In any literate culture, poetry is placed language. Poets decide where on the page to put questions, long words, light or dark vowels. This course aims at explaining the basic elements and processes of “Poetese” (such as rhyme, metaphor, etc.) and also at showing how corridors – lines of similar elements – can add visual harmony to poetic impact. They can add to beauty.

Objectives:

This course will aim at familiarizing students with the types of devices that poets can use to make their work transcend the usual bounds of language – that can give it a huge heave-ho towards the eternal. Of course, there will be discussion of such traditional topics as rhyme, alliteration, meter, metaphor, etc. But above and beyond these well-known devices, there are a number of others which have emerged in my research on this topic in the past three decades. Some of these are named in the outline which follows below. I will not try to go into the details of what these terms mean in this brief overview. They are defined in the papers of mine that I have listed below, which I will be happy to furnish, should there be interest in them. Most of the terms, such as sectioning, co-sectioning, splitting, lonering and sore-thumbing deal with the distribution of linguistic elements. Some of
these originate with me, but even if original, they are not revolutionary.

This is not the case with what I call *corridors*. Some poets place similar linguistic items in ways that “make sense” visually. An obvious example: on the left margins of many poems there is a vertical corridor, because the poet had decided to have a number of the lines of the poem start in exactly the same way. A quick example is the Irish blessing shown below:

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May the road rise up to meet you
may the wind be always at your back
may the sun shine warm upon your face
and the rain fall soft upon your fields.
Until we meet again my friend
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.
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What I have discovered in my work is that such corridors can be in many different parts of the poem, and that they can not only be straight lines, but also curved, and that they can also be closed curves, or polygonal in shape. My intent in this course is to teach the students not only about the more traditional ways of structuring a poem, but also to offer them something like a research seminar, introducing to them the possibility of corridors and other visual devices, an area of research in which I have published nothing to date. Thus I hope to engage the students as co-researchers, and to make our course as discovery-centered as possible. No one in the room, least of all me, will know what “the right answer” might be – we will all only be looking for next steps in what seems like a promising direction.

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**Poetics or Language “and” literature or Linguisterature**

The universal language of linguistic power. How writers choose their words and sequences of words in such a way as to render them eternal: *To be or not to be...* Old tricks (rhyme, alliteration, metaphor and other tropes, compaction, etc.) and new ones (sore-thumbing, lonering, punch-lining, hologramming, integering, corridering, etc.). How writers get past the ineffable. The soul of words.

1. **Week 1.** Types of poetic distribution of linguistic elements in the stanzas of a poem: splittings, balancings, lonerings, one-offings. 


3. **Week 3.** Co-sectioning. The assumption of total significance. 
   Example poems: Blake – *The Tyger*, Williams – *To Waken an Old Lady*.

4. **Week 4.** Ganging. The suspension of sequentiality. 
5. **Week 5.** Fusion.

6. **Week 6.** Integering.

7. **Week 7.** Punch-lining.
Example poems: Yeats – *When You Are Old and Grey*, Williams – *To Waken an Old Lady*, Blake – *The Tyger*.

8. **Week 8.** Corridoring.


10. **Week 10.** Compaction.

11. **Week 11.** Untranslatability.

12. **Week 12.** The uniqueness of poetic structuration.
Example poems: Williams – *so much depends*, Silva – *Poema para ser lido de baixo para cima*.

13. **Week 13.** Writing with words. The soul of words.
Example poems: Sandburg – *Fog*, Basho – *buruike ya*, Stevens – *The Well Dressed Man With a Beard*, Shakespeare – *To be or not to be – that is the question*.

14. **Week 14.** Metaphor. Writing about writing.

15. **Week 15.** Review, conclusions, *l'avenir*.

Course Grade and Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: 50%
3 Poetry contributions with discussion 30%
Final research paper on selected poet with 2 poems analyzed using the linguistic tools discussed in class 20%

**Books**

Alton Becker *Beyond Translation: Essays toward a Modern Philology*
Life in our class

Turn in homework assignments on time.  Come to class regularly.  Think.  Question.  Argue.  Participate.

This is a heads-on class.  Watch how you learn, watch how your classmates learn.  Do not think that you will get it if all you do is read and write things.  NB: an unreasonable number of excused or unexcused absences may affect your grade.

Suggested supplements:


Edward Sapir, *Language*, (1921) [a paperback is still in print!!].  Better yet:  it is on the web for free!!

http://www.bartleby.com/186/

The good news:  Any tests will be open book – any books or other materials may be brought to the tests.  More likely, they will be take-home.  You will be able to consult more there than you can carry.

The bad news:  None of your materials will help much, if you have not learned to think for yourself about the course.  This course is not about memorization of a set of concepts and definitions.  Rather, what is required is a general openness of mind, and the exercise of intelligence and creativity.  What is not required,
but is fervently hoped for, is that you become fascinated with language, and find that you cannot live without it. [BTW: you can’t]

Grading policy: To be discussed in class.

Disabilities

In accordance with the terms and spirit of Public Law 101-336 (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will cooperate with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable special arrangements for students with disabilities. If you have a disability which will require some accommodation under the terms of these acts, please come to me and discuss your individual needs, or give me a written statement. If you have not registered yet with the Office of Disability Accommodation, I encourage you to do so. Their telephone number is (940) 565-4323; TDD access (940) 565 2958.

The search for truth is in one way hard and in another easy – for it is evident that no one of us can ever master it fully, nor miss it wholly. Each one of us adds a little to our knowledge of nature, and from all the facts assembled arises a certain grandeur.

Aristotle

From a wall in the Museum of Science in Boston