

**English 414-Special Topics in Creative Writing**

**Lyrics and Songwriting**

**Tuesdays/Thursdays, 11:30 am-12:45 p.m. (online)**

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**Course Description:** The combination of lyrics and music can produce emotionally evocative and thought-provoking songs. However, well-crafted lyrics can stand on their own as a literary art form, as acknowledged by the Nobel Prize Committee in 2016, when the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Bob Dylan for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition” ([nobelprize.org/literature](http://nobelprize.org/literature)). Like Dylan, some of the most accomplished songwriters, such as Willie Dixon, Robert Hunter, Lou Reed, Patti Smith, John Prine, Tom Waits, Lucinda Williams and others, have drawn upon literary elements and devices as sources of inspiration and innovation for their songwriting.

This course will focus on the craft of songwriting, specifically on writing lyrics. Students will compose lyrics based on considerations such as word usage, rhythmic patterns, rhyme schemes, balance of phrases, and other elements of language and form. Students will learn about established techniques used by accomplished songwriters and examine modern and contemporary examples of lyrics within different genres as ways to develop their own writing. Songwriters’ reflections on their own writing process will also be considered. The ability to read and write musical notation (the symbols used by composers and performers of music) is not required for this course.