

## E F371K • Modern and Contemporary Poetry - WB

**Instructor:** Bennett, C.  
**Unique #:** 79765  
**Semester:** Summer 2020, first session  
**Cross-lists:** n/a

**Areas:**  
**Flags:** Wr, CD  
**Restrictions:** n/a  
**Computer Instruction:** WB

**Prerequisites:** Nine semester hours of coursework in English or rhetoric and writing.

**Description:** Why, given longstanding declarations of poetry's apparent cultural marginality or even demise, does poetry—and our need for it—persist? What does poetry do for us? Is it an art of social awareness and engagement? ("When power corrupts, poetry cleanses," declared President John F. Kennedy in a 1963 speech.) Does poetry map the wild terrain of our inner lives? ("Poetry," writes the poet Adrienne Rich, "can break open locked chambers of possibility, restore numbed zones to feeling, recharge desire.") How do we account for the vital role poetry has played in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture? How have contemporary poets responded to and helped to shape the cultural and aesthetic questions of their times?

This course, a study of poetry written in English from 1945 to the present, explores such questions through a sampling of poems from significant contemporary poetic communities and movements as well as the in-depth consideration of some of the most influential books of poetry published in the last seventy years. These innovative and sometimes controversial books evince the often-lively part poetry has played in contemporary culture. In our efforts to understand this part, our readings of these books of poetry will attend to both the poetic traditions and practices they represent and the cultural contexts out of which they emerge and to which they speak.

Class readings, discussion, and writing will be motivated by three main goals. First, we will seek to develop and fine-tune our skills in analyzing poetry, placing particular emphasis on understanding specific poems, and the workings and effects of poetic language, structures, and devices. Second, we will pursue a deep understanding of the books we consider, paying special attention to how each book's poetics and reception are differently inflected by issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation. Finally, we will more broadly map the richness and variety of the movements, innovations, and impasses in poetry from 1945 to the present.

### **Texts:**

Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (City Lights)  
Frank O'Hara, *Lunch Poems* (City Lights)  
Sylvia Plath, *Ariel* (Harper)  
Gwendolyn Brooks, *In the Mecca* (Course Packet)  
Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck* (Norton)  
Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III* (FSG)  
Lyn Hejinian, *My Life* (Wesleyan)  
Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red* (Vintage);  
Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* (UC Press)  
Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* (Graywolf)

Brief critical essays will be distributed via course Canvas site

**Requirements & Grading:** Final grades will be based on two exams (25% each), a six-page essay and optional revision (30%), and participation in class discussion and in informal written exercises (20%).

### **Schedule:**

Th 6.4 Mapping contemporary poetry  
F 6.5 How to read a poem  
  
M 6.8 Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (1956).  
Tu 6.9 Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*, cont.  
W 6.10 Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*, cont.  
  
Th 6.11 Frank O'Hara, *Lunch Poems* (1964).

F 6.12 O'Hara, *Lunch Poems*, cont.

M 6.15 Sylvia Plath, *Ariel* (1965).

Tu 6.16 Plath, *Ariel*, cont.

W 6.17 Gwendolyn Brooks, *In the Mecca* (1968).

Th 6.18 Brooks, *In the Mecca*, cont.

F 6.19 Brooks, *In the Mecca*, cont.

M 6.22 Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck* (1973).

Tu 6.23 Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, cont.

W 6.24 Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III* (1976).

Th 6.25 Bishop, *Geography III*, cont.

F 6.26 Exam 1

M 6.29 Lyn Hejinian, *My Life* (1980).

Tu 6.30 Hejinian, *My Life*, cont.

W 7.1 Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red* (1998).

Th 7.2 Carson, *Autobiography of Red*, cont.

F 7.3 Carson, *Autobiography of Red*, cont.

M 7.6 Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* (2005).

Tu 7.7 Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*, cont.

W 7.8 Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014).

Th 7.9 Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, cont.

Sa 7.11 Final Exam

#### **Policies:**

**Documented Disability Statement:** The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

**Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Academic Integrity:** Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>.

**Religious Holy Days:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Web Site:** Canvas