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, and dance.

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.

- W. Benjamin, One-Way Street (Belknap Press)
- S. Ortiz, From Sand Creek (Sun Tracks)
- N. Shange, for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf (Scribner; Reprint Edition)
- C. Rankine, Citizen: An American Lyric (Graywolf Press)

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(s): visit to Court Theatre on March 13 (last day of classes) to see Ntozake Shange, for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf
Schedule

_crisis_

**Week 1: poetry and the broken world**

class 1: Langston Hughes, “The negro speaks of rivers”
Gwendolyn Brooks, “Boy breaking glass”
Adrienne Rich, “Tonight no poetry will serve”
Audre Lorde, “Poetry is not a luxury”

class 2: Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Love,” “Conversation with a taxman about poetry,”
“At the top of my voice”
Aime Césaire, “In the Guise of a Literary Manifesto,” “Keeping Poetry Alive”
Slavoj Žižek, “The Poetic Torture-House of Language”

**Week 2: poetry and the corrupted world**

class 1: Charles Baudelaire, “To the Reader,” “Spleen (II),” “Spleen (III),”
“Obsession,” “The Seven Old Men”
T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”

class 2: T. S. Eliot, _The Waste Land_

_first essay due by midnight._

**Week 3: poetry in fragments**

class 1: Walter Benjamin, _One-Way Street_

class 2: Paul Celan, “Death fugue,” “Psalm” and “Mandorla”
Theodor Adorno, from _Minima Moralia_: “Do not knock,” “Expiry,” “Innuce,” “Finale”

**Week 4: poetry and conflict**

class 1: Dahlia Ravikovitch, “A little woman made the world,” “Delight,” “Blue lizard in the sun,” “Hovering at a low altitude,” “A deadly fear,” “You can’t kill a baby twice”
Yehuda Amichai, “Two poems about the first battles,” “God full of mercy,”
“The place where we are right,” “My child has the fragrance of peace,”
“Wildpeace,” “An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion”

class 2: Taha Muhammad Ali, “Warning,” “Fooling the killers,” “There was no farewell,” “The bell at forty: the destruction of a village”
Mahmoud Darwish, “On this earth,” “I belong there,” “We journey towards a home,” “We travel like all people,” “Other barbarians will come,” “They would love to see me dead”

**performance**

**Week 5: poetry in time and place**

class 1: Walt Whitman, “I sing the body electric,” “Mannahatta,” “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”  
Paul Strand, *Manhatta* (link also on Canvas)

class 2: Maya Deren, “Tempo and Tension”  
Maya Deren, *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (link also on Canvas)

**Week 6: poetry, mind and movement**

class 1: Marianne Moore, “What are years?” “Poetry” (1924) and (1967)  

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

second essay due by midnight.

**Week 7: poetry and history**

class 1: Claude McKay, “America” and “If We Must Die”  
Langston Hughes, “Johannesburg Mines,” “I, Too,” “Let America Be America Again”  
Countee Cullen, “Heritage,” “For a poet,” “Threnody for a brown girl,” “Uncle Jim,” “Scotssboro, too, is worth its song”

class 2: Robert Hayden, “Middle passage,” “The whipping”

**politics**

**Week 8: poetry and the present (I)**

class 1: Simon Ortiz, *From Sand Creek*

class 2: Layli Long Soldier, “38,” “Whereas”

**Week 9: poetry and the presence**

class 1: Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*
class 2: Tracie Morris, *It all started, Too black, Chain Gang* (links also on Canvas)

**Week 10: poetry and politics**

class 1: Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

third essay due by midnight.