Course Description
Early Americans wrote and recited poems on all sorts of occasions, such as love, travel, death, contemplation, indignation. They composed poems for a range of purposes, including social commentary, aesthetic refinement, civic engagement, devotional practice, and human connection. Poems adorned coffins, were read aloud in literary “salons,” circulated in both popular newspapers and intimate letters, and were collected into printed and homemade books. The public, collective aspect of poetry was particularly significant throughout our period of study, the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. Poetry cultivated social and political connections and provided diverse authors a forum for civic engagement. The central American literary genre before the rise of the novel, poetry is crucial to understanding American culture, history, politics, and literary practice over centuries.

In this class we will read a wide range of early American poetry and will explore the relationship between the political, cultural, and aesthetic uses of poetry. We will practice how to read poetry, how to write poetry, and how to write about poetry. We will think through what poetic conventions and innovations teach us about history and society, and we will confront the complex identifications and affiliations of writers and audiences in early America. Through a variety of assignments, you will hone your skills in research, analysis, and creative thinking.

Course Goals
By the end of the semester, I hope that you will be able to:

• Enjoy poetry while also analyzing its meanings and messages.
• Contextualize poems within their historical periods, geographic locations, material circumstances, and intended audiences, in order to better understand the particular conditions in which literature is produced.
• Analyze and compare the formal, stylistic, ideological, thematic, and figurative elements of poems.
• Consider poetry as a long tradition in which authors stake a claim; analyze the place of a particular author in a poetic tradition.
• Scan a poem and identify its metrical patterns.
• Identify and articulate the purpose of various poetic devices, such as metaphor, alliteration, anaphora, and caesura.
• Evaluate the implicit and explicit political arguments present in a range of poems and critical essays.
• Write an informed, well-supported essay in clear, concise, and precise prose.
• Work well on your own and with others to answer questions and solve problems.
Required Texts

- All other required readings will be posted on Blackboard as PDF files or web links.

Absence Policy and Late Work

Each student gets three “freebie” absences: use these for illness, emergency, etc. After three absences, each additional absence will take three percentage points off of your final grade (so an (82) B- will become a (79) C+, for example). If you have an extended illness or emergency that will require you to miss more than three classes, notify me immediately when you learn of the situation and provide documentation; you may be able to do some alternative work to make up extra absences. Any student who misses 7 or more classes will automatically be given a grade of WF.

Late work will immediately lose points (10 per day) and will not be accepted after three days from the due date. However, I do sometimes offer extensions if you ask in advance (at least 24 hours). Please provide a good reason for the extension in your request.

Graded Work

Participation: 15%
Presentation: 15%
Midterm: 10%
Short Paper 1: 15%
Short Paper 2: 15%
Final Project: 30%

Participation

Participation includes completing the assigned reading, bringing your book or printed reading to class, listening carefully, contributing to small-group and full-class discussions, thoughtfully completing in-class assignments, and treating others with respect. My methods of evaluating participation include reading quizzes, calling on students, organizing small group discussions, directing open questions to the class, and noting any distracting behavior. Keep your cell phone on silent and out of sight. If you are texting or otherwise using technology in a distracting manner, you will be asked to put away your device. Should you fail to do so, I will ask you to leave class for the day and you will be counted absent.

In-class presentation/discussion leading (15%)

Each student will present on one selected poem and will lead our discussion of that poem in class. We will sign up for poems on Monday, Jan. 22. Follow these specific guidelines for your presentation:

1. First, read your poem (or an important section of the poem, if it is very long) aloud for the class. This is an important element of the assignment. Practice beforehand and look
up how to pronounce any unfamiliar words. Share something about your experience of encountering this poem and learning to read it aloud.

2. Then, answer (with evidence and explanation) the following questions about your poem:
   - What is the author’s background? Where/when did they live, what was their occupation, what else is notable about their life?
   - What is the poem’s meter? Scan several lines for the class.
   - What is the poem’s form and tone? It is a humorous satire? A serious elegy? A formal ode?
   - What are the poem’s subject, argument, major themes, etc.? What major issue does the poem address? Where exactly do you see that issue in specific lines from the poem?
   - Identify at least three formal, sonic, or figurative devices in your poem.
   - List at least two other poems we’ve read with which we might group this poem because of a similar form, style, tone, subject matter, etc. Briefly explain your choices.
   - Draw the poem into relation with any other poems or secondary readings for that day.

