

**COLBY COLLEGE
FALL 2021**

FREEDOM & CAPTIVITY 2021-22 HUMANITIES THEME COURSE

**EN358 A/AA356 A DONNING THE MASK *IN THE WAKE*: THE PERSONA POEM
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS 2:30PM-3:45PM EST LOCATION: MILLER 008**

PROFESSOR ARISA WHITE

PRONOUNS: SHE, HER, HERS

OFFICE HOURS: WEDNESDAYS 1-4PM & BY APPOINTMENT

EMAIL: AAWHITE@COLBY.EDU (PREFERRED) PHONE: 207-859-5256

This course will bring new meaning to the popular phrase and hashtag “Stay Woke.” We will look at poetic works that use persona, personification, and/or dramatic monologue as the dominant literary device to construct long poems and book-length narratives that reimagine and reanimate historical figures and events that have had material and socio-political consequences for the Black community. Christina Sharpe’s wake theory will inform the reading of these poetry collections, and the making of your own creative work. Wake theory, simply put, considers what does it mean for (African) Americans to be in the wake of slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade—and the various definitions of “wake” are deployed. Sharpe poses questions that resonate well with this course, and we will consider the following: “The ongoing state-sanctioned legal and extralegal murders of Black people are normative and, for this so-called democracy, necessary; . . . What kinds of possibilities for rupture might be opened up? What happens when we proceed as if we *know* this, antiblackness, to be the ground on which we stand, the ground from which we attempt to speak, for instance, an “I” or a “we” who know, an “I” or a “we” who care? Through discussion, critical reflective writing, and poetic imitations we will examine how contemporary Black poets “don the mask” to comment on our historical times (we) and challenge us morally (I).

Goals & Objectives:

- Explore the relationship between “wake work” and persona poetry.
- Creatively and intersectionally think through the ways anti-blackness, sex and gender, class, and sexuality shape our cultural imagination and narrative points of view.
- Experiment with the persona poem as an expressive mode the can be used to address and disrupt social and environmental injustices and to imagine pathways to get free.
- Incorporate research to authentically develop the inner and social lives of personae.
- Cultivate a poetic practice that is embodied and centers attention, care, and empathy as a way of being in the world.

OFFICE HOURS: WEDNESDAYS 1-4PM & BY APPOINTMENT

Use this [hyperlink to my Google calendar](#) (the link is also posted on Moodle and appears in the signature of my emails) to schedule a time to meet one-on-one to discuss the writing you’re doing in class, concerns and doubts, and literary goals and ambitions. It is an opportunity to further humanize the classroom experience. If you want to be pushed further

in your writing and reading process, let's meet to discuss what more you can do. If you are having issues with time management, questions about the assignments, or life problems that are affecting how you show up in class, come talk to me. I am here, but you need to make the effort.

COURSE MATERIALS

REQUIRED TEXTS are available from online retailers, at the college bookstore, and on reserve at Miller Library:



In the Wake: On Blackness and Being

by Christina Sharpe
Duke University Press, 2016



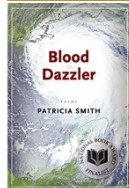
Mend

by Kwoya Fagin Maples
University Press of Kentucky, 2018



Brutal Imagination

by Cornelius Easy
Penguin Random House, 2001



Blood Dazzler

by Patricia Smith
Coffee House Press, 2008

SUPPLEMENTAL COURSE READINGS

PDFs and links of additional readings will be posted on Moodle.

DICTIONARY APP

Download a dictionary app that can be used offline. Make sure the app provides the etymology of the word.

PHYSICAL NOTEBOOK

Get a notebook of your liking and one that is easy to transport around. You'll use it to take notes, record weekly reflections related to your Subject of Injustice, complete generative writing assignments and research exercises, and keep organized the ideas, questions, and observations you don't want to forget.

MOODLE

Moodle will be our primary hub for information sharing and gathering for this course. There you'll find weekly homework assignments and instructions; weekly announcements; pdfs; and links to access supplemental source materials. **Make sure your notifications from Moodle are turned on.**

COURSE POLICIES
SAFETY PROTOCOLS

As we face the continued health risks and challenges that Covid-19 and its many variants pose for us, our community, and the world, **face coverings will be required in this class, and during office visits**, for protection of my health and my family members.

