

English Language and the Poetic Craft (SS 2114)

Credit Hours: 2

Pre-Req: None

Instructor Name: Ateeb Gul

Schedule: Monday to Friday (09:30 AM – 10:45 AM)

This course will attune students to the poetic craft in the English language and will train them in writing English poetry.

T.S. Eliot once wrote: “genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.” What is it, then, that poets wish to communicate? Their inner most desires? Their deep-seated emotional conflicts? Loss, and the limbo that accompanies it? How does the environment—the surroundings—affect poetic sensibilities? What has been the role of the ‘third space’—the creative potential that resides between humanistic extremities—in the development of poetic masterpieces? These are fundamental questions in literary hermeneutics and this course will deal with these questions through close readings of famous English poets, including but not limited to Percy Shelley, A.E. Housman, T.S. Eliot, Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Sir Geoffrey Hill, Maya Angelou, and Bob Dylan.

Reading these poets and others will also give us a chance to discuss the art of poetic craft—the importance of forms (epic, lyric, free verse), sounds (rhymes, half-rhymes, alliterations, meters), imagery (metaphors), and even aesthetics (indentations, spacing, and, to a great extent, punctuation). Each and every single one of these elements impacts the way we understand a particular piece of poetry. Appreciating this craft in the works of famous poets will allow students to develop their own poetic styles and attitudes.

At the start of the term, students will attempt to write rough drafts of their poems. Gradually, they will revisit those drafts and improve upon them in light of assigned readings and class discussions. Toward the end, they will read and submit final drafts of their poems.