



Writing Poetry

AME\_4\_WPN



Department of Culture, Writing and Performance

2011-2012

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Module Title	Writing Poetry
Module Reference Number	AME_4_PNL
Module Level and credit value	4 - 20
Faculty and department	Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Department of Culture, Writing and Performance
Course	BA (Hons) Creative Writing; BA (Hons) English with Creative Writing
Prerequisites	None
Module Study Hours	300 Hours
Class contact hours	45 Hours
Student independent study hours	210 Hours
Assessment Methods	<b>Portfolio of 6-8 original poems (70%) 1000-word critical analysis of the portfolio (30%) Deadline 17 May 2012</b>
Pass Mark	The module pass mark is 40% overall
Module Co-ordinator:	Dr. Karlien van den Beukel email: vbeukelk@lsbu.ac.uk tel: 020 7 815 5441
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## **ASSESSMENT**

**Assignment 1: Portfolio of 6-8 original poems (70%)**

**Assignment 2: 1000-word critical reflective essay on the portfolio (30%)**

*Deadline for both assessments: Thursday 17 May 2012*

## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE MODULE**

This module is designed to enable students to develop and experiment with poetry as a mode of creative expression through the study and production of poetry in a variety of forms. The module introduces students to the workings of rhythm, metre and rhyme; a selection of poetic forms (e.g. haiku, sestina, villanelle) and devices (e.g. metaphor, imagery, symbolism); and a variety of other conventions associated with verse. Students will learn about the technical skills of writing poetry by reading the work of established and emerging poets. Workshops will focus on methods of explication and students will be able to apply close-reading practices to their own and peers' writing. The module will also concentrate on other methods of evaluation and revision. Students will produce a portfolio of original poetry for this module.

## **AIMS OF THE MODULE**

This module aims to:

- To provide students with a basic understanding of the fundamentals of poetry, including aspects of metre, rhyme and verse form
- To introduce students to methods of analysing a poem in terms of form and content and to enable students to apply these methods to their own writing
- To introduce students to a variety of past and present poetry in a range of forms and styles
- To allow students to produce a portfolio of original poetry

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MODULE**

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

### **Knowledge and Understanding:**

- Demonstrate an awareness of a range of poetic forms and devices
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between poetic forms and devices
- Illustrate an understanding of the relationship between poetic form and content

### **Intellectual Skills:**

- Show an understanding of a variety of poetries and poetry criticism
- Be confident in their ability to compose original poems that adhere to specific conventions

- Show competency in critiquing and revising their own and peers' poems
- Produce a portfolio of poems that contains examples of particular forms (e.g. dramatic monologue, 'conversation' poem, sestina, poem using 'open' form)

#### **Practical Skills:**

- Offer an understanding of proof-reading skills, and the ability to apply them
- Demonstrate a competency in critiquing and revising their own and peers' work

#### **Transferable Skills:**

- Indicate interactive group skills through workshop activities
  - Offer oral communication through seminar discussion
  - Show written communication skills through writing exercises
- Demonstrate an ability to read critically, proof-read efficiently, and revise effectively

## **INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE MODULE**

### **Overview of the module content**

- An overview of modern and contemporary poetry in relation to current writing practices
- Widen understanding of the diverse writing opportunities available to new writers
- To demonstrate the living context and relevance of poetry to new writers and how it relates to contemporary society
- The development of reading skills to compliment and develop writing skills
- How free-verse and 'traditional' verse forms can be utilised in creative work
- To develop a grasp of how notebooks, drafting and editing are key to writing success
- Introduce new poets to individuals and organisations who can help them in their future writing career

## **Equality and Diversity**

Contemporary poetry is written, practiced and performed by people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and the course will reflect this in the choice of texts used to help students find their own voices and develop their own writing.

### **Overview of the types of classes and self-managed learning**

The module is taught over 12 weeks. Each week consists of a 4-hour class comprising lectures, seminars for group discussion, writing exercises and workshops, plus approximately 7 hours of self-managed study per week.

**Seminars:** The format will follow a seminar on the theme for open discussion and exploration, followed by a controlled, intense writing exercise. Homework assignments will accompany each class.

**Tutorials:** Students will be given the opportunity to attend small group tutorials to discuss their work after week 9.

**Blackboard:** The module guide and other relevant materials will be available on the Blackboard site.

**Self managed study:** It is essential for the successful completion of this module that all students acknowledge the responsibility they have for self-managed learning. Students will be given independent reading, research and other seminar preparation each week and are expected to follow up areas of interest through exploring texts from the additional reading lists and others which the tutor might suggest.

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## WEEKLY TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

### WEEK 1

#### **Introduction. What is poetry? What is the difference between poetry, verse and prose?**

Discussion of the main topics and problems we will find recurring through the course. These will include: experience and language; craft, originality and inspiration; verse and poetry (does T.S. Eliot's view ring true, or is it in need of re-visiting?); 'free' verse v 'formalist' verse

Homework:

Reading and writing - their dynamic relationship. Read chapter 1 of the Tony Curtis book, *How to Read Modern Poetry*

- From *The Harvill Book of Twentieth-century Poetry in English*, read Les Murray, 'An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow,' applying this reading method

### WEEK 2

#### **Where does a poem come from? Experience, Memory, Autobiography, Language, 'Conversation' Poems:**

- Re-cap on the Curtis Reading method
- Coleridge's 'Conversation Poems,' Creeley's 'When I Think.' The use of 'everyday' language versus the archaic and poetic
- Create a list of poeticisms and archaic words we can agree to be 'Stop' words: 'thou,' etc. and abstractions like 'Truth'

### WEEK 3

#### **Sound effects, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance:**

- Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, W.S. Graham, Basil Bunting, Wendy Cope, Philip Larkin, Don Paterson's 'A Private Bottling'
- How important is sound to poetry? Reading poems aloud
- Examples of the traditional and modern ballad (Border Ballads, W.S. Graham), stress metres, etc.. Pound's 'The Seafarer'
- Oral verses written traditions: metre as memory aid
- Class attempt to write an iambic pentameter; a rhyming couplet; a traditional four-line ballad stanza.

