

POETRY AND THE HUMAN

What is poetry and why do we do it? This three-quarter sequence examines the practice of poetry as a form of communication, linguistic innovation, and embodied presence. How is poetry as language and action different from other forms of activity? What is the role of poetry in society, in regard to memory, performance, storytelling, and history; ritual and creation; knowledge and formation of selfhood; institution and revolution? This course addresses these questions in the poetry of different eras and peoples, including works of Homer, Sappho, Catullus, Rumi, Gwendolyn Brooks, Louis Zukofsky, Robert Hayden, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Anne Carson, N. Scott Momaday, Claudia Rankine, Layli Long Soldier, and others. It provides students with skills in the close reading of texts and performance and a grasp of the literary, philosophical, and theoretical questions that underpin the humanities. In the Spring students may take a third quarter of Humanities and/or shift into a related Arts Core course (CRWR 18200).

HUMA 18000

Autumn: form, formation, transformation

In Autumn (*form/formation/transformation*), we closely analyze poetry to understand its distinctive qualities, looking at questions of form and rhythm, translation and adaptation, and experimentation with genre. We also explore argumentation, criticism, and the role of poetry in mapping creation through practices of language, image, and sound.

Books and Course Reader

The following books – in order of when we will be reading them – are available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore, 5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue or from amazon.com, and have also been put on reserve at the Regenstein Library.

- E. Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* (New Directions, 2016).
- *The Popol Vuh*, trans. M. Bazzett (Milkweed Editions, 2018).
- N. Scott Momaday. *The Way to Rainy Mountain, 50th Anniversary Edition* (University of New Mexico Press, 2019).
- Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. R. Lattimore (University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- A. Oswald, *Memorial: A Version of Homer's Iliad* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

All other readings can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas.

Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

- Event:

Lecture on Song of Songs by Dr. Ilana Pardes, Katharine Cornell Professor of Comparative Literature and the director of the Center for Literary Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Wednesday, November 2, 6pm: Logan Center Performance Hall

Attendance is mandatory.

Schedule

form

Week 1: *on/you*

- class 1: Marianne Moore, "The Fish"
W. H. Auden, "The Fall of Rome"
Robert Hayden, "The Whipping"
Lewis Carroll, "Jabberwocky"
- class 2: Robert Burns, "To a Mouse"
John Keats, "This living hand, now warm and capable"
Gwendolyn Brooks, "the mother"
"Apostrophe," from *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*
Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion" (*read the poems at the end of the essay first, the ones by Baudelaire, Shelley, Sexton, Clifton and Rich*)

Week 2: *on structure*

- class 1: Emily Dickinson, select poems
Paul Fussell, "The Historical Dimension"
Lecture of Rosanna Warren (recording posted on Canvas)
- class 2: Villanelles: select poems & guide to villanelles
-see "Versification," for reference (posted on Canvas)

Week 3: *on images*

- class 1: Eliot Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*
Ezra Pound, select poems & "A Retrospect"
- class 2: HD, select poems
William Carlos Williams, select poems
Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique"
- Friday: Villanelle exercise and commentary due

formation

Week 4: *on love I*

- class 1: Sappho 1, 16 and 31 translated by Anne Carson
Juliana Spahr, "Poem written from November 30 to March 27"
Anne Carson, *Ruse* (on Sappho 31)
- class 2: Catullus 1, 2, 3, 5, 51, 85 translated by Peter Whigham
Catullus translations by Celia and Louis Zukofsky

Frank Bidart, “*Catullus: Excrucior*” and “In memory of Joe Brainard”

Friday: first essay due by 5pm

Week 5: on creation

class 1: *The Popol Vuh*

class 2: *The Popol Vuh*
Edgar Garcia, “Birds”

Week 6: on love II

class 1: *Song of Songs* (and “To the Reader”)

class 2: Rumi, from *Swallowing the Sun*: Ghazals 5, 633, 1357, 2245, 332, 302, 553, 1393, 1855, 19, 2309, 395, 1759 (notes are posted on Canvas)

transformation

Week 7: on re-creation

class 1: N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

class 2: N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Friday: second essay due by 5pm

Week 8: on translation

class 1: Homer’s *Iliad* 1, 9, 16, 22, 24, translation by Richmond Lattimore

class 2: Visit to Special Collections
Homer, *Iliad* 24: George Chapman’s and Alexander Pope’s translations

