

University of California San Diego

Literatures in English (LTEN) 128GS | British & Irish Poetry: 1900-present

Summer 2027 | Global Seminar | Edinburgh, UK

Antony Lyon

Email: alyon@ucsd.edu

The United Kingdom today has a diverse population, which is reflected in its vibrant poetry scene. This course surveys the current state of British poetry. It will look at how the tradition of western literature is being used to think about contemporary concerns, and it will keep returning to the question of what it means to be “British” in the 21st century. Elements of this syllabus and the course are subject to change.

Class

Time: Mon, Tues, Wed 11a-1p

Location: tbd

Technology Policy: Use of smartphones is not permitted in lecture. Laptops and tablets are allowed. **You must have the day's text available in class either printed or on an electronic device that is not your phone.**

Student Hours

Given the varying schedule, I will offer weekly student hours on different days and times, announced at the start of each week. I am also available by appointment.

Assignments

You must fulfill *all* course requirements in order to pass the course. All times are local Edinburgh time. Grades are assessed based on 100 points.

- **Participation** (30pts)
- **Quote Cards** (15pts) – one submitted in each class
- **Response Journal** (20pts) — five due within one day of when poet was discussed
- **Field Notes Sessions** (10pts) – write-up from two sessions
- **Concluding Presentations** (10pts) — in-class, July 26

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- **Reflective Essay** (15pts) — due July 28 @11:59pm

Course Texts

All texts are available as a Reader on Canvas.

Class Schedule: Topics & Readings

Week 1 (June 28-30)

Mon | Program Orientation (led by IFSA-Butler)

Tues | Introduction & UK Poet Laureate

- Simon Armitage, selected poems from *Paper Aeroplanes*, *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic*, & *Never Good With Horses*

Armitage is the current UK Poet Laureate. He is known for the conversational style of his verse, his translations of English medieval texts, and his public poetry projects that embed poetry in the world.

Wed | UK Poet Laureate: Poems in the landscape

- Simon Armitage, “In Memory of Water” (aka Stanza Stones)

Week 2 (July 5-7)

Mon | Selection of Scottish Poets

- Selection of Scottish poets, including Nan Shepherd, George Mackay Brown, WS Graham, Edwin Morgan, and Jackie Kay

Tues | Ecopoetics & the self

- Thomas A Clark, selected poems from *Farm by the Shore* and *Threadbare*

Clark is a Scottish poet focused on the beauty of the natural world in the Scottish Highlands and islands.

Wed | Thinking in Two Languages: English & Shetland

- Roseanne Watt, selected poems from *Moder Dy*

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Watt was raised in the Shetland Islands north of mainland Scotland. Her poetry moves between English and the local Scots dialect, Shaetlan. She includes what she calls her own “uneasy translations” of her Shaetlan poems.

Week 3 (July 12-14)

Mon-Tues | Spoken Word

- Kae Tempest, “Tiresias” from *Hold Your Own*

*Tempest’s verse engages with the boundaries between genders. In *Hold Your Own*, Tempest uses the Greek myth of Tiresias, the blind prophet of Thebes who lived as both a man and woman, to explore how gender affects one’s life experiences. Recently Tempest changed pronouns to “they” and their name to Kae Tempest. Tempest’s style is indebted to spoken word poetry and hip-hop.*

Wed | What does it mean to be British today?

- Zaffar Kunial, selected poems from *Us*

Kunial was born to a white, English mother and a Pakistani father. His verse engages with questions of finding one’s own identity when it draws from multiple cultures and traditions.

Week 4 (July 19-21)

Mon-Tues | The Sovereignty of Quiet

- Victoria Adukwei Bulley, selected poems from *Quiet*

*Bulley was born in Essex and maintains strong connections with her Ghanaian heritage. *Quiet* shows what, to quote the epigraph from Kevin Quashie, “an aesthetic of quiet makes possible...a black subject in the undisputed dignity of its humanity.”*

Wed | Nature & Tradition

- Alice Oswald, “Dunt: A Poem for a Dried-Up River”

*Oswald is known for her concern for nature and the environment as well as her engagement with ancient Greek texts, such as Homer’s *Iliad* in *Memorial* and the *Odyssey* in *Nobody*.*

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Week 5 (July 26-28)

Mon | Dear Hearing World

- Raymond Antrobus, selections from *Perseverance*

Antrobus is closely connected with the spoken word community in London. He is of Jamaican and English heritage and is Deaf. His debut collection Perseverance explores his intersectional challenges to identity formation.

Tues | Open Discussion

- We will take a vote for a favorite poem not discussed yet in class!

Wed | Concluding Presentations
