

University of California Santa Cruz

Literature Department

LIT 120A Poetry and Capitalism after 1970 Summer Session 1 2017 Soc Sci 2, Room 179

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M/W 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

*...Rise, like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you:
Ye are many—they are few!*
Shelley, “The Masque of Anarchy”

Not More Strange Than Us (*Rep.* VII, 515a)

Course Description:

We will read and critically reflect on the cacophonous conversation that is contemporary poetry. This course examines U.S. poetry since 1970, a period of intensifying multiple challenges and surplus exploitation of people, animals, and the non-human world. We consider how contemporary poetry may help us understand what we mourn and how we might re-think and feel our agency, even cultivating refusal, new ways of being, subversions, and resistances.

This course will examine how the myriad poetic practices of post-1970 poets (choice of materials, subject matters, methods of poetic production) take up questions about the possibility of political alignment for artistic production, circulation, and audience constitution, forging tentative answers that both draw from and take issue with insights offered by poets, political theorists, philosophers, cultural theorists, and poets.

In short, this course asks what the relation of culture (poetry) is to the economy (capitalism)—and whether or not these separations even hold—and to what extent the contemporary focus on personal pain and identity can elide larger structures and power relations, particularly class.

We will ask if a radical poetic practice is possible, repeating in a new register, similar questions to those raised by Benjamin, Adorno, Brecht, Lukacs, Williams, Eagleton, and others about the value and/or efficacy of poetry under intensified, global capitalist political and social conditions.

Poetry has always distinguished itself from prose by its use of enabling formal constraints (the line, sonnets, rhyme, meter, image, etc.), and contemporary poetry—from experimental avant-garde to laureate lyricist—in its capaciousness is no different. However, as Marjorie Perloff,

Frederic Jameson, and others have noted, poetry after 1970 revitalizes questions of what political commitment means today—given the historical defeat, if not recession, of oppositional political and social movements and the relative triumph of capital’s cultural logic. This course will also contextualize the *very practice of reading as itself a radical practice* that is under attack as non-instrumental indulgence, given the managed shrinking of its historically-privileged prerequisites (literacy, privacy, and time).

This course will read about capitalism, its history and its contemporary moment of neoliberalism; historical questions of “voice;” new methods and media in poetic production and dissemination; and Oren Izenberg’s ethico-political offering of a set of limit cases that define poetic tradition and his belief that poetry “dwells in multiple temporalities” (33).

Through Izenberg’s consideration of Yeats, Oppen, O’Hara, and the language poets, we will consider the wit of side-stepping regnant binaries that organize contemporary poetics and the vast field of contemporary American poetry—tradition versus experimental (laureate versus language, expressivist versus constructivist) while on the ground, contemporary poetry borrows composition strategies from the multiple legacies of surrealism, Oulipo, lyricism, modernism, the Beats, and the Black Mountain poets.

Our discussions will note the varieties of poetry’s world-creation as well as its response to the world’s texts and contexts while noting shifts and discontinuities in competing narratives of poetic categorizations. We will consider, among others, Jackson MacLow’s textual borrowing; Susan Howe’s narrative and anti-narrative strategies; Ron Silliman’s valorization of the look-and-feel of words; Bernadette Mayer’s reworking of emotion and memory; Charles Bernstein’s challenge of hegemonic forms of representation; Lyn Hejinian’s undermining the privilege of the poetic subject; Vanessa Place’s foregrounding of gender; and flarf’s use of randomized source material from search engines.

Despite most experimentalists’ shared eschewing of notions of “creativity” and the importance of individual authorship, this course embraces the contradiction that the zeitgeist/s of contemporary poetry can be appreciated only through a broad and comprehensive focus on the work of many diverse poets.

