

# Principles of Literary Study

pls21.blogs.rutgers.edu

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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

January 25, 2021. Words.

New student sign-up: <https://forms.gle/3JKj2gQgFeP6jHmA6>

## course requirements

- ▶ 10% participation
  - ▶ 5 or more absences: can't pass
- ▶ 10% short exercises
- ▶ 20% paper 1 (on poetry)
- ▶ 30% paper 2 (on fiction)
- ▶ 30% take-home final (all essays)

## literature: long view

- ▶ Literature is writing that is socially and culturally marked as distinctive.
  - ▶ What is marked changes.
  - ▶ How the distinction is marked changes.
  - ▶ The significance of the distinction changes.

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universal

literature

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(language)

(writing)

song

poetry

stories

narrative poetry/prose

performance

dramatic poetry/prose

rhetoric

non-narrative prose

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## review: Dickinson

- ▶ “Tell all the truth but tell it slant”
  - ▶ an exhortation to be indirect
  - ▶ an argument whose “logic” is...questionable
  - ▶ effects vs. contents / *what* is said vs. *how*

## how to think about words

- ▶ the words matter...but what do they mean?
- ▶ metaphor is a special case of something very general:
  - ▶ meaning depends on a rich communicative context
  - ▶ we take only some of the implications of words and sentences
  - ▶ we supplement with assumptions of our own
- ▶ “He’s a beast!” (traditional: Achilles is a lion)

Or does it explode?

(it: “a dream deferred”)

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(it: “a dream deferred”)

But now I mean...

No other sugaring of my speech to prove

Or does it explode?

(it: “a dream deferred”)

But now I mean...

No other sugaring of my speech to prove

She seem'd a thing that could not feel



Or does it explode?

(it: “a dream deferred”)

But now I mean...

No other sugaring of my speech to prove

She seem'd a thing that could not feel

Rose, harsh rose

## Donne, “A Valediction: forbidding Mourning”

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- ▶ What's the basic idea?

## Donne, “A Valediction: forbidding Mourning”

- ▶ What’s the basic idea?
- ▶ Why doesn’t he just say so?

## discussion: the metaphysical conceit

- ▶ What is *implied* in the extended simile of the compass? (25–36)?  
Try to enumerate *as many* dimensions of meaning as you can.

Pound, “In a station of the metro”

## Pound, “In a station of the metro”

- ▶ What is *implied* in the metaphor of the petals?

Armantrout, “Will”



## Armantrout, “Will”

- ▶ What does “will” mean?

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- ▶ What are the other puns in the poem?

## Armantrout, “Will”

- ▶ What does “will” mean?
- ▶ What are the other puns in the poem?
- ▶ (tense, tide, perfect, corn, slip)

This corn is highly  
leveraged

and I'm wearing  
a pink slip.

- ▶ What does the fact that words mean more than one thing mean for this poem?

This corn is highly  
leveraged

and I'm wearing  
a pink slip.

- ▶ What does the fact that words mean more than one thing mean for this poem?

Thy firmnes makes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begunne.

next: lines

- ▶ Think about how sentences are spread over lines
- ▶ Focus on:
  - ▶ Shakespeare, Sonnet 129
  - ▶ Herbert, “Prayer”
  - ▶ Stevens, “The Snow Man”
- ▶ Also read INTRA, §2: [www.reed.edu/english/intra/2.html](http://www.reed.edu/english/intra/2.html)