Thanksgiving break – no class

Week 9: on adaptation

class 1: Alice Oswald, *Memorial*

class 2: Alice Oswald, *Memorial* (continued)
Adrienne Rich, “Reading the *Iliad* (As If) for the First Time”

Friday: third essay due by 5pm

POETRY AND THE HUMAN

HUMA 18100

Winter: crisis, performance, politics

In Winter (*crisis/performance/politics*), we turn to questions of social rupture, breakdown, and reformation as we consider the ways that poetry revolts, reflects, and rebuilds in political crises. We will also look at poetry in performance, and performance as poetry, to consider how poetry is practiced in non-textual media such as spoken word, film, music, and dance.

Course Reader

All readings can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas. Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

- Event:

Reading by Ito Hiromi and Jeffrey Angles
Thursday, February 23, 6pm: location TBA

Schedule

crisis

Week 1: *poetry and manifestos*

- class 1: Gwendolyn Brooks, "Boy breaking glass," "kitchenette building," "The Bean Eaters," "RIOT"
Audre Lorde, "Poetry is not a luxury"
- class 2: Adrienne Rich, "Serve" (epigraph), "Tonight no poetry will serve"
Slavoj Žižek, "The Poetic Torture-House of Language"

Week 2: *poetry and the corrupted world*

- class 1: Charles Baudelaire, "To the Reader," "Spleen (I)," "Spleen (II)," "Spleen (III)," "Spleen (IV)," "Obsession," "The Seven Old Men"
- class 2: T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Week 3: *poetry and the fragmented world*

- class 1: T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (continued)
- class 2: Paul Celan, "Death Fugue," "Psalm," "Mandorla," "Breathcrystal,"
from "The Meridian Speech"

Week 4: *poetry and the conflicted world*

- class 1: Yehuda Amichai, "My child has the fragrance of peace," "Wildpeace," "An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion"
Mahmoud Darwish, "On this earth," "I belong there," "Other barbarians will come," "They would love to see me dead," "Identity Card"
- class 2: Dahlia Ravikovitch, "A little woman made the world," "Delight," "Hovering at a low altitude," "A deadly fear"
Taha Muhammad Ali, "Warning," "Fooling the killers," "The bell at forty: the destruction of a village"
- Friday: first essay due by midnight.

performance

Week 5: *poetry and film*

- class 1: Walt Whitman, "I sing the body electric," "Mannahatta," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
[Paul Strand, *Manhatta*](#)

class 2: Walter Benjamin, from *One-Way Street*
[Maya Deren, *Ritual in Transfigured Time*](#)

Week 6: *poetry and art*

class 1: W. H. Auden, “In memory of W. B. Yeats,” “September 1, 1939,” “Musée des Beaux Arts”
Marianne Moore, “The Octopus,” “An Egyptian pulled glass bottle in the shape of a fish,” “Poetry” (1924) and (1967)

class 2: Frank O’Hara, “For Grace, after a party,” “Meditations in an Emergency,” “Why I am not a painter,” “Having a Coke with You,” “The Day Lady Died”
Allen Ginsberg, “Howl,” “Footnote to howl,” “A supermarket in California”

Week 7: *poetry and music*

class 1: Bessie Smith, [“Young Woman’s Blues”](#)
Billie Holiday, [“Strange Fruit”](#)
Nina Simone, [“Mississippi Goddam,”](#) [“Strange Fruit,”](#) [“Images”](#)
W. E. B. Du Bois, from *Souls of Black Folk*
Langston Hughes, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “Theme for English B,” “Weary Blues,” “Spirituals,” and “Song for Billie Holiday”

class 2: Robert Hayden, “Middle passage”

Friday: second essay due by midnight.

politics

Week 8: *poetry and protest*

class 1: Janice Mirikitani, from *We, the Dangerous*

class 2: Cathy Park Hong, from *Dance Dance Revolution*
Ito Hiromi, from *Killing Kanoko*

Week 9: *poetry and new forms*

class 1: M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (excerpts)

class 2: Tracie Morris, [*It all started, Too black, Project Princess, ICE Children*](#)

Friday: third essay due by midnight

POETRY AND THE HUMAN (HUMA)

HUMA 18200

Spring: myths and ecologies

The Spring Humanities course (*myths and ecologies*) looks at how humans tell stories through the poetry of the world: from ancient myths reconfigured voices feminist, queer, and indigenous, to ecologies that draw on the history and geography of the earth, to imaginings of a world without boundaries, and finally to how our pasts and futures merge in the poetic word. Students will be asked to formulate a research project over the course of the quarter that handles one of these themes.

