

Syllabus: Poetry Workshop in the Mystical Tradition

Instructor: Rebecca Hill

Duration: 5 days

Total Hours: 10 hours (2 hours per day)

Day 1: Introduction to Mystical Poetry and Traditions

Session Overview (2 hours):

- Welcome and Course Overview
 - Introductions and objectives
 - What is mysticism? How does it manifest in poetry?
 - Lecture & Discussion: The Mystical Tradition in Poetry
 - Overview of major mystical poets and themes:
 - Rumi (1207–1273), "The Guest House" (13th century)
 - St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), "The Dark Night" (c. 1578)
 - Mirabai (c. 1498–c. 1547), "I Send Letters" (early 16th century)
 - Writing Exercise:
 - Prompt: Write a short poem inspired by a mystical experience, focusing on divine union.
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Day 2: Sacred Language and Symbolism in Mystical Poetry

Session Overview (2 hours):

- Lecture & Discussion: Symbolism in Mystical Poetry
 - Exploring how mystical poets use symbolic language to express spiritual truth. Readings:
 - Hafiz (c. 1315–1390), "The Sun Never Says" (14th century)
 - St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), "The Spiritual Cantic" (c. 1584)
 - Writing Exercise:
 - Prompt: Write a poem using symbols to represent spiritual or mystical insight.
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Day 3: The Poet as Mystic – Embodying the Experience

Session Overview (2 hours):

- Lecture & Discussion: The Poet's Journey as a Spiritual Practice
 - Examining the connection between spiritual experience and poetic creation. Readings:
 - Mirabai (c. 1498–c. 1547), "Why Mira Can't Go Back to Her Old House" (16th century)
 - Mary Oliver (1935–2019), "The Journey" (1963)
 - Writing Exercise:
 - Prompt: Write a poem where you embody the mystic's journey or spiritual quest.
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Day 4: Ecstatic Poetry and the Language of Love

Session Overview (2 hours):

- Lecture & Discussion: Ecstasy and Divine Love in Mystical Poetry
 - Exploring ecstatic poetry and its themes of divine love. Readings:
 - Rumi (1207–1273), "A Great Wagon" (13th century)
 - Hafiz (c. 1315–1390), "I Am A Hole in a Flute" (14th century)
 - Writing Exercise:
 - Prompt: Write a poem about divine love, capturing ecstatic or joyful elements.
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Day 5: Integrating Mystical Insights into Your Poetic Voice

Session Overview (2 hours):

- Lecture & Discussion: Developing Your Unique Mystical Voice
 - How to infuse personal and mystical insights into your poetry. Readings:
 - Mary Oliver (1935–2019), "Thirst" (2006)
 - Final Writing Exercise:
 - Prompt: Write a poem synthesizing all you've learned from the mystical tradition, exploring themes of union, longing, or spiritual insight.
 - Sharing & Reflection:
 - Group reading of final poems
 - Reflections and course wrap-up
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Required Reading Materials:

- Selected mystical poems provided by the instructor, including works by Rumi, St. John of the Cross, Hafiz, Mirabai, and Mary Oliver.

Assignments:

- Daily writing prompts based on mystical themes
 - Active participation in discussions and feedback sessions
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Learning Outcomes:

- Understand key mystical themes and symbols in poetry
 - Develop techniques to express mystical and spiritual experiences through writing
 - Produce original mystical poetry based on personal reflection
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Additional Notes:

Participants should bring a journal for daily reflections and writing. No prior experience with poetry or mysticism is required. Additional readings suggested:

Schimmel, Annemarie. *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Kavanaugh, Kieran, and Otilio Rodriguez, trans. *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*. Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991..

Hawley, John Stratton, and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds. *Songs of the Saints of India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Ladinsky, Daniel, trans. *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master*. New York: Penguin Compass, 1999.

Oliver, Mary. *Thirst*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.