3. Finally, display (either in a hand-out or electronically) three questions to guide our class discussion of the poem.

**Short Paper 1 (15%): Presentation Poem Analysis**
This paper will be based on your presentation and will be due in class one week after the presentation date. For example, if you present on Monday, February 5, your paper will be due at the beginning of class on Monday, February 12. This is a three- to four-page paper in which you briefly contextualize your poem and author, using the sources you gathered for your presentation, and analyze the poem’s form, message, themes, etc. within that context. You must quote specific lines from the poem in your analysis and cite all of your sources in either MLA or Chicago format. Your paper must include some analysis of form, sonic devices, and figurative language (see the poetic analysis handout for examples).

**Short Paper 2 (15%): Comparison/Contrast**
This is a three- to four-page paper in which you compare and contrast two poems. You might choose two poems that approach a similar topic in very different ways, or two poems with complete different styles. Your goal is to think about what the similarities and differences mean: for instance, what does the comparison suggest about changes or continuities in poetic practice and expression over time, across geographies, for different occasions, or among varying cultural, social, or economic experiences?

**Midterm (10%)**
The midterm will include identification of poetic devices and of specific poems and their contexts. It will also require a basic understanding of English meter. It will also include short answer (paragraph) questions that reflect our class discussions of the material.

**Final Project (30%)**
Choose one of the following two options:
1. Write a series of at least three original poems inspired by the work we’ve read in class, with annotations and an explanatory essay of at least five pages detailing your choices of
Your explanatory essay should exhibit a clear understanding of the poetic conventions we’ve discussed in class and should reflect your knowledge of the social, historical, geographical, and cultural contexts of early American literary production. You are highly encouraged to draw some of your inspiration from primary source material in such databases as Early American Imprints, Early Americas Digital Archive, and/or Godey’s Lady’s Book (we will have a library tutorial on 2/28).

2. Research project: Choose one poem from class and write a research paper that contextualizes your poem in its/his historical period, its publication history, and other poetry from the period or place. While this single poem will focus your paper, your paper may incorporate other poems and must incorporate in some way poetry from at least one of the following databases: Early American Imprints, Early Americas Digital Archive, Godey’s Lady’s Book (we will have a library tutorial on 2/28). You are welcome to use your presentation poem for the primary poem if you wish.

Grade Scale
A 93-100  C 73-76
A- 90-92   C- 70-72
B+ 87-89   D+ 67-69
B 83-86    D 63-66
B- 80-82   D- 60-62
C+ 77-79   F 59 and below

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
If you use information or interpretations from the Internet or elsewhere in your papers or tests without a proper citation, you are committing plagiarism, or representing another’s words, ideas, or research as your own. Students who plagiarize will automatically fail the assignment (and possibly the course) and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office. Please review UNT’s Student Standards of Academic Integrity at: https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003_AcademicIntegrity_2009_0.pdf

While you do not have to cite “common knowledge” (e.g., the sun rises in the east), you must cite any ideas that do not originate with you that are not common knowledge. Literary analysis or “facts” about texts and authors found on websites ARE NOT common knowledge and MUST be cited. Follow this advice from the UNC-Chapel Hill writing center: “In order to decide if the material you want to use in your paper constitutes “common knowledge,” you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:
• Did I know this information before I took this course?
• Did this information/idea come from my own brain?
If you answer “no” to either or both of these questions, then you need to cite your source(s) and indicate where you first discovered this information.

Assistance for Students with Special Needs
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA
will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.
Reading and Assignment Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change at any time. I will notify you of any changes during class, on Blackboard, and via email. You are responsible for regularly checking Blackboard and your UNT email.


Mon. Jan. 22: Shields, Interview (online); Lewis, “Waiting to be Found” (online); Anne Bradstreet, “The Prologue,” “Dialogue Between Old England and New,” “The Author to Her Book” (Shields 36-46); Benjamin Harris, “In Adam’s Fall” (Shields, 221); Poetic Analysis Handout (online)

Wed., Jan. 24: Anne Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” “Before the Birth of One of Her Children,” “To My Dear and Loving Husband” “In Memory of my dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet,” “On my dear Grand-child Simon Bradstreet,” “In silent night when rest I took” (Shields 46-61);

Mon., Jan. 29: Edward Taylor, “Huswifery” (Shields 198); Michael Wigglesworth, “The Day of Doom”; Stanzas 1-43 (Shields 74-87); Urian Oakes, “Elegie” (Shields 132); Mather Byles, all poems (Shields 447-453); Benjamin Franklin, “Silence Dogood No.7” (online); Joseph Green, “The Poet’s Lamentation for the Loss of His Cat” (Shields 430)

Wed., Jan. 31: John Osborn, “Whaling Song” (Shields 481); Edward Johnson, “New England’s Annoyances” (Shields 17); Richard Lewis, “A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis” (Shields 386)