Learning Outcomes:

- Developing strategies for critical reading, understanding, and analyzing challenging poetry texts
- Familiarity with important political, philosophical, and cultural theories and their claims about their relationship to the economic realm
- Understanding the historical context of poetry production and reception in the U.S. with an emphasis on neoliberalism’s attack on education in general and the liberal arts in particular

- Attunement to every text’s rhetorical situation, purpose, audience, context, and genre
- Ability to craft well-supported arguments in discussion and writing by using examples from source poems and poetics narratives
- Broad familiarity with the diversity of genres, styles, and subject matters of U.S. poetry after 1970
- Ability to model and provide helpful feedback to peers in class discussion and response to student reports

Required Reading, Books:

- *Course Reader*

The *Reader* and all other books are available at The Literary Guillotine, Locust Street (open 10-6). Please purchase it as soon as you can, and bring it with you on Wednesday. Remember, Summer Session is only five weeks long, so it’s super-speeded up and compressed.

- Oren Izenberg, *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground of Social Life*. Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2011)
- *The Postmoderns: The New American Poetry Revised*, ed. Donald M. Allen and George Butterick [1960] New York. Grove Press, 1982.
- *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Language Meets Lyric*, ed Juliana Spahr and Claudia Rankine. Wesleyan University Press, 2002

Required Reading: (first three are handouts on first day; fourth is in *Reader*)

- Akemi. “Kill Yourself,” <https://hellopoetry.com>
- Ammiel Alcaly. “Consumer Demand,” “Things To Look Forward To,” “R&D”
- Fredrick Jameson. “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 1/146, July-August 1984
- A Portfolio of Poetry, Selected by Barbara Guest. *Chelsea* 57, 1994 (20-88)

Reading/Writing Schedule:

Week 1

Monday, June 26 (Handouts provided for first three)

- A Portfolio of Poetry, Selected by Barbara Guest in *Chelsea* 57, 1994 (20-88)
- Akemi. "Kill Yourself," <https://hellopoetry.com>
- Ammiel Alcaday. *Poems*: "Consumer Demand," "Things To Look Forward To," "R&D," *Boston Review*, Cambridge, 2017
- Matthew Eagleton-Pierce. "Capitalism," *Neo-Liberalism: The Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge, 2016 (in *Reader*)

Wednesday, June 28

(All subsequent readings are in *Reader*.)

- Fredrick Jameson. "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 1/146 (July-August 1984)
- Julie Stephens. "Review of Alex Houen's *Powers of Possibility: American Experimental Writing since the 1960s*." *Modern Philology*, 113:2 (November 2015), E133-135
- Student reports

Week 2:

Monday, July 3

- Oren Izenberg. *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground of Social Life* (Princeton University Press, 2011), Introduction (poetry and persons) and chapter 1 (Yeats)
- Matt Kilbane. "An indexical lyric," *Jacket* 2, December 9, 2016
<https://jacket2.org/article/indexical-lyric>
- David Caplan. "Review of Robert Archambeau's *The Poet Resigns: Poetry in a Difficult World*," *Modern Philology*, 112: 3 (February 2015), E276-279
- Juliana Spahr. "The Cthulhu of Privatization and my Psychosocialsexual Poetry Scene," *Viz. Inter-Arts: A Trans-Genre Anthology*. Berkeley, CA, 2016 (242-245)
- Student presentations

Wednesday, July 5

- Rosa Braidotti. "Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism," in *Anthropocene Feminism*

ed. Richard Grusin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017 (21-47)

- Alain Badiou. *The Age of the Poets: Poetry and Communism* (October 2016)
<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2871>
- Wendy Brown. “What Exactly Is Neoliberalism” (Interview in *Void Network* April 4, 2017)
<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/booked-3-what-exactly-is-neoliberalism-Wendy-brown-undoing-the-demos>
- Student presentations

Week 3:

Monday, July 10

- Izenberg, chapter 2 (Oppen)
- Calvin Bediant. “Against Conceptualism: Defending the Poetry of Affect,” *Boston Review* (July-August 2013), 70-75
- Chris Nealon. “The Matter of Capital in 2016” in *Post Crisis Poetics*
<http://postcrisispoetics.blogspot.com/2017/04/chris-nealon>
- Manohar Samuel. “Deferred Dreams: The Voice of African American Women’s Poetry since the 1970s”
<http://www.americansc.orguk/Online/Samuel.htm>
- Student presentations

