

Poetics: A Practitioner's Guide

Language: English

Organization: Dr David M. Ashford (University of Groningen)

Credits: 5 ECTS

Venue and Period: Groningen, 6 November – 11 December 2019

Speakers and instructors: TBC

Module Description

This course will introduce participants to poetic genres, forms and metres, enabling them to develop, or to expand upon their own practice, as creative writers. Participants will study poetry from a variety of traditions, in order to understand how poetic form is determined by its original context in performance, and by the information, musical and theatrical technologies necessary to that original performative context. Far from being arbitrary or inorganic restrictions upon individual creativity, poetic form will emerge as the response to a context in performance that may since have been lost; as something organic, evolving and (potentially) still very much alive. Over a series of seminars and creative writing workshops, featuring poets invited to reflect upon their own practice, participants will investigate how ancient poetics have been (and might be) adapted for the creation of contemporary poetries, being introduced to recent research on creative writing as an historical and a discursive phenomenon. In addition, participants will learn to use creative-writing techniques as a form of artistic research and as an element of their methodologies.

Module Aims

- To equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand, analyse, and enjoy poetry;
- To introduce students to various critical and theoretical approaches to reading and studying poetry (i.e. poetics);
- To examine key issues, terminologies, and historical contexts required for academic study of poetry;
- To develop skills required for the critical analysis of, and creative engagement with, poetic language, imagery, and form.

Learning Outcomes

- A detailed knowledge of the formal elements of poetry;
- A detailed knowledge of the relevant historical performative context;
- An ability to research, interpret, analyse and evaluate poetry;
- An ability to apply insights gained from the course to the creation of new poetry.

Teaching Programme

Week 1 – EPIC (6 November 2019)

A revisionist account of epic, considering the genre as a response to ancient forms of information technology; to be followed by a workshop exploring how this insight might inform contemporary creative-writing.

Week 2 – LYRIC (13 November 2019)

A introduction to poetic forms, considering these in relation to their original performance context in song, and the ancient musical technology associated with particular forms; – exploring in a workshop how one might adapt and reinvigorate those forms in the present.

Week 3 – DRAMA (20 November 2019)

An introduction to poetic drama - from the Ancient Greek, Medieval English, Indian and Japanese traditions; to be followed by a workshop exploring how poetic drama has been (and might be) adapted for contemporary western audiences.

Week 4 – ACCENT (4 December 2019)

A revisionist account of metre in English, exploring the history of accentual or stress-based metre, its original context in Anglo-Saxon Britain, its demise following the introduction of Classical quantitative metres, and its resurgence over the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries; with a workshop considering its most vibrant contemporary manifestations (i.e. hip-hop) and its future potential.

Week 5 – IDEOGRAM (11 December 2019)

An introduction to imagery, consisting chiefly of an overview on the history of the translation (or rather mis-translation) of Chinese and Japanese poetry into English, tracing its formative impact on Imagism and thus on Modernist poetry in general; to be followed by a workshop exploring the creative possibilities of techniques such as Dadaist “cut ups”, machine-generated translation, and Kathy Acker’s “recriture feminine”.

Module Assessment

1. Creative Portfolio (50%)

Prior to each session, students will produce a short piece of creative writing relating to that week’s reading material (no more than 500 words). Specific instructions for these assignments will be provided separately. At the end of the module, each student will collect their creative-writing assignments into a portfolio.

2. Reflective Essay (50%)

You will finish the course by writing a paper of 2500 words (excl. notes and bibliography) in which you give evidence of the capacity to comprehend and reflect critically both on the reading material and on seminar discussions. In this paper, you will analyse a poetic text and research a topic we considered in class that is relevant to your own poetic practice (in one of the poems in the creative portfolio). You are expected to engage with literature explored in class, and to make use of additional sources. Students must have a research question they attempt to answer, and one central thesis statement they set out to substantiate. You will submit a proposal for the essay prior to the last session (no more than 100 words) and receive feedback on that proposal within one week.