

English 4399.003: Senior Seminar

Contemporary American Poetry

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Spring 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:50

Classroom: **Carlisle 212**

English Dept.: 817 272-2692



“Modern American Poetry. . . in its astonishing and endlessly energetic variety. . . is one of the major achievements of human culture.” (Cary Nelson)

The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions hidden by the answers.”
(James Baldwin, quoted by Claudia Rankine.)

Description of Course Content:

English 4399: SENIOR SEMINAR is a capstone course for English majors. It is a writing-intensive, seminar-style, in-depth study of a topic. Because this is a capstone course the emphasis will be on independent research, thinking, writing, and learning, as well as on intense in-class discussions. The topic of this particular section of the Senior Seminar is Contemporary American Poetry. Specific topics in the class will be: People in Place, Displaced, Roaming; Race in America; Gender, Sex, Love; and Animals, Nature, and Environment. We will examine poetry as an art form as well as discuss its cultural and political contexts and the philosophical questions it provokes. The course concludes with research papers and presentations on contemporary poetry. We will take advantage of the extraordinarily rich and informative web site that accompanies Cary Nelson’s Contemporary American Poetry anthology and the Poetry Foundation website. The class is organized as a seminar, focusing on students’ interpretations and culminating with students’ research projects.

Required Textbook and Other Course Materials

Cary Nelson, *Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, Vol. 2, Second Edition
ISBN-13: 978-0199920730; ISBN-10: 0199920737

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen, An American Lyric*, Graywolf Press

Juliana Spahr, *Well Then There Now*, Black Sparrow Books

One or two more books of poetry by a poet of your choice (for your final seminar paper).

Access to the internet in order to prepare for each class period.

Recommended Books (to read on your own if you so wish)

Stephen Burt, *This Poem is You: 60 Contemporary American Poems and How to Read Them*

Robert Dale Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (if you need a theory review or did not gain a background in critical theory within 2350.)

Course Objectives

- 1) To introduce students to a range of Contemporary American poetry, within its social, historical, and cultural contexts.
- 2) To enhance students' abilities to enjoy, understand, analyze, interpret and teach poetry.
- 3) To provide students with the opportunity to create their own interpretations of the poetry and to conduct independent research.
- 4) To create a space for philosophical reflection on difficult questions and issues that emerge from the poetry.
- 5) To improve students' skills, more generally, in reading, writing, critical thinking, research, use of internet and library resources, and public speaking.
- 6) To provide students with the opportunity to write a medium-length research paper, and present that paper to the class, as part of their capstone experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students should demonstrate an understanding of the poetry included in the course.
- 2) Students should be able to formulate original, illuminating, and persuasive analyses and interpretations of the poetry.
- 3) Students should demonstrate an understanding of how the poetry relates to its specific historical/cultural/political moment.
- 4) Students should be able to use the MAP web site and the Poetry Foundation site to discover biographical, historical, and cultural contexts as well as literary criticism. Students should be able to demonstrate how this information enhances their understanding of the poem.
- 5) Students should be able to express their ideas in clear, logical, organized, concise, and persuasive ways, in both written and oral forms.
- 6) Students should be able to conduct research and incorporate that research into a coherent seminar paper that develops and supports an original thesis.

Requirements/Grading

You must complete all the required work in order to pass the course.

- Daily Participation: 10%

- 10 Index Cards: 20%
- Short Paper (5 pages): 10%
- Exam: 25%
- Final Research Paper (15 pages, plus prospectus, annotated bibliography, and rough draft for peer editing): 30%
- Presentation of research paper: 5%
- Attend one live poetry reading, performance, or poetry slam and hand in a 2-page description/interpretation/critique by Thanksgiving [required: graded pass/fail].
- No final exam!

Index Cards

Everyone will be required to hand in at least 10 index cards. The index cards are designed to help you prepare for the class discussions, both by generating your own readings of the poems and by encouraging you to take advantage of the MAP web site and The Poetry Foundation site as resources. <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/> and <https://www.poetryfoundation.org>. The index cards are “due” every day, on the readings for that day, though you may skip days, as long as you hand in at least 10, in the end. If you hand in more than 10 I’ll take the 10 highest grades. They will be graded zero (F), check (B) check plus (A) and check minus (C). Each index cards must include:

1. A 1-3 sentence thesis about the poem—your own original reading or analysis—not a summary or description but an interpretation or analytical argument.
 2. A significant quote from one of the sources on the MAP site or the Poetry Foundation site (or the essays listed for Rankine and Spahr.). (A quote that you would like to talk about.) If there are no sources on a particular poem another option for #2 would be to describe a research question for the poem—something factual rather than interpretive, say, about historical or cultural context.
 3. One specific, thought-provoking discussion question about a poem for the class.
- Your work on these cards should help you engage with the poetry, study for the exam, and make substantial contributions to the class discussion.