Wednesday, July 12

- Jahan Ramazani. “The Local Poem in a Global Age,” *Critical Inquiry* 43 (Spring 2017), 670-696
- Student presentations (poem and poetics)
- Midterm Paper presentations

Week 4:

Monday, July 17

- Izenberg, chapter 3 (O'Hara)
- M. NourbeSe Philip. "A Conversation with David Anthony and Vilashini Cooppan" in *Viz. Inter-Arts: A Trans-Genre Anthology*. Berkeley, CA, 2016 (258-265)
- Nate Marshall. "Blueprint for BreakBeat Writing: Why hip-hop has everything to do with poetry." *Poetry Magazine* (April 2015)
- Seth Michelson. "Count-Time: Neoliberalism, Subjectivity, and Jimmy Santiago Baca's Prisoner Poetry," *Pacific Coast Philology*, 48: 1 (2013). 25-47
- Marie Timbreza. "Review of Susan Somers-Willett's *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America* in *Melus*, 35: 2 [Multi-Ethnic Poetics] (Summer 2010) 205-207
- Student presentations

Wednesday, July 19

- Timothy Yu, "Inventing a Culture: Asian American Poetry in the 1970s" in *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965*. Stanford University Press, 2009
- Jonathan Monroe. "Poetry, the University, and the Culture of Distraction." *Diacritics*, 26: 3-4, (Fall-Winter 1996), 3-30
- Student presentations

Week 5:

Monday, July 24

- Izenberg, chapter 4, (Language Poets); chapter 5 (Conclusion)
- Ron Silliman. "Review of Bob Perelman's *The Marginalization of Poetry*," *Jacket* 2, 1:4 (May 1997)
- Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Notes on Silliman and Poesis," *Journal of Poetics Research*
- Student presentations

Wednesday, July 26 – LAST CLASS

- Final paper presentations

Suggested Reading:

Rae Armantrout. "Interview with Rae Armantrout." *Chicago Weekly Online*, January 28, 2011

<http://blog.chicagoweekly.net/2010/01/28/interview-with-rae-armantrout/>

Robert Azarello. "Review of Gayatri Spivak's *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*," *The Radical Teacher*, No. 95 (Spring 2013), 66-68

Charles Bernstein. "Interview" by Bradford Senning. *Catalyst*. Vol 1, no. 10 (March 25, 1999)

Andrei Codrescu, ed. *American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1987

Jodi Dean. "Neoliberalism's Defeat of Democracy" [Review of Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*], *Critical Inquiry*, 42:4 (2016), 979-982

Christopher Funkhouser. "Digital Poetry: A Look at Generative, Visual, and Interconnected Possibilities in its First Four Decades," in *A Companion to Digital Studies*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray Siemens, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008 (318-335)

Kenneth Goldsmith. "Flarf is Dionysus. Conceptual Writing is Apollo. An introduction to the 21st Century's most controversial poetry movements." *Poetry*. July/August 2009

Ann Guthrie. "Conceptual Poetry/Conceptual Interview." University of Arizona, University of Arizona Poetry Center. Tucson, 2008

http://poetrycenter.arizona.edu/enewsletter/April2008/enews0408_concpoet_read.shtml

Paul Hoover, ed. *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology*. 1994

Lee Konstantinou. "Reading under Neoliberalism"

<http://arcade.stanford.edu/blogs/reading-under-neoliberalism>

David Lau. "Poetics of Resistance: Review of Piotr Gwiadzda's *US Poetry in the Age of Empire: 1979-2012*." *New Left Review* 98 (2016), 141-154

Colin Mooers. "Review of Jodi Dean's *Cultural Studies and Political Theory* and

Larry Ray and Andrew Sayer (eds). *Culture and Economy after the Cultural Turn*," *Historical Materialism*, 11:3 (2003), 215-224