Mon., Feb. 5: James Revel, “The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon’s Sorrowful Account” (Shields 156); James Grainger, “The Sugar Cane” (Shields 492)

Wed., Feb. 7: Samson Occom (Mohegan), Hymns (Shields 543-547); Joanna Brooks, “Six Hymns by Samson Occom” (online)

Mon., Feb. 12: Presentation: Jonathan Womble on Henry Brooke, “An unwilling Farewel to Poesy” (Shields 306); Annis Boudinot Stockton, all poems (Shields 581-589)

Wed., Feb. 14: Presentation: Chase Corell; Susanna Wright, all poems (Shields 371-379); Joseph Green, all remaining poems (Shields 430-442)

Mon., Feb 19: Presentations: Maria Bautista Carrera and Brianna Ruffin; Philip Freneau, “American Liberty” (Shields 723), “Female Frailty” (Shields 733), “The Indian Student” (Shields 743), “Lines Occasioned by a Visit to An Old Indian Burying ground” (Shields 746); Hannah Griffitts, “The Female Patriot,” “Upon reading a Book entituled Common Sense,” “On reading a few Paragraphs in the Crisis” (Shields 558-563)

Wed., Feb 21: Presentation: Kameron Salley; Title Page, Preface, Letter from John Wheatley, “To the Publick” in Wheatley’s Complete Writings (online); Phillis Wheatley, “To Maecenas” (Shields 774)
Mon., Feb. 26: **Presentation: Cameron Davidson**; Phillis Wheatley, “To the University of Cambridge” (Shields 775), “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (Shields 776), “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth” (Shields 778); “To His Excellency General Washington” (Shields 786); Letter to Samson Occom (online)

Wed., Feb. 28: **Library Tutorial: Meet in Willis Library 136**

Mon., March 5: Phillis Wheatley, “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield” (Shields 777; other Whitefield elegies (online); Wendy Roberts, work in progress (online)

Wed., March 7: **Midterm Exam; Dr. Ivy Schweitzer lecture (3:30-4:30pm) and film screening (7-9pm)**

Mon., March 12: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Wed., March 14: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mon., March 19: **Presentations: Samantha McMillan and Daniel Samples**; Lydia Sigourney, “Death of an Infant,” “To a Shred of Linen” (online); William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis” (online); Mary Louise Kete, “The Reception of Nineteenth-Century American Poetry” (online)

Wed., March 21: Tee-кон-еес-кее (Cherokee), “On First Hearing the Report” and “Though far from thee Georgia in exile I roam” (online); Lydia Sigourney, “Indian Names,” “The Cherokee Mother,” “The Mohegan Church” (online)

Mon., March 26: Robert Dale Parker, Preface (ix-xv) and Introduction (1-84) to **The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky**; Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, “To the Pine Tree” (89-90)

Wed., March 28: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, poems (94-123)


Mon., April 9: **Final Project Proposal Due**

Mon., April 16: Emily Dickinson, selected poems

Wed., April 18: Emily Dickinson, selected poems

Mon., April 23: **Short Paper 2 Due;** Walt Whitman, selected poems

Wed., April 25: Walt Whitman, selected poems

Mon., April 30: Final Project Workshop

Wed., May 2: Final Project Workshop

**Final Project Due: Monday, May 7, by 3:30pm**

Further Reference and Suggested Secondary Readings:

- Caroline Wigginton, *In the Neighborhood: Women’s Publication in Early America* (Massachusetts, 2013)
- Eliza Richards, ed. *Emily Dickinson In Context* (Cambridge, 2013)
- Eliza Richards, *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe’s Circle* (Cambridge, 2004)
- *Early American Imprints*. Access this database of more than 36,000 printed books, pamphlets, and broadsides from the 17th and 18th centuries via the UWF library website. The database catalogues poems by genre.
- *The Walt Whitman Archive* ([http://www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org)). This website includes all six editions of Whitman’s famous *Leaves of Grass* (first published in 1855).
- *The Emily Dickinson Archive* ([http://www.edickinson.org](http://www.edickinson.org)). Includes high-resolution images of Dickinson’s manuscripts.

- Important journals, available via MLA, Project Muse, and JSTOR: *Early American Literature, American Literature, American Literary History, The William and Mary Quarterly*.

- *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* ([http://keywords.nyupress.org](http://keywords.nyupress.org)). A great resource for familiarizing yourself with the critical vocabulary of American cultural studies. Includes web essays on important critical terms in the field of American cultural and literary studies.