

**LIT 120A —  
50+ Years of Small Press Poetry of the San Francisco Bay Area**

University of California Santa Cruz / Summer Session 2 - 2024 / Melissa Mack /  
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Course meetings (required) / Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00 am – 12:30 pm, July 30 – August 29,  
2024 / Physical Sciences 130

Office hours (optional) / Tuesdays, 12:30 – 1:30, 20-minute appointments, in person or remote.  
Schedule via [Calendly](#).

**Course Description**

This course is an a brief survey of counter-cultural poetry and poetry communities in the larger San Francisco Bay Area in the last twenty-five years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first almost 25 of the 21<sup>st</sup>. It is an engaged reading and writing class. We'll read broadly innovative poetry from small presses based in or near the San Francisco Bay Area; think together about what's different about this poetry compared to poetry published in larger or more mainstream presses; and read writing *about* these communities of origin and how they shape and are shaped by the work of the poets they publish. Many small presses come to exist in order to publish writers and writing that have been excluded from other spaces. In that way, they are often overtly opposed to systems of oppression including capitalism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, and interested in telling untold histories, and pushing back against received notions of aesthetic value.

The **learning outcomes** for this course are:

- (1) to undertake a survey of poetry published by politically and/or aesthetically radical small presses in the Bay Area in the last 50 years,
- (2) to practice shared learning via classroom discussions – thinking aloud and thinking *with* others,
- (3) to cultivate your skills at historically contextualized and culturally aware close reading and discussion of written work, and
- (4) to practice writing about poetry and publishing movements of the last 50 years, drawing on a literary and poetic lexicon and on historical contexts learned in the class, as well as on additional tools and resources for fostering your development beyond the scope of the class.

Reading, writing, and talking with one another about assigned readings and each other's ideas are mutually supporting activities and, ideally, exciting and generative.

**Required Texts**

*Revolutionary Letters* by Diane di Prima (City Lights, 1974, 2021). [any edition OK]

All other readings will be uploaded to Files on Canvas. The class schedule below indicates what you should read for each class. (Caveat: subject to change – I will always let you know at least one week in advance if a reading is changing.)

Please plan to purchase *at least two other texts* that we read in class. This is to support the small presses that we are studying, to provide access to the experience of interacting with hard-copy books or chapbooks, and to support you in building a personal poetry library of work that you connect with. To make this affordable and easy to manage: texts can be purchased from anywhere, used or new, and in any version, including reprints published by other presses than the version we are studying. As you purchase the texts, please bring them to class and show me so that I can give you credit for fulfilling this requirement. (Last day to do so is the last day of class.)

### **Required Materials**

Please bring a notebook, something to write with, a laptop or tablet, and hard copies of the text(s) we are discussing to class. The only modality *not acceptable* for accessing class readings in class is a phone.

### **Weekly Schedule —**

The schedule below is provisional – it is a general and relatively flexible structure that will serve as a guide. The readings, activities, and timing may change.

## Week One – Beginnings 1950s & 1960s – Beats, Berkeley Renaissance – City Lights, Auerhahn, White Rabbit,,,

### Class #1, July 30

- Introductions and overview of the class and syllabus.
- Poetics/community history: “How to Close Read a Poem” (G. Kim Blank and Magdalena Kay, University of Victoria).
- Primary text: “Ballad of the Little Girl Who Invented the Universe: A Translation for George Stanley” by Jack Spicer (from *After Lorca*, White Rabbit Press, 1957)
- Primary text: choose your own for small group discussion
- Poetics/community history: “Small Press Economies: A Dialogue” ” (Hilary Plum and Matvei Yankelevich, *Chicago Review* Vol. 66, Issue 3-4, 2023).

## Class #2, August 1

- Poetics/community history: “The Revolutionary Legacy of City Lights's Literary Gathering Place” (Eliza Browning, *Chicago Review* Vol. 66, Issue 3-4, 2023).
- Primary text: *Revolutionary Letters* by Diane di Prima (City Lights, 1971, 2021).
- Poetics/community history: Cedar Sigo on Auerhahn Press
- Poetics/community history: “Vancouver Lectures: from ‘Dictation’ and ‘A Textbook of Poetry’” (Jack Spicer, introduced by Peter Gizzi, Poetry Foundation).
- Primary text: *After Lorca* (White Rabbit Press, 1957).