Vanessa Place. *Dies: A Sentence*. Les Figues Press, 2008

Kristin Prevallet. "The Exquisite Extremes of Poetry: Watten and Baraka on the Brink." *Jacket* 12. July 2000

Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, eds. *Poems for the Millennium*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998

Ron Silliman, ed. *In the American Tree*. National Poetry Foundation. 1986. [out of print; available in Library]

John Wilkinson. "Review of Daniel Tiffany's *My Silver Planet: A Secret History of Poetry and Kitsch*," *Modern Philology* 113:1, August 2015 (E62-65)

Course Requirements with grade weight:

- Regular attendance and punctuality (priceless)
- Class participation* in discussion, Go-arounds, and other activities (priceless)
- **Two brief oral presentations each week**, beginning Week 2 (See below)
 - *Presentation of one poem* (from *The Postmoderns* or *American Women Poets* or *Chelsea "Portfolio of Poetry"*) that expanded the way you think/feel about the world, yourself, or others (32%)
 - and
 - *Presentation of one section of one required reading about poetics* that you agreed or disagreed with or learned something from (32%)
- One short (500-word max) critical report (due Week 3) with in-class oral presentation (11%)
- Final Paper (6-8 pages) (25%)
- At least *one* consultation with me about your academic progress, etc. during Office Hours. Please make an appointment. Be responsible; keep a calendar and refer to it. No no-shows.

***Class participation.** Come prepared to discuss. Be collegial, listen, and engage viewpoints with which you disagree. *You cannot earn the grade of “A” unless you are a regular participant in class discussion.*

- Regular reading is critical for success in this course. Pace yourself. Read each text carefully and completely.
- Write and take notes as you read. Mark the text; highlight, underline, or circle important words, phrases, or sections. Use the margins of the text or write on a separate piece of paper (or index cards, whatever). Find the method that works for you. Review your notes before class. This will refresh your memory.
- Come to class prepared to discuss the reading. Lectures will introduce key questions, considerations, and themes. We will discuss the language as well as issues raised by the texts and your reactions to them. Please participate actively in the discussion—exploring, questioning, and arguing with the text, each other, and me.
- Regular attendance is critical. Especially in summer session, if you miss a class, it is impossible to make it up.
- Your classmates are your best resource—for study groups, discussion, and collaborative work. You constitute a unique, though temporary, community because you are reading and discussing the same texts for five weeks.
- Your Final Paper should—
 - ✓ use in-text citation (author’s name and page number in parentheses)
 - ✓ have page numbers
 - ✓ have a compelling title
 - ✓ have your name and section number on the first page
 - ✓ be spell-checked and grammar-proofed (no glaring mistakes)
 - ✓ use standard margins and fonts
 - ✓ be double-spaced
 - ✓ be stapled (no binders or paper clips)

A note about institutional policy: The University of California Systemwide Senate Regulation 760 specifies that 1 academic credit corresponds to 3 hours of work *per week per credit* in a 10-week quarter. As a result, each five-credit course expects students to put in approximately 15 hours of work per week. In summer session, however, because of its contracted nature of taking place in half as many weeks, the student workload is doubled to *30 hours per week*. The following is provided as an approximate breakdown of time expectations for fitting these guidelines into the compressed framework of a summer session five-credit course.

- class time – 6 hours and 20 minutes per week (3 hours and 10 min/class times two classes/week)

- reading – 15 hours/week
- note-taking – 3 hours/week
- writing – 5 hours and 40 minutes/week

Course tips:

Good writers and thinkers are made, not born, and all academic success is a result of experience, training, and hard work. There is nothing mystical or pre-ordained about it. If you come from a family and/or background that did not have access to, or experience with, higher education and its culture, it is more difficult to succeed because you lack the models and the self-confidence that come from believing you are an heir to higher education.

