

Sophister Module Description Template, 2026-27

Full Name: Poetry in Practice: Form, Voice, Image

Short Name: Poetry in Practice

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Dr Seán Hewitt, shewitt@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: JS

Module Content:

This creative writing module is intended for students with a strong interest in writing poetry and developing their artistic craft. In this module, students will begin the work of critically-assessing contemporary poetry *as practicing poets*.

In this module, we will explore some key concerns of contemporary poetry, including race, sexuality and the environment, and will look at a range of poets working in both traditional and non-traditional forms. Using sample poems provided in class, alongside critical materials, we will develop an informed critical idiom for the discussion and critique of contemporary poetry, and will also work towards writing a small portfolio of our own poems.

Students must be willing to produce new poems to deadline, and be prepared to have their work discussed in class. It will also be the responsibility of students to offer constructive and considered feedback to their peers during these weekly sessions.

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Read poetry as practicing poets, and discuss the work of other poets in terms of poetic praxis
- Critically reflect on their own use of poetic technique
- Critically discuss key concerns in contemporary poetry in the 21st century
- Display an enhanced ability in poetic craft, and have begun to advance a distinctive poetic voice in their work

Assessment Details:

There will be two assessments for this module.

1). The midterm assessment will take the form of 40 lines of poetry with an accompanying critical reflection of 500 words. **(30%)**

2). Portfolio of original poems (120-140 lines) and accompanying critical reflection (1200 words) **(70%)**

Note: Poems submitted for the midterm assessment may not be re-submitted for the final portfolio assessment.

Preliminary Reading List:

- Carl Phillips, *My Trade is Mystery: Seven Meditations from a Life in Writing* (Yale, 2023)
- W.N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis, eds., *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry* (Bloodaxe, 2000)
- Marie Howe, *Madness, Rack, and Honey: Collected Lectures* (Wave Books, 2012)
- Mark Doty, *The Art of Description: World Into Word* (Graywolf Press, 2010)
- Alice Oswald, Lectures from the Oxford Professor of Poetry (available online: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/people/alice-oswald>)
- Don Paterson, *The Poem: Lyric, Sign, Metre* (Faber, 2018)
- John Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 2006)

Students should prepare for this course by reading as much contemporary poetry as possible. Some good anthologies to start with include:

- the annual Forward Book of Poetry, or the recent *Poems of the Decade* anthology from the Forward Foundation
- Bloodaxe's *Staying Alive* series of anthologies
- *100 Queer Poems* (ed. Andrew McMillan and Mary Jean Chan)
- *More Fiya* (ed. Kayo Chingonyi)

Students may also enjoy podcasts such as the New Yorker Poetry podcast and Pádraig Ó Tuama's *Poetry Unbound*.

Collections of poetry to be read for class discussion:

Richard Scott, *That Broke into Shining Crystals* (Faber, 2025)

Wong May, *In the Same Light* (Carcenet, 2022)

Mark Doty, *Deep Lane* (Cape, 2015)

Brigit Pegeen Kelly, *The Orchard* (BOA Editions, 2004)

Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas* (Picador, 2019)

Tara Bergin, *This is Yarrow* (Carcenet, 2013)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.