## Week Two — Gay, Lesbian, Latin@, Women of Color Presses of the 1970s – Pocho-Ché, Women’s Press Collective, Shameless Hussy, Manroot, Hoddypoll,,,

### Class #1, August 6:

- Guest: Noah Ross, Small Press Traffic
- Student Presentations
- Poetics/community history: “The Women's Press Collective, 1969-1977” by Catherine Kelly (*Chicago Review*, Vol. 66, Issue 3-4, 2023).
- Primary text: Pat Parker’s *Child of Myself* (Women’s Press Collective).
- Primary text: Selections from Judy Grahn’s memoir, *A Simple Revolution* (Aunt Lute Books). “Meeting Parker” pp. 151-153, “Back Home to a Printing Press,” pp. 161-166, “Oakland: 61st Street, 1974-75,” pp. 181-183, “Moving Into a New Movement,” pp. 187-190, “Child of Myself,” pp. 191-193, “A Simple Dream and a Revolution,” pp. 202-204

**Your first reading response is due before Thursday’s class time (9:00 am) on Canvas.**

### Class #2, August 8:

- Visit to Special Collections
- Student Presentations
- Poetics/community history: Read and discuss “Shameless Hussy Press, 1969-1989” by Lauren Kivlen (Found SF, 2015).
- Primary text: Discuss *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* (Shameless Hussy, 1974).
- Primary text: *Camp Notes and Other Poems* by Mitsuye Yamada (Shameless Hussy, 1976).

Week Three — “Language” writing, AIDS activism, solidarity with Central America, Press Collectives of the 1980s & 1990s (+ a jump to 2020s),,,

Class #1, August 13: [NO IN-PERSON CLASS]

- View asynchronous lecture on Canvas (Files/Week 3)
- Discussion post – respond independently to the discussion post as well as responding to at least two other class members’ posts
- Collaborative annotation
- Poetics/community history: “The Tropics of Pocho-Che” by Juan Felipe Herrera (FoundSF)
- Poetics/community history: “Back to the streets — on Mission Poets of the 1970s” by Erick Lyle (San Francisco Bay Guardian)
- Primary text: “Heart Songs” by Nina Serrano (Pocho-Che, 1980)

**Your Special Collections Assignment is due on Canvas by Friday at midnight.**

Class #2, August 15:

- Guest: Tongo Eisen-Martin, Black Freighter Press
- Student Presentations
- Poetics/community history: “Black Freighter Press sails in, boosting writers of color and radical imagination” by Alan Chazaro, 48 Hills
- Primary text: selection from *Blood on the Fog* by Tongo Eisen-Martin (City Lights, 2021)
- Poetics/community history: “The Rejection of Closure” by Lyn Hejinian (1983), published in *The Language of Inquiry* (University of California Press, 2000).
- Primary text: *For Erato* by Fanny Howe (Tuumba, 1984).

Week Four — The Oughts: New Narrative, Krupskaya, Tripwire, Omnidawn,,,

Class #1, August 20:

- Guest: Stephanie Young, Krupskaya Books
- Student presentations
- Poetics/community history: “Krupskaya Books: Some Notes on Collective Practice” by Jocelyn Saidenberg and Stephanie Young (Chicago Review Vol. 66, Issue 3-4, 2023).
- Primary text: *Julian* by Julian Talamantez Brolaski (Krupskaya, 2018).

- Primary text: selection from Stephanie Young’s work.

**Your second reading response is due before Thursday’s class time (9:00 am) on Canvas.**

Class #2, August 22:

- Poetics/community history: “To Weave Ever Themes of Love’: New Narrative and the Berkeley Renaissance,” From Our Hearts to Yours: *New Narrative as Contemporary Practice* (On Contemporary Practice, 2017).
- Primary text: *I Wonder if Fred Was Happy Here* by Adelaide Ivánova, translated by Chris Daniels (Tripwire Pamphlet #13, 2023).

Week Five — The 2010s and 2020s: Ephemeral Collectives and Survivors: Dogpark; Eyelet; Timeless, Infinite Light; Nomadic; Kelsey Street,,,

Class #1, August 27:

- Guest: Lara Durback, independent printer & poet (book with Publication Studio)
- Student presentations
- Poetics/community history: “Life Fabric: Bay Area Poet-Publishers, 2010-2023” by Kate Robinson (Chicago Review).
- Primary text: OKLDCAAN by Kevin Lo (Eyelet, 2019).
- Primary text: selection from *Baby Axolotls y Old Pochos* by Josiah Luis Alderete (Black Freighter Press, 2021)
- Primary text: selection from *black god mother this body* by Raina J. León (Black Freighter Press, 2022)

**Your third reading response is due on Canvas by Thursday, August 29, by 9:00 am.**

Class #2, August 29:

- Poetics/community history: Excerpts from *Forces of Imagination: Writing on Writing* by Barbara Guest (Kelsey Street Press, 2003).
- Poetics/community history: “Escapist Poetry” by Jennifer Soong
- Primary text: *Concordance* by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and Kiki Smith (Kelsey Street Press, 2006).

