LT148 Poetry and Poetics

Seminar Leader: Dr. David Hayes
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Office Hours: By appointment
Course times: W/F 15:45–17:15

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the analysis and appreciation of "the most concentrated form of verbal expression" (Ezra Pound). We will examine representative poets and works from four celebrated eras of composition: archaic Greece, the Chinese Tang dynasty, British Romanticism, and American Modernism. Through our encounter with this range of eras, we will try to develop a broad view of what poetry is for. If poetry gives us knowledge, what kind of knowledge? If poetry gives pleasure, what is the distinct character of its pleasure? In this course, close attention will be paid to how the various elements of poetics – image, tone, rhythm, etc. – contribute to the overall meaning of a poem.

Requirements

The texts for this course are all contained in the Course Reader.
Because of the character of lyric poetry, most of the reading assignments for this course are quite short. However: while a short poem can be read without comprehension in a matter of minutes, a thoughtful reading may take a long time. An aim of this course is the development of the capacity to read more and more slowly.

Use of Electronics
The use of electronic devices during class time is only allowed for disability accommodation. Research unequivocally shows that the presence of laptops hurts the academic performance of the user – and also of whoever else can see the screen. These devices especially undermine the effort to create and sustain a common conversation.

Handies/Smartphones
In order to facilitate an environment that is constructive for seminar discussion, please do not enter the classroom until you have put your smartphone away in a bag or backpack. This means: please do not sit at the seminar table with your phone out, even before class has begun. Please also make sure that your ringer is turned off before you enter the room.

Academic Integrity
Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

The use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software is not permitted in assignments for this course. Note that section 14.3.1.4 of the Student Handbook specifies that the submission of work from AI platforms is considered cheating.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement. If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the Bard College Berlin Accessibility page. Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

For each absence over two, I will deduct from the final grade according to the following ascending scale: -.05, -.05, -.1, -.1, -.15, -.15.

I will excuse absences with a doctor's note or a bureaucratic appointment confirmation (excused absences still count against the 30% rule). Every other absence is simply counted as an absence. There is no need to send me an email message if you will be absent.

Assignments

A diversity of forms of assessment is used in this course:

1) Students will be tested three times on their ability to apply poetic concepts in the close reading of poems. While this is partly a matter of technical mastery, the full application of poetic concepts requires non-technical thinking about their contribution to a particular poem's meaning.

In addition, students will be asked:
2) to turn prose into poetry ("Tu Fu translation")
3) to memorize and recite a short poem.

4) The class participation grade assesses a student's manifest preparation of the poem(s) to be discussed in class, and the thoughtfulness of their contributions to the seminar discussions. This grade may include short ad-hoc assignments.

5) The final exam assesses the student's capacity to "sight read" poetry, and the development of an overall view of poetry's character and purpose.

Grade Breakdown

Poetics test x3: 10% + 10% + 10%
Tu Fu translation: 10%
Blake memorization: 10%
Final exam: 20%
Class participation: 30%

Schedule

Archaic Greece
Week 1
Sept 3 Archilochus
Sept 5 Archilochus

Week 2
Sept 10 Mimnermus
Sept 12 Sappho

Week 3
Sept 17 Sappho
Sept 19 Alcaeus

Week 4
Sept 24 Pindar
Sept 26 Baccylides / Poetics test

Tang Dynasty China
Week 5
Oct 1 Tu Fu
Oct 3 Federal holiday

Week 6
Oct 8 Tu Fu
Oct 10 Po Chü-i

Week 7
Oct 15 Po Chü-i

Oct 17 Li Po / <mark>Poetics test</mark>

Oct 22 Fall Break
Oct 24 Fall Break

<mark>Oct 26 Tu Fu translation due</mark>

British Romanticism
Week 8
Oct 29 Wordsworth
Oct 31 Wordsworth

Week 9
Nov 5 Blake
Nov 7 Blake

Week 10
Nov 12 <mark>Blake memorization presentation</mark>
Nov 14 Keats

American Modernism
Week 11
Nov 19 Dickinson
Nov 21 Dickinson / <mark>Poetics test</mark>

Week 12
Nov 26 Pound
Nov 28 Pound

Week 13
Dec 3 Eliot
Dec 5 Eliot

Week 14
Dec 10 Stevens
Dec 12 Stevens

Dec 15 Completion Week / <mark>Final exam</mark>
Dec 19 Completion Week