- The relation of metre and rhythm. Bunting's idea that the poem on the page is like music on the stave, dead until it is uttered/played. Developing 'an ear'

## WEEK 4

**What does a poem look like? Shape, stanzas, line breaks. Poetry as play. List, collage, found poems:**

- Thomas Hood 'I Remember', Joe Brainard's *I Remember*, The Surrealists? Word games. Explore 'poetry as a serious game'
- Two published poems formatted in different ways – in couplets, as a prose block of text, four words to a line, etc.
- To discuss the importance of lineation, paragraphs, the use of form to reflect thought processes, narrative, etc.
- Individuals will then be asked to lineate the two poems as they think reads best for discussion in class

### • RE-WRITING

- Rewriting of draft poem from homework
- Further work on Ginsberg's *Howl*

## WEEK 5

**Symbolic and figurative language. Simile, metaphor, the senses:**

- 'William Carlos Williams, 'The Red Wheel Barrow,' 'This is Just to Say,' 'Poem'
- The role of poetry in 'translating' ideas into images, and mechanisms for doing this, 'not ideas but things'. Poetry as a language object
- The 'resistance' of poetry to paraphrase, the use of symbolic and figurative writing to 'surrender' its meaning – what often puts readers off poetry, but also invites her to return and find other meanings, repeatedly.

**Traditional Forms (I) The Haiku, the Renga, the Epigram, and creating your own forms:**

- Pound and HD's Imagism, breaking of the pentameter –
- Contemporary use of the haiku: Tom Raworth's Haiku,
- Renga. The whole group to work up a renga (the original use of haiku) in class

## WEEK 6

### Persona Poetry/Dramatic Monologue.

- Voices and voice: Ron Padgett's 'The Voice,' Carol Ann Duffy's 'Mrs Midas,' Browning's 'My Last Duchess.' Eliot's 'Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' Pound, 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley'.
- What does it feel like to speak using someone else's voice? What are the freedoms, what are the limitations?

## WEEK 7

### Traditional Forms (II) Sonnet, Villanelle, Sestina:

- Elizabeth Bishop's 'One Art,' Dylan Thomas, 'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night,' William Empson.

### POETRY IN PERFORMANCE:

- recordings and video etc., for discussion of reading and performance techniques:
- ideas and questions to cover – the importance of 'developing an ear,' judging an audience and where to pitch work, choice of poetry for your reading, acting (how important is that?), should the poet read her work, or should it be left to professional actors?
- Student poems we can 'score' for performance

Homework:

- Write a sestina/villanelle of your own

## WEEK 8

### • FREE VERSE:

- Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself,' e.e. cummings, James Schuyler, 'This Dark Apartment.'
- When is 'free' verse not free? Is free verse simply chopped up prose?
- Williams' variable foot, Frost's free verse is like tennis without the net, etc.

### EDITING

- Eliot's 'The Wasteland' facsimile.
- Active role of editor: where does editor become joint author?
- Examples of collaborative poems: Ted Berrigan/Ron Padgett 'Bean Spams'



## WEEK 9

### POETRY IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Vital sites, the various ways poetry appears on the internet, home pages, creating poetry for the web
- The 'politics' of publishing and the opportunities of the web.
- Print on Demand (POD) technologies and the availability and distribution of poetry
- Brian Kim Stefans, 'The Dream-life of Letters,' 'Kluge,' the 'Truth Interview'. 'EPC' web site, Poetry Magazines website

### Homework:

- Attempt haiku, rengas etc.
- Bring a poem of your own to 'score' for performance to the next session

## WEEK 10

Poetry Tutorials

## Week 11

Poetry Tutorials

## WEEK 12

Poetry Tutorials

*Deadline for Assignments 1 and 2: Thursday 17 May 2012*

## **READING LIST**

### **Required Reading**

- Curtis, T. (1990). *How to Study Modern Poetry*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Hobsbaum, P. (1996). *Metre, Rhythm and Verse Form*. London: Routledge.
- Schmidt, M. (2000). *The Harvill Book of Twentieth-century Poetry in English*. London: Harvill.

### **Additional Reading**

- Easthope, A. (1983). *Poetry As Discourse*. London: Methuen.
- Fenton, J. (2002). *An Introduction to English Poetry*. London: Penguin.
- Fraser, G.S. (1970). *Metre, Rhyme and Free Verse*. London: Methuen.
- Fussell, P. (1965). *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*. New York: Random House.
- Hollander, J. (1985). *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Huisman, R. (1998). *The Written Poem: Semiotic Conventions from Old to Modern English*. London & New York: Cassell.
- Kirby-Smith, H.T. (1996). *The Origins of Free Verse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Preminger, A., & Brogan, T.V.F. (eds.) (1993). *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Riffaterre, M. (1978). *The Semiotics of Poetry*. Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press.
- Steele, T. (1999). *All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing: An Explanation of Meter and Versification*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.