets in greater depth in weeks 12-13.

Week 11. November 21: *no meeting—Friday classes meet*.

Week 12. November 28. Other poets/periods of interest; drafting the final essay. Walcott, Gunn, Muldoon, Clampitt, Pico, Shapero?

Week 13. December 5. Poets/periods of interest; drafting the final essay.

Week 14. December 12. Revising the final essay.