- Class closing – SETS & reflections

## Course Grade Breakdown

Attendance & participation	25%
Presentation	15%
Special Collections assignment	15%
Reading responses (3 – 15 pts each)	45%

### Attendance & Participation (25%)

- The course meets on most **Tuesdays and Thursdays, July 30 through August 29, in Physical Sciences 130.**
- To me, attendance and participation go together so you do need to come to class. I will deduct points for each absence. (That said, we are only meeting in person eight times rather than 10, and the attendance/participation points for the two days when we don't meet in person will be based on contributions to Canvas-based discussions.
- In recognition of the fact that different people feel comfortable with and excel in different modalities of engagement, there are many different ways to demonstrate participation, including:
  - regularly contributing to class discussions of the readings,
  - participating in in-class reading and being willing to read aloud,
  - volunteering for class discussion roles (facilitator, time keeper),
  - contributing to Canvas-based discussions and group annotations, and
  - probably other things I haven't thought of that will emerge.
- It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and with a wide array of perspectives feel included and are able to learn and achieve their goals in this course. The diversity of experience and expertise that each of you brings to this class is a resource, strength, and benefit to all of us. Your suggestions for making this learning community as inclusive as possible are encouraged and appreciated.
- I will have office hours by appointment. These are optional and encouraged. Please use the [Calendly link](#) to schedule a 20-minute appointment on Tuesdays between 12:30 and 1:45 pm – we can meet remotely or in person in or near our classroom. If you are not available during this time and want to meet with me, please reach out to me via email or before/after class to discuss alternatives.

## **Presentation (15%)**

Once during the class you will present for approximately 10 minutes on an assigned reading of your choice. Presentations will include an introduction of the author, publisher/publication, and an overview of key questions, themes, arguments, techniques, forms, etc., depending on the piece in question. Your presentation should conclude with several discussion questions for the class. We will talk more about the presentations in class.

## **Special Collections Assignment (15%)**

- For this assignment, you will visit Special Collections independently and find a text to work with. Your assignment will consist of two parts: 1) a close reading of one of the poems in the book/chapbook/journal/broadside that you find (3-4 pages); 2) an essay about the physical object (describe it in detail) and an aspect of the press that published the text you chose (3-4 pages) – such as who started the press, when, where, what was its focus, what were its politics or commitments, who else read and referenced the work, etc.

## **Weekly Reading Responses on Canvas (45% -- 15pts per response)**

- You will have three brief (3-4 page) close reading + press profile/historical context assignment. This response should attend to one or more of the poetry readings for the given week (focusing on either Tuesday or Thursday readings) as well as presenting the press that published it and the historical context in which it was written and produced.
- These will be reading responses that include attention to content, craft, form, historical and theoretical context, such as publisher, distribution, reception, “scene”, related social movements, etc. We will discuss this assignment in more detail in class.
- Standard formatting: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced. Your name, class, my name, date, and title in upper left corner.
- Your responses are due by **Thursdays before classtime** on Canvas.

## **Grading Scale**

A+: 99% +	A: 93.5-98.99%	A-: 90-93.49%
B+: 87.5-89.99%	B: 83.5-87.49%	B-: 80-83.49%

C+: 77.5-79.99%      C: 73.5-77.49%      C-: 70-73.49%  
D+: 67.5-69.99%      D: 63.5-67.49%      D-: 60-63.49%  
F: 0-59.99%

## Course Policies

- Writing, sharing writing, thinking, and thinking aloud are vulnerable undertakings. I would like our classroom to be a generative space. My foundational principles for classroom engagement are mutual respect, curiosity, and attentive listening to one another as we think and learn together.
- According to Systemwide Senate Regulation 760, the average workload for a 5-credit course is 15 hours per week, which means that after class meetings, you can expect to work another 8 hours per week for this class.
- Communicating with me: Email is the best way to reach me ([mdmack@ucsc.edu](mailto:mdmack@ucsc.edu)). During the week, I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours. I do not tend to check email after 6pm. Email received Friday-Sunday will be responded to by the following Monday. Please check your UCSC email and Canvas every week day. These are the methods I have for contacting you for important class announcements. For more extended conversations, schedule an office hours appointment with me.
- If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center will be sent to me by the DRC. If you wish to discuss your accommodations with me directly, you may make an appointment for office hours. I suggest you do this as soon as possible, preferably within one week of the start of the class. You can visit the DRC website at [drc.ucsc.edu](http://drc.ucsc.edu) to learn more and, if needed, make an appointment to meet with a DRC staff member. The phone number is (831)-459-2089; e-mail, [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).
- [Title IX](#) prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the [Campus Advocacy Resources & Education \(CARE\) Office](#) by calling (831) 502-2273 or going to [care.ucsc.edu](http://care.ucsc.edu). In addition, [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628 or going to [caps.ucsc.edu](http://caps.ucsc.edu).



- All kinds of other resources are available on campus, including free food and emergency financial support (Slug Support). Check [basicneeds@ucsc.edu](mailto:basicneeds@ucsc.edu).
- Don't plagiarize or use AI to write your assignments. All work must be your own.
- Turn things in on time. Late assignments will not receive comments unless you have discussed extenuating circumstances with me at least three days prior to the deadline. However, if you are facing extenuating circumstances that prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, you will find me sympathetic if you talk with me before or after class, in office hours, or via email, as soon as possible.