Course Title: Poetry Without Fear
Course Code: LIT 35
Instructor: Nicholas Jenkins

Course Summary:
“Look at | what passes for the new. | You will not find it there but in | despised poems” (W. C. Williams, “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower”). This class is for people who love reading poetry but would like to improve their understanding of how to interpret poems productively. It is also for those who would like to start reading poetry, or to begin reading again. So experience with poetry is welcome but not necessary. All that is required is an absence of assumptions and a feeling for verbal beauty. (By the way, a friendly clarification: this is not a creative writing course and we won’t be looking at poems anyone in class, including me, has written.)

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:
- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Score will be determined by student attendance and participation.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Grade determined by an 8-10 page paper, on a topic agreed in advance with me, as well as memorization of one poem of around 30 lines.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1: 31 March
Importance of poetry, nature of poetry, places of poetry, origins of poetry.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 2: 7 April
Forms of poetry. Case study: the sonnet.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).
Week 3: 14 April
Other forms of poetry. Case studies: the villanelle and sestina.
Auditory and visual dimensions of poetry.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 4: 21 April
Genres of poetry. Case study: the elegy.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 5: 28 April
Other genres of poetry. Case study: the ode.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 6: 5 May
Modes of poetry. Case studies: comic and humorous poetry.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 7: 12 May
Occasions of poetry. Case study: love lyrics.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 8: 19 May
Modern poetry: what is it?
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 9: 26 May
The poetic voice: autobiography, confessionalism.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Week 10: 2 June
Let’s talk: review of key concepts, suggestions for future exploration.
Class discussion of selected poem(s).

Bibliography: Some Poetry Handbooks and Guides:
[they are helpful, but none are required reading for this class]


