

Form and Theory of Poetry  
English 4953/6953  
MWF 9-9:50

Spring 2016  
Prof. West

## Going Long

*I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms.*

— Edgar Allan Poe, from his essay "The Poetic Principle"

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course will again offer an advanced introduction to verse form, but this time in the context of a study of the long poem and the long poetic sequence. After a look at some pre-1900 long poems and sequences, we'll spend most of the semester examining several from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Most celebrated long poems in English are in blank verse, heroic couplets, or one variety of free verse or another, and most of the best-known sequences are made of sonnets. You'll learn to recognize those forms and others; you'll also learn to think about the ways they can underscore or complicate what a poem says or suggests.

From time to time we'll explicate self-contained passages of long poems and individual poems within sequences. Graduate students preparing for the M.A. exam may find that aspect of the course helpful.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Regular attendance, constructive participation in discussion, two papers, two exams, and a reading journal.

### BOOKS:

*Four Quartets*, by T. S. Eliot

*Trilogy*, by H. D.

*Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*, by William Carlos Williams

*Brother to Dragons*, by Robert Penn Warren

*Omeros*, by Derek Walcott

*Kyrie*, by Ellen Bryant Voigt