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, John Donne, Gwendolyn Brooks, 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 – POETRY AND THE HUMAN I

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.

- Rumi, Swallowing the Sun, trans. F. D. Lewis (Oneworld Publications, 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: TBD

- In Class and Poem Recitation

Attendance and participation are critical (10% of grade), since the quality of the course depends upon your expressing your ideas and hearing those of your classmates. Please speak up to voice your thoughts, no matter how incomplete they may be. Reading and other assignments must be completed carefully by class. Unexcused or repeated absences will adversely affect your grade. Absences will be excused only for sickness, emergencies, or truly unavoidable conflicts.

You should each memorize a short poem of your choice (c. 10–25 lines) and recite it in class (10% of grade, pass/fail). This poem can be from the syllabus or otherwise, but please choose a published poem.
Please sign up for your preferred day using the Canvas Scheduler, and confirm your poem with me at least two days before your recitation.

• On Canvas
By 10pm of the evening before each class meeting, please post a comment or question about a passage from the reading under the “Discussion” on our Canvas webpage (10% of grade), in response to a broadly stated question. There will be no formal requirement to respond directly to other posts, but you are strongly encouraged to take note of and engage with each other’s comments.

• Written Work and Writing Seminars
You will be required to complete three essays (20%, 20%, 20% of grade, respectively) this term. These are to be submitted as Word documents as uploads to Canvas, with a title that includes your last name. Work handed in after the due date may be penalized for lateness. Please upload all written assignments to our Canvas site as Word documents.

Schedule

form
Week 1: on poetry and humans

class 1: Marianne Moore, “The Fish”
W. H. Auden, “The Fall of Rome”
Robert Hayden, “The Whipping”
“Introduction,” “Line and Stress,” in The Poem’s Heartbeat (p. xv-xxi, 3-21)

class 2: Odes: a selection
Jonathan Culler, “Apostrophe”

Week 2: on form

class 1: Villanelles: a selection
“Verseforms,” “Refrain” in The Poem’s Heartbeat (p. 97-119)

class 2: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Raven” and “The Philosophy of Composition”

Friday: short paper of close reading due by midnight

Week 3: on composition

class 1: selected poems of Emily Dickinson
“Accentual-Syllabic Verse,” “Phonic Echo” in The Poem’s Heartbeat (p. 23-37, 71-84)

class 2: selected poems of Ezra Pound, H. D., William Carlos Williams
Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as technique”

Friday: villanelle/commentary exercise due by midnight
**Week 4: love and mysticism**

Sunday: first essay due by midnight

class 1: *The Song of Songs*

class 2: Rumi, *Swallowing the Sun*, select poems and introduction

**Week 5: on creation**

class 1: *The Popol Vuh*

class 2: *The Popol Vuh*

**Week 6: on re-creation**

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

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

*transformation*

**Week 7: on loss**

Sunday: second essay due by midnight

class 1: Homer’s *Iliad* 1, 9, 16 (Lattimore)

class 2: Homer’s *Iliad* 22, 24 (Lattimore)

**Week 8: on material**

class 1: Homer, *Iliad*: Book 24, translations by Alexander Pope, George Chapman
Discovering versions of Homer in Special Collections

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

**Week 9: Thanksgiving break**

class 1: No class.

class 2: No class.

**Week 10: on change**

class 1: Sappho 1, 16 and 31 translated by Anne Carson
Juliana Spahr, “Poem written from November 30 to March 27”
Catullus 1, 2, 3, 5, 51, 85 translated by Peter Whigham, and Celia and Louis Zukofsky
Frank Bidart, “Catullus: Excrucior” and “In memory of Joe Brainard”

Sunday: third essay due by midnight