Course Description:

Nineteenth-century British and American poetry is ordinarily taught in parallel tracks as the unfolding of separate traditions; we will approach these intertwined histories, instead, through the lens of poetic genre. Rather than sort poets and poems by national tradition, we will study the trajectory of specific verse genres, asking whether and how national culture makes a difference to the history of major genres such as pastoral, georgic, and epic. We will also seek to trace the histories of minor verse genres such as elegy, ballad, dramatic monologue, and ode, genres that might better be considered as forms or modes, or that seem to loosen the ties between formal definition and social or cultural function.

Schedule of Readings

Sept. 6  Introduction


Sept. 13  Genre

Aristotle, *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE)


Tvetzan Todorov, “The Origin of Genres” (1976)


Sept. 20  Pastoral

Theocritus, *Idylls* (3rd C BCE), 1, 4
Virgil, *Eclogues* (40 BCE), 1, 2, 4, 5, 7

Alexander Pope, “Winter” from *Pastorals* (1709)
Jonathan Swift, “A Description of a City Shower” (1710)
William Wordsworth, “The Ruined Cottage” (1797), Michael, A Pastoral Poem” (1800)
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight” (1798 / 1817)
Alfred Tennyson, “The Grasshopper” (1830)
William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis” (1817 / 1821) and “Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood” (1817)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Humble Bee” (1839) and “The Snow-Storm” (1841)

Alexander Pope, “A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry” (1704)

*The Guardian*, Nos. 22, 23, 28, 30, 32 (Tickell) and 40 (Pope) (1713)

Paul Alpers, “What is Pastoral?” (1996)

Sept. 27  Pastoral and Georgic

Virgil, *Georgics* (30 BCE), I, II, IV

James Thomson, from “Autumn,” “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (1746)
Oliver Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village” (1770)
Anna Laetitia Barbauld, “Washing Day” (1797)
William Wordsworth, “Resolution and Independence” (1807)
Fitz-Greene Halleck, “The Field of the Grounded Arms” (1828)
Lydia Sigourney, “To a Shred of Linen” (1838)

William Wordsworth, “Essay Supplementary to the Preface,” *Poems* (1815)

Oct. 4  Georgic

James Grainger, from “The Sugar Cane” (1764)
From *Jamaica: A Poem in Three Parts* (1777)
Timothy Dwight, “The Flourishing Village,” from *Greenfield Hill* (1795)
William Cullen Bryant, “The Prairies” (1832)
Fitz-Greene Halleck, “Connecticut, Part Two” (1852)
Thomas Grayson, *The Hireling and the Slave* (1854)

**Oct 11**  
**Epic: Book Ones**

William Cowper, *The Task*, Book 1 (1785)  
Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus*, Book 1 (1787)  
Lord Byron, *Don Juan* Canto 1 (1819)  
John Keats, *Hyperion: A Fragment*, Book 1 (1820)

**Oct. 18**  
**Epic: New Worlds**

Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809)  
Lydia Sigourney, *Traits of the Aborigines of America* (1822)  
Fitz-Greene Halleck, “Wyoming” (1821)  
Yopie Prins, "Nineteenth-Century Homers and the Hexameter Mania" (2005)

**Oct. 25**  
**Lyric**

Bring Your Own Lyrics

John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” (1833)  
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle” (1848)  
Jonathan Culler, “Apostrophe” (1977)  

**Nov. 1**  
**Ballad**

William Wordsworth, “Preface,” “Goody Blake and Harry Gill,” “We are Seven,” and “The Thorn” from *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)  
Walter Scott, “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” (1805)  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798 / 1817)  
William Makepeace Thackeray and George Cruikshank, “The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman” (1839)
Edgar Allan Poe, “Bridal Ballad” (1837), “Ulalume” (1847)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Wreck of the Hesperus” (1842)
Walt Whitman, “Boston Ballad” (1855)

Susan Stewart, “Scandals of the Ballad” from Crimes of Writing (1991)

Nov. 8  Elegy

John Milton, “Lycidas” (1637)
Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751)
Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Adonais” (1821)
Lydia Sigourney, “The Suttee” and “The Mother of Washington” (1827)
Felicia Hemans, “The Grave of a Poetess” (1828)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Threnody” (1846)
Alfred Tennyson, In Memoriam esp. 1-23, 93-122, and Epilogue (1850)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport” (1854)
Walt Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (1861)
Matthew Arnold, “Thyrsis” (1865)

Peter Sacks, “Interpreting the Genre” from The English Elegy (1985)
Max Cavitch, “Introduction” and “Retrievements out of the Night,” from American Elegy (2007)

Nov. 15  Dramatic Monologue

William Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” (1798)
Lord Byron, from Manfred (1816-17)
Percy Bysshe Shelley, from Prometheus Unbound (1821)
Edgar Allan Poe, “Tamerlane” (1827)
Tennyson, “Ulysses” (1842)
Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess,” “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister” from Dramatic Lyrics (1842)
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (1848)
Walt Whitman, “The Wound Dresser” (1865)
Ada Isaacs Mencken, “Judith” (1868)

Dwight Culler, “Monodrama and the Dramatic Monologue” (1975)
Herbert Tucker, “Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric” (1985)

Nov. 20:  Ode
Andrew Marvell, “Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland” (1650)
Thomas Gray, “The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode” (1757)
William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” (1807)
John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1820)
Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind” (1820)
William Gilmore Simms, “The Lost Pleiad” (1829)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Ode, Inscribed to W.H. Channing” (1847)
Walt Whitman, “As I Ebb’d by the Ocean of Life,” “Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking” (1860)
James Russell Lowell, “Ode, Written for the Celebration of the Introduction of the Water of Cochituate Lake into the City of Boston” (1848), Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration (1865)
Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, “The Cricket” (1873)

M.H. Abrams, “Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric” (1965)

Nov. 21  Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 29:  Poetic genres 1

Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849)

Dec. 6  Poetic genres 2

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh (1856)

Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel” (1941, repr. 1975)