

Sophister Option, Hilary Term 2024

Title: The Practice of Poetry

This non-assessed course will take place over 11 weeks in Hilary Term, and is intended for students with a strong interest in both the writing and criticism of poetry. Each session will last for two hours. The course is open to SS/VS and will be taught by contemporary Irish poet and former Professor of Poetry Harry Clifton.

Course Description (Content)

Each session will have two elements. There will be a workshop component, in which poems written by students in the group will be examined and discussed. We will also, in the second hour, look at and critique a broad range of work from the existing tradition, in the light of critical writings by practicing poets in and out of the academy (see recommended reading below).

Students will be expected to produce work to deadline. They must be prepared to have their poems discussed in class and they must also be willing to offer constructive and considered criticism to their peers.

Learning aims

To familiarise student practitioners of poetry with the origins and context of the poems they are writing.

Learning outcomes

Ability on the part of students to write poems and/or think consciously as they write about where in the great tradition their work may unconsciously derive from.

Assessment

Completion and submission by end of semester of 10-12 poems between 20 and 60 lines approximately, plus an introductory essay of 1000 words on the work submitted and its likely influences in the life and reading of the examinee.

How to Apply

Students interested in this course may apply by submitting a short covering letter outlining their interests and practice in this area, together with a sample of their work (4-6 poems/2 A4 pages maximum per poem. BE sure to include your name and email address. This material, should be submitted to the School of English office by 12 p.m. on Friday, 26th May.

Class numbers will be capped at ten, and successful applicants will be contacted in July.

Recommended reading

The Harvill Book of Twentieth Century Poetry in English edited by Michael Schmidt, Harvill Books.

The New Oxford Books of 16th/17th century verse

Poetry in the Making, Ted Hughes, Faber and Faber

Object Lessons, Eavan Boland, Vintage Books

What is Found There Adrienne Rich, Virago Books

John Butler Yeats Selected Letters, Faber and Faber

A Poet's Country: Selected Prose, Patrick Kavanagh, Lilliput Press

Works by individual poets will be introduced in photocopy form as required.

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