



# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *How to Read Poetry and Why - 17230*

*Last update 15-10-2024*

*HU Credits: 2*

*Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)*

*Responsible Department: Hebrew Literature*

*Academic year: 0*

*Semester: 1st Semester*

*Teaching Languages: Hebrew*

*Campus: Mt. Scopus*

*Course/Module Coordinator: Dror Burstein*

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*Coordinator Office Hours: By Appointment*

*Teaching Staff:*

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Prof. Dror Burstein

Course/Module description:

Many books that offer an introduction to poetry begin by describing poetry as a type of writing that has special characteristics and peculiarities. In many cases, the discussion remains at the level of technical discourse of "artistic means." It's like discussing a car that focuses on the tires, engine and gearbox but not journey, the concept of place, exhilaration of speed, and the need for changing of places.

In this course, we will present poetry from other perspectives, which do not deal with the technical details of poetic language, but with questions such as "what is poetry", "what is it to be a poet", "what is inspiration", and so on. In other words, we will describe poetry as a way of life rather than a kind of text.

We will read a variety of sources, including ancient Hebrew sources, Japanese poetry thought and the Tea Way, classical Chinese poetry thought (following David Hinton), the archetypal psychology of James Hillman, an essay on inspiration by Zali Gurevitch, thoughts on poetry by Harold Schimmel, and interviews with poets edited by Helit Yeshurun.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To feel or even understand the Way of poetry; to read poetry.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

Course/Module Content:

1. "Poetry is what happens when we start paying attention to our lives"
2. Awakened Cosmos: The Thought of Chinese Poetry with David Hinton and Simon Leys
3. Twinhood with everything: Paterson
4. The voice of the soul: James Hillman
5. A cave by the sea: poetry in ancient Hebrew culture (from the Bible to Maimonides)

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6. Poetry as the voice of the angel
  7. The voice of the wind in the pines, in a painting: poetry and tea in Japan
  8. How to read a poem

Required Reading:

ההלית ישורון, איך עשית את זה

Iain McGilchrist, *Ways of Attending*

David Hinton, *Awakened Cosmos*

Dennis Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*

Simon Leys, *Painting and Poetry*

Additional Reading Material:

On Moodle.

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 100 %

Additional information:

*"In this mortal frame of mine which is made of a hundred bones and nine orifices there is something, and this something is called a wind-swept spirit for lack of a better name, for it is much like a thin drapery that is torn and swept away at the slightest stir of the wind. This something in me took to writing poetry years ago, merely to amuse itself at first, but finally making it its lifelong business. It must be admitted, however, that there were times when it sank into such dejection that it was almost ready to drop its pursuit, or again times when it was so puffed up with pride that it exulted in vain victories over the others. Indeed, ever since it began to write poetry, it has never found peace with itself, always wavering between doubts of one kind and another. At one time it wanted to gain security by entering the service of a court, and at another it wished to measure the depth of its ignorance by trying to be a scholar, but it was prevented from either because of its unquenchable love of poetry. The fact is, it knows no other art than the art of writing poetry, and therefore, it hangs on to it more or less blindly."*

*(Introductory paragraph from Basho, "The Records of a Travel-Worn Satchel", 1688, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa).*