In the event that this course may need to go remote, please use the following Zoom link to log into class at our usually scheduled time. Zoom ID and password are not to be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in this course. Doing so is a violation of our privacy and compromises the well-being and intellectual integrity of our learning community. In the case of needing to go remote, I will not record classes, unless we have a guest speaker. If you're absent during a remote session, schedule a time to meet with me to go over the material that was missed.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87476719098?pwd=K0lPZS9FOFZQRUtnZ2tGMkMzemZaUT09>

Meeting ID: 874 7671 9098

Passcode: 167514

GENDER PRONOUNS & NAMES:

I acknowledge that there are a variety of gender pronouns, and I will ask everyone to identify their preferred name(s) and personal pronoun(s) in class. **My pronouns are She, Her, Hers. You may address me as Professor, Professor White, Mx. White, or Ma'am.**

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS:

Students with learning differences who are admitted to Colby have available to them several forms of support. If you are a student with learning differences, who needs reasonable accommodations, please speak with me directly. Students requesting support services are required to provide a letter from the Dean of Studies documenting your approved accommodations.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES & RECORDING:

I permit the use of phones, tablets, and laptops in class; however, have a physical notebook that you can carry around when we do writing exercises. There will be times when you will

be asked to conduct online searches for the purpose of generating content, but other than that, I expect you to turn your smartphones off, not text, browse your socials, or otherwise distract yourself and your peers with your electronic devices. As for recording in the classroom, you will need to get everyone's explicit permission before recording by video, camera, or audio, and you must inform us how the recorded media will be used. I will not record classes or take pictures without your explicit permission.

ATTENDANCE:

You are part of a learning community and showing up for it is what makes it thrive. In this course, each class builds on the next, as is the case with assignments. It is important to be here. **You are allowed to miss two (2) classes. For your third absence, three (3) points will be deducted from your final grade. For your fourth absence, six (6) points will be deducted from your final grade. If you are absent for five classes or more, you will fail the course.** It is your responsibility to email me to ask for in-class writing assignments when you have missed a class.

I understand, and especially in the wake of a pandemic, there are valid reasons to be absent: medical reasons, personal catastrophes, religious observances, and athletic contests, but when the circumstances allow, let me know in advance so we can discuss make-up assignments or early submission of assignments. **If you miss class on the day of Peer-Review Workshop, regardless of a valid excuse, you will not receive full points.**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

If you know a week or more in advance that you will not be able to complete an assignment on-time, please talk with me and we will arrange a new deadline and plan. Do keep in mind that your failure to promptly complete an assignment will impact your ability to complete another assignment. **All late assignments receive half the points.**

PARTICIPATION:

What does it mean to come to this class prepared? For your whole self to be present; showing up in body, heart, and mind, because in order for the classroom to be a dynamic learning community, we need the presence of your lived experiences and intellectual and emotional contributions. Practically speaking, this means that you have completed your homework as preparation for in-class writing exercises; read the assigned texts so you can confidently participate in discussions; and you have brought to class copies of the books and/or pdfs of essays with notes written in the margins and text underlined and highlighted. More than getting things done, you come to class with questions, with your ideas, and with a willingness to engage.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Exciting and enriching classroom discussions are generated through collective effort. Which often occurs when the poetry leads us to question our ways of being and knowing—the poems offer us a new way of seeing that evolves our encounter with a world beyond what we know. **“Remember that poetry is written in [your] language, and that all of us can be liberated into our own independent lives as readers,”** writes poet Matthew Zapruder, and this serves as a good reminder when reading the poetry collections assigned in this course. I want you to think about and reflect on what was liberated: What new idea was sparked that you'll try out with your Subject of Injustice? What patterns did you notice that

you want to riff off of? What political and personally unchartered topics do you want to explore in your poems? What are some words, phrases, expressions you want to bring into your poems? What more do you need to find out about your Subject of Injustice?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- ❖ You get points for the timely completion of course assignments. You will receive thorough feedback that will guide you in determining what you are doing well and what you need to work on. For your Poetic Reenactments, I will provide you with a rubric for how points will be allocated. Based on your accumulated points, you will receive, at the end of the semester, a final letter grade consistent with the grading system outlined by the College.

GRADING

This is the evaluation procedure that will be used to determine your final grade:

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly Pages	35	35%
Poetic Reenactments (3)	30	30%
Group Presentation	10	10%
Final Zine Project & Presentation	25	25%

WEEKLY (DIGITAL) PAGES: 35 %

Think of the Weekly Pages as the generative writing that leads to the development and completion of your zine. **You may organize your Weekly Pages in a one Google Doc or on a WordPress site.** Each week, starting Week 2, on Sunday, 11:59 PM EST, you will post 3-5 pages that may consist of reflective writing addressed to your Subject of Injustice, researched materials or questions, and something creative. This writing can be in various stages of development—from a scrap of an idea, an inspiring image, excerpts from your physical notebook to a completed first draft of a poem. If there are videos, sound clips, or songs you want me to watch and listen to, provide the links, and be sure to cite your sources. **Each fragment, idea, draft, reflection, link, etc., must appear on its own separate page.** I will give you feedback on what is sent and offer ideas for further development.

