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, poets from the T’ang period in China, Rumi, Ki no Tsurayuki, John Donne, Louis Zukofsky, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Anne Carson, N. Scott Momaday, Claudia Rankine, 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 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

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.


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

- Event: In week 6, Professor Gary Tubb will give a talk on the Ramayana, date and time TBA.
Schedule

form
Week 1: what is (human about) poetry?

class 1: Robert Burns, “To a Mouse”
Walt Whitman, “A Noiseless, patient spider”
Marianne Moore, “The Fish”

class 2: “Introduction,” “Line and Stress,” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* (p. xv-xxi, 3-21)
W. H. Auden, “The Fall of Rome”
Lewis Carroll, “Jabberwocky”

Week 2: poetry as composition

class 1: selected poems of Emily Dickinson
“Accentual-Syllabic Verse,” “Metrical Variation” and “Phonic Echo” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* (p. 23-84)

class 2: Edgar Allen Poe, “The Raven” and “The Philosophy of Composition”
“Stanza” and “Verseforms” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* (p. 85-107)

Week 3: poetry and images

class 1: selected poems of Ezra Pound and H. D.
“Quantitative Verse” and “Syllable-Count Verse” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* (p. 121-36)
Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as technique”

class 2: selected poems of Meng Chiao, Han Yü, Li Ho and William Carlos Williams
except from introduction to *Poems of the Late T’ang*
“Unmetered Poetry” in *The Poem’s Heartbeat* (p. 137-58)

Week 4: form and rhythm

first essay due by 5pm.

class 1: section on villanelles in *The Making of a Poem* (p. 5-20)

class 2: section on sestinas in *The Making of a Poem* (p. 21-42)
C. Levine, “Rhythm”

formation

Week 5: creation of/in poetry

villanelle/commentary exercise due by 5pm.
class 1: N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

class 2: Popol Vuh, Part One and introduction

**Week 6: love and language**

class 1: selected poems and afterword (p. 79-102) from A. K. Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape: Classical Tamil Love Poems*

class 2: Valmiki, *Ramayana*, Book 1, Cantos 1-4

*second essay due by 5pm.*

**Week 7: love and its institutions**

class 1: selected poems from Rumi, *The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*

class 2: *Song of Songs*

**transformation**

**Week 8: on receiving**

class 1: Homer's *Iliad* Book 24, translation by Richmond Lattimore

class 2: No class. Happy Thanksgiving!

**Week 9: on adapting**

class 1: Homer, *Iliad* Book 24, translations by Alexander Pope, George Chapman

class 2: Homer, *Iliad*: C. Logue, “Pax” and “*Iliad*, Book 24”
      Alice Oswald, *Memorial*

**Week 10: on lyric shifts**

class 1: Sappho 1, 16, 31 and 94 translated by Anne Carson
      Catullus 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 51, 85 translated by Peter Whigham, and
      Celia and Louis Zukofsky
      Frank Bidart, “Catullus: *Excrucior*” and “In memory of Joe Brainard”

class 2: No class. Reading period.

*third essay due by 5pm.*