Books and Course Reader

The following books – in order of when we will be reading them – are available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore, 5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue or from amazon.com, and have also been put on reserve at the Regenstein Library.

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Norton Critical Edition, 2019)
- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* (Theatre Communications Group, 2002)
- Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannos* (Norton Critical Edition, 2021)
- Rita Dove, *The Darker Face of the Earth: A Verse Play* (Story Line Press, 1994)
- Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (Knopf, 1998)
- Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1992)
- Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poems* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2001)

All other readings can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas.

Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

- Event: TBA

Schedule

myths

Week 1: *poetry and world-creation*

Tuesday: William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
readings from Norton Critical Edition of *The Tempest*

Thursday: Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*

Week 2: *poetry and metamorphosis*

Tuesday: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannos*
readings from Norton Critical Edition of *Oedipus Tyrannos*

Thursday: Rita Dove, *The Darker Face of the Earth: A Verse Play*

Friday: assignment 1: proposal due for extended paper

Week 3: *poetry in transformation*

Tuesday: Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*

Thursday: Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*

Week 4: *poetry as epic I*

Tuesday: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

Thursday: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

Friday: first draft of extended research paper due by midnight.

Week 5: *poetry as epic II*

Tuesday: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

Thursday: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

ecologies

Week 6: *prophecy, fable, thought*

Tuesday: Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey"
Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac*
Ed Roberson, select poems; "We must be careful"

Thursday: Lorine Niedecker, “Traces of Living Things,” “Wintergreen Ridge” [\[more?\]](#)
Arthur Sze, “The Angle of Reflection Equals the Angle of Incidence”

Week 7: *poems without borders*

Tuesday: Solmaz Sharif, from *Look: Poems*

Thursday: Javier Zamora, from *Unaccompanied*

Friday: second draft of extended research paper due by midnight.

Week 8: *poetry and our past*

Tuesday: Layli Long Soldier, from *Whereas*

Thursday: Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poems*

Friday: final draft of extended paper due by midnight

Week 9: *poems and our future*

Tuesday: Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poems* (continued)

Thursday: research presentations

POETRY AND THE HUMAN (ARTS) CRWR 18200

This spring-term Arts course is intended as a potential sequel to the first two quarters of the Humanities sequence “Poetry and the Human,” but can also be taken as a freestanding course. Through a combination of seminar discussions and creative writing workshop sessions, it focuses upon literary arts practice (form, material, and voice) as a way of approaching many of the questions raised over the Autumn and Winter terms. It considers the role of poetry in different traditions (Japanese, English, Persian, etc.) from aesthetic, philosophical, and performative angles. Students in the PATH sequence (Hum) will have priority registration for this course; other students may register for any remaining seats.

Books and Course Reader

- Matsuo Basho, *Narrow Road to the Interior*, trans. Sam Hamill (Shambhala)
- Agha Shahid Ali, *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals* (Norton)

All other readings can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas.
Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

- Event: TBA

Schedule

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS

Review syllabus and in-class writing ‘warm-up’ exercises

WEEK 2: JAPANESE HAIBUN

Reading: Matsuo Basho, *Narrow Road to the Interior* and selected haiku

In-class writing exercise (haiku)

WEEK 3: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN HAIKU

Reading: James Merrill, “Prose of Departure”

In-class writing exercise (haiku/haibun)

WEEK 4: WORKSHOP

Creative writing workshop on students' haibun

WEEK 5: EARLY MODERN SONNETS

Reading: Selected sonnets by William Shakespeare and John Donne

In-class writing exercise (sonnet)

WEEK 6: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SONNETS

Reading: Selected sonnets by Wanda Coleman and Terrance Hayes

In-class writing exercise (sonnet 2)

WEEK 7: WORKSHOP

Creative writing workshop of students' sonnets

WEEK 8: CLASSICAL & CONTEMPORARY GHAZAL

Reading: Hafez, selected ghazals; Dick Davis, introduction to *Faces of Love*
Agha Shahid Ali, *Poetry Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals*

In-class writing exercise (ghazal)

WEEK 9: WORKSHOP

Creative writing workshop of students' ghazals