Successful completion of this course includes thorough preparation and active participation. Being prepared includes, but is not limited to, actively reading the required texts and doing all the writing assignments. Reading and commenting on your peers' presentations will help you generate ideas, dialogue with others, and make you more aware of your—and their—intellectual and aesthetic choices. You are each other's great resource.

Peer learning is an important dimension of college. Enjoy your encounter with people who have different backgrounds, lifestyles, and histories from yours. Discuss with each other, and question what you read and hear in class. Learning is a group, as well as an individual, activity. Welcome to my class!

Students with Disabilities:

I am committed to being open and supportive to all students, and I seek to accommodate different learning styles, so if you have an accommodation letter, please see me (in confidence, of course). I want you to succeed in this class, so if you have any learning issues, please see me so you can get whatever help you need to succeed.

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC, 1476 Hahn Student Services Bldg.) and submit it to me in person before or after class or during office hours in the first two weeks of the quarter. For more information on the requirements and/or process, contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or <http://drc.ucsc.edu>. They are helpful, friendly, and welcoming, and they offer *free printing* services at their office.

Evaluation criteria:

Your course evaluation will be comprehensive and based on a review of your Final Portfolio, which considers all parts of your effort and performance over the quarter: attendance and preparation for class and writing groups; level of engagement with the course material and depth

of analysis; participation in discussions, small groups, and other class activities; meeting of deadlines; conferencing about your work; and commitment to improving your critical writing and reading skills over the quarter. You may take this course Pass/No Pass or for a grade. The following is University Grading Policy. So, for example, *if you are not a regular discussant and do not participate in all class activities, you cannot earn more than a B.*

A (or P)

The grade of A is given to students whose preparation for and execution of all course assignments (for example, reading, in-class discussions, presentations, group projects, informal writing, essay drafts, and revisions, etc.) have been consistently thorough and thoughtful. In addition, by the end of the quarter students who earn an A are consistently producing essays that are ambitiously and thoughtfully conceived, conscious of the demands of a particular assignment, purposeful and controlled, effectively developed, and effectively edited. Student who earn the grade of A are frequent and consistent participants in discussion and collegial collaborations in Writing Groups and Research Groups.

B (or P)

The grade of "B" is appropriately given to students who have satisfactorily completed all in-class assignments, although some of these efforts may have been more successful than others. By the end of the quarter, students who earn a B are consistently producing essays that are clearly competent in that they meet the demands of assignments, are controlled by an appropriate purpose, are sufficiently developed, and are accurately edited. A "B" performance may well reveal areas of strength that are not sustained throughout.

C (or P)

The grade of C is appropriately given to students who have fulfilled course requirements although, in some instances, minimally so. By the end of the quarter, students who have earned a C have provided sufficient evidence that they can produce focused, purposeful writing that satisfies the demands of an assignment, is adequately developed, and is carefully edited although, in some instances, achieving that standard depended on multiple revisions.

D or (NP)

The grade of D is appropriately given to students whose work has been unsatisfactory in some significant way they have not completed all the course requirements and/or their essays have not yet achieved the level of competency described in the Writing Program's standard for passing work.

F or (NP) The grade of F is appropriate for students whose work is so incomplete or so careless that it does not represent a reasonable effort to meet the requirements of the course.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas, writings, or materials without giving specific credit, known as a citation. In an academic environment, plagiarism is considered theft.

If you plagiarize any materials, you may fail the assignment, fail the course, or face other penalties, up to and including expulsion. More information regarding plagiarism and disciplinary policies can be found on the University's Academic Integrity website at the page:
http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html

You are responsible for your own intellectual behavior and conduct, and you must cite sources for all referenced materials in course writings. Accusations of plagiarism can be easily avoided by properly citing all resources and materials you use in your assignments. For additional information on how to cite your sources, please see:
http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/citation_master.html

Excellent information regarding plagiarism, what it is and how it can be avoided, can be found at: Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services. I urge you to visit this site.
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#plagiarized>
Excellent information regarding plagiarism, what it is and how it can be avoided can be found at: Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services. I urge you all to visit this site.
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#plagiarized>