Exam

The exam will contain some short-answer and identification questions, but most of the points will be from essay questions. Bring bluebooks and pens for the exam. Bring your anthology. There will be no final.

Papers

A short paper and a medium-length research paper are required, (5 and 15 pages, respectively.) You will be able to choose your own topic within Contemporary American Poetry for the research paper. Note that the research paper assignment requires a prospectus, an annotated bibliography, and a rough draft, which must be handed in when they are due. I do not accept emailed papers. All papers are due at the very beginning of the class. I will mark down papers one grade for every day that they are late.

Mechanics: All papers must be “typed,” stapled, and have a significant title. Please do NOT use plastic folders for your paper—a staple is sufficient. Standard form: double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Papers must be submitted to Safe Assign on Blackboard and handed in as paper copies.

Please Note: plagiarism is a serious offense and will be punished to the full extent, according to university procedures. You must always give people credit for their intellectual property by citing them properly—this includes ideas and language.

- Resources on plagiarism : <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/>; <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054>.
- Please take this tutorial before writing any papers for this class: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/>

Poetry Performance

Our class will take advantage of the literary events on campus and in the metroplex by attending one live poetry performance. A 2-page description/interpretation/critique of a live poetry reading that you attended will be due at the end of the semester. This is a pass/fail requirement that will not receive a letter grade (but a passing grade is required to pass the class). The English Department will be sponsoring some poetry readings, including those by UTA Creative Writing Minors. If you'd like to attend a poetry reading in the metroplex check out: Pandora's Box and Other People's Poetry at Deep Vellum Books in Dallas; Bonehouse Poetry holds monthly readings at Wild Detectives in Dallas on Saturday afternoons and evening; Dark Moon Poetry (women's work); The Mad Swirl, a "Beat" style poetry-jazz-weirdness showcase and open mic that meets in a bar in Dallas every first Wednesday night, <http://madswirl.com/category/open-mic/>. (Check the internet or Facebook for more information). There are probably many more events in Fort Worth and other areas. (If you find out about events, please post to the Blackboard site.)

Due Dates

Notecards: You may choose which days to submit notecards, throughout the semester.

Short Paper: Thursday, February 23rd, in my mailbox.

Seminar Paper Prospectus: Tuesday, March 7th, at the start of class.

Annotated Bibliography for Seminar Paper: Tuesday, March 28th

Exam: Thursday, April 6th.

Rough Draft of at least ¾ of Seminar Paper for Peer Editing, Tues, April 18th, start of class.

Seminar Paper Due: Thursday April 20th, at the start of class.

Your Presentation of Seminar Paper: [fill in later] _____

Before the end of the semester: Attend one live poetry reading or poetry slam or watch a video about poetry performances or poetry slams or competitions and hand in a 2-page description//interpretation/critique (required: graded pass/fail).

****Participation/Attendance/Punctuality****

Your active, informed participation is crucial to the success of the course. Carefully prepare for each class period by doing the reading in a rigorous and inquisitive manner. Every day that you come to class you should have something valuable to say. I will grade on actual participation, rather than on mere attendance. However, if you miss class five times, your course grade will be lowered and if you miss six classes you will fail the course. This is a required capstone course for the major—I must require that you attend. Everyone gets four absences; use them wisely. You do not need to tell me why you were absent—that is your own private business--just don't miss more than four classes. There are NO excused absences. If you come in after I have marked the rolls, that will count as an absence—so come to class on time. If you can't come to class or you can't get here on time you will need to drop. Everyone is required to attend class during the final student presentations.

Contacting the Instructor: The best way to contact me is through email: alaimo@uta.edu. Note that we are required to require you to use your official UTA email when contacting us. We are not supposed to reply to any other email address. Also note that I do not have a phone in my office but you can leave a message with the English Department if you'd like. But email is best. Please do not contact me through Facebook regarding anything having to do with this class. I do not accept emailed or faxed papers.

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3.