Here are some must-dos for your Weekly Pages. **If don't meet these must-dos, three (3) points will be deducted from your final grade:**

- ❖ Each week, **all posts are to be posted on Sunday, 11:59 PM EST** unless stated otherwise on Moodle.
- ❖ Weekly Pages need to have identifiable subject headers and dates (if it is not time-stamped). Subject headers indicate which assignments are being completed and when. For example: WEEK 2, Sept 19: Weekly Pages

- ❖ **(Google Docs) Start a new assignment on a different page** by using a page break (go to the top header, click on INSERT; scroll down to BREAK; then click on PAGE BREAK).
- ❖ Weekly, I will comment on your assignments and you will respond by making the changes and/or replying back. **Do not remove my comments.** I want you to keep a record of our dialogue about your writing and research. My questions to you will be both process-oriented and constructive. I am most interested in your process and for you to be aware of all that goes into making a poem: your feelings, thoughts, impulses, surroundings, and what you were attempting to communicate versus what actually arrived on the page. Also feel free to ask me questions in return.

TWO-PART POETIC REENACTMENTS: 30%

After we have read and discussed a poetry collection, you will select a poem from that book and practice what the poet has done on the page. The poem you select should be informed by your research questions and by personal and political connections you want to make known about your Subject of Injustice. Think about how you can be wonderfully challenged by the selected poem. With these poetic reenactments, I want you to sharpen your critical reading skills, make visible the ways you think, deepen your emotional intelligence, and take some creative risks. **A total of three (3) poetic reenactments are assigned, and you can receive up to ten (10) points for the completion of each.** A rubric will be provided the week when your first reenactment is due. The Poetic Reenactment is done in two parts.

- ❖ **First:** from title to finish, offer a line-by-line (or stanza-by-stanza) analysis of the poem, which should be 500 words in length. You may go over that word count if necessary. Take notice of the point of view, word choices, images, sounds, rhythm, tone, punctuation (or lack thereof), number of lines, stanzas, syllables. What is the effect of the poem's mechanics? How are these different parts working together to make meaning? What are you experiencing as a reader? How does your reading experience connect to what is being shared in the poem? Additionally, reflect on how this poem connects to the reading and discussion of Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*.
- ❖ **Second:** Incorporate research on Subject of Injustice and emulate the poem you just analyzed from title to finish. As much to your capabilities, write a poem in the same way the poet wrote the poem. For instance, if they used five stanzas, and each line was 12 syllables, written in first-person narration, you will do the same. If the poet uses olfactory images, you will create your own similarly-inspired olfactory images. Use the original poet's poem as a template for your own poem. If you deviate from the poet's form, be aware of why you are making such choices for your own poem. Also, keep in mind, you are attempting to create in your reader the feeling/experience that the poem (and poet) created for you.

GROUP PRESENTATION: 10%

I will assign you a presentation group and your group will be assigned a poetry collection to analyze through a wake work theoretical lens. Your group will conduct background research

to offer a nuanced and contextualized reading of the poetry, bring value points for consideration, questions, food for thought, and ideas for possible writing prompts.

FINAL ZINE PROJECT & PRESENTATION: 25%

Your final project is a zine that comprises an introduction, eight (8) revised poems, visuals, critical reflections, quotations, a resource page to learn more about your Subject of Injustice, and any other information you would like to include. You have creative freedom! On Thursday, December 9, our last class, we will have a presentation and reading at the Greene Block + Studios.

You will make eighteen (18) copies of your zine, which will be shared with your classmates, myself, and the Center for Arts and Humanities. Copies can be made at SBS/Carbon Copy, located at 54 Main St, Waterville, ME 04901. Their business hours are M-F, 8:00am-5:30pm; 207-873-7947. Provide SBS with the course title and number, your name, and Colby ID.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- ❖ Since I often create assignments that are responsive to the needs and interests of those in class, as well as to our cultural and political times, these assignments are subject to change. Any changes that impact our scheduled classes, updates to the syllabus, and weekly homework assignments will be posted to Moodle.

WEEK 1

Thursday, Sept 9: Welcome!

WEEK 2

Tuesday, Sept 14: Exploring Persona

Thursday, Sept 16: Exploring Persona

❖ ***Weekly Pages #1 due on Sunday, Sept 19***

WEEK 3

Tuesday, Sept 21: Embodying Persona: Runnals Smith

Thursday, Sept 23: Discussion of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

❖ ***Weekly Pages #2 due on Sunday, Sept 26***

WEEK 4

Tuesday, Sept 28: Discussion of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*

Thursday, Sept 30: Miller Library: Zine Specials Collection

❖ *Weekly Pages #3 due on Sunday, Oct 3*

SEPT 30: VISITING WRITER'S SERIES

Poet-Activist Tongo Eisen-Martin

5pm EST/ Zoom

WEEK 5: CLASSES CANCELLED THIS WEEK FOR INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Tuesday, Oct 5: Conferences

Thursday, Oct 7: Conferences

❖ *Weekly Pages #4 due on Sunday, Oct 10*

WEEK 6:

Tuesday, Oct 12: Discussion of *MEND*

Thursday, Oct 14: Discussion of *MEND* with Poet Kwoya Fagin Maples

DUE: Submit in class Poetic Reenactment of *MEND*

WEEK 7:

Tuesday, Oct 19: FALL RECESS

Thursday, Oct 21: Writing Workshop

❖ *Weekly Pages #5 due on Sunday, Oct 24*

WEEK 8

Tuesday, Oct 26: Writing Workshop

Thursday, Oct 28: Discussion of *BRUTAL IMAGINATION*

❖ *Weekly Pages #6 due on Sunday, Oct 31*

WEEK 9

Tuesday, Nov 2: Discussion of *BRUTAL IMAGINATION* with Poet Cornelius Eady

Thursday, Nov 4: Writing Workshop

DUE: Submit in class Poetic Reenactment of *BRUTAL IMAGINATION*

WEEK 10

Tuesday, Nov 9: Writing Workshop

Thursday, Nov 11: Discussion of *BLOOD DAZZLER*

❖ ***Weekly Pages #7 due on Sunday, Nov 14***

WEEK 11

Tuesday, Nov 16: Discussion of *BLOOD DAZZLER* with Poet Patricia Smith

Thursday, Nov 18: Writing Workshop

DUE: Submit in class Poetic Reenactment of *BLOOD DAZZLER*

WEEK 12

Tuesday, Nov 23: Individual Conferences (ZOOM)

Thursday, Nov 25: THANKSGIVING RECESS

❖ ***Weekly Pages #8 due on Sunday, Nov 28***

WEEK 13

Tuesday, Nov 30: Prep for Final Project

Thursday, Dec 2: Zine-Making Workshop w/ Julia Arredondo at Greene Block + Studios

WEEK 14

Tuesday, Dec 7: Wrapping Up (Zines due to SBS/Carbon Copy)

Thursday, Dec 9: FINAL PROJECT DUE

Zine Presentation & Reading at the Downtown Arts Collaborative

COLLEGE-WIDE POLICIES

Code of Student Conduct:

In accepting membership in the Colby community, students agree to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the values of an academic community, including but not limited to honesty, integrity, civility, personal responsibility, respect for the rights of others, and openness in the pursuit of knowledge and the search for truth, and to adhere to the following Code of Student Conduct: Colby students will not lie, steal, cheat, or engage in dishonest or unlawful behavior or any other behavior intended to inflict physical or emotional harm on another person. Colby students must abide by College policies and comply with directions of College officials acting in performance of their duties. For additional details, see Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook: <https://www.colby.edu/studentlife/handbook/>.

Academic Integrity:

Intellectual integrity is a fundamental value of all academic institutions and is at the heart of the primary teaching, learning, and research activities of the College. Misrepresenting one's work, using sources without appropriate attribution, and giving or receiving unauthorized aid on assignments are dishonest acts that violate the core value of intellectual integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses. Finding an instance of academic dishonesty, I will report the case to the academic integrity coordinator. If you do not accept responsibility for the charge of academic dishonesty, an investigation will be initiated. The Academic Review Board will review the case and may impose a sanction up to and including suspension or expulsion. The decision of the board shall be final and binding. The report becomes part of your confidential file and is destroyed six years after graduation or the last date of attendance. You may not drop or withdraw from a course in which you have been found guilty of academic dishonesty. (Colby College)

Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct:

Members of the Colby community, guests, and visitors have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct. All members of the campus community are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of others. Colby maintains a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct, including sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, non-consensual sexual intercourse or contact, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and stalking. (Colby College)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COMMITMENT TO THIS COURSE.