RESOURCES:

The English Department's web pages: <http://www.uta.edu/english/>

Dr. Alaimo's web pages: <http://www.uta.edu/english/alaimo/forundergrads.html>

Criticism and Context for the class:

- The most important web site for this class is the Modern American Poetry website at University of Illinois: <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/>. Get thoroughly acquainted with this excellent resource! The resource is being updated here: <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/dashboard>.
- The other important source for our class is: The Poetry Foundation: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

More Internet sources on Poetry

- Poets.org: <http://www.poets.org>
- The Electronic Poetry Center: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/>
- Poetry Slam Inc: http://www.poetryslam.com/index.php?option=com_psivideo&view=all&Itemid=131 and <http://poetryslam.com/watch/>
- Poetry Out Loud: <http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/video-recitation-series>
- Contemporary American Poetry Archive: <http://capa.conncoll.edu/>

Poetry Terms on the web. Rather than having you purchase a book of poetic terms, I thought it would be easier for you consult various online sources. Here are some:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/glossary-terms>

http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/glossary_of_poetic_terms.htm

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/glossaryIndex.do>

The English Writing Center: “The English Writing Center (411LIBR): The Writing Center Offers free tutoring in 20-, 40-, or 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students are also available. Please see www.uta.edu/owl for detailed information on all our programs and services.”

Library & Research Assistance: University-level research requires university-level sources. Contact the Library for personalized help in navigating research resources and locating the sources you need. **Librarian:** Your librarian is **Diane Shepelwich**, dianec@uta.edu. If you need help getting started with your research or have questions along the way, contact Diane for personalized assistance. **Research Coach:** Research Coaches are UTA students trained to help you frame your research questions, develop search strategies, understand citation styles, and select and evaluate relevant resources, <http://libguides.uta.edu/researchcoach> **Research Consultation:** To set an appointment to meet with your librarian or research coach, <http://library.uta.edu/form/appointment-request-form>

Library Data Bases: Use the MLA International Bibliography for most of your research; it is the essential bibliographic tool for English Studies. If you use Project Muse or other shortcuts you will miss articles and books on your subject.

For a helpful guide to MLA Formatting see:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Official UTA Policies and other syllabus information required by UTA

[Official UTA Policies in the official language. Consider this section encased in quotation marks. My comments are in brackets.]

Attendance: At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. [As the instructor of this section, I have outlined my specific attendance policies above: see above! Dr. Alaimo] However, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a

test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

Grade Grievances: Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current University Catalog. [[Contact the department of English for the grade grievance procedures.](#)]

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Disability Accommodations: UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability.

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

Non-Discrimination Policy: *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos.*

Title IX Policy: The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.*

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Campus Carry: Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>. [Please note: If I see a gun in the classroom, the hall, or in my office I will immediately call the police. Campus carry does not mean "open carry." Dr. Alaimo]

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" are directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students' anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law and aggregate results are posted online. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: for semester-long courses, a period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, [located at either end of Preston Hall]. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities. [If anyone needs assistance with emergency evacuation, please discuss this with me privately. Dr. Alaimo.]

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

The IDEAS Center (2nd Floor of Central Library) offers free tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email IDEAS@uta.edu or call (817) 272-6593. The Library's 2nd floor Academic Plaza offers students a central hub of support services, including IDEAS Center, University Advising Services, Transfer UTA and various college/school advising hours. <http://library.uta.edu/academic-plaza>

Emergency Phone Numbers: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381

Dr. Alaimo's policy: Respect your fellow students! Respect your brain! Focus! Be here!

TURN OFF all pagers, cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices while in class! You may not text message or read email or engage in any other electronic activities during class. You may not use laptops in class; the only exception is the use of laptops for accessing the PDFs, the OED or other materials in the course. [Anyone who is looking at anything other than our class materials on line will be counted absent that day and will be asked to leave the class.



Arrive to class **ON TIME**. It is distracting to both the professor and the students to have someone come in late. If you come in late, you will be marked absent.

Always arrive **PREPARED** to work. Every day we will have work to do in class. Some days we will work in small groups. If you are not prepared then you will not be able to contribute to the class or to your small group. You may be asked to leave class if you are not prepared. Also, remember that for English classes you **MUST BRING** whatever **TEXTS** we are discussing that day to class.

Treat your classmates with **RESPECT**. Learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We will discuss controversial, volatile topics, so everyone needs to learn how to disagree with someone's views, beliefs, or perspectives while maintaining a sense of civility—or even compassion! Civil discourse is important for an educated, humane, democratic society.





As the instructor, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule. Dr. Alaimo

Always come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Bring your own interpretations, comparisons, analyses, and questions. Always bring the books or other readings we are discussing, which should be all marked up by your active, inquisitive, analytical reading practices.

Unless other wise noted, the poems can be found in the *Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, Vol. 2, Second Edition, ed. Cary Nelson.

PDF = Texts available on Blackboard, under the "Course Materials" link there. Please print these out or at least download them onto your laptop so that in the event of a Blackboard or internet outage you will have them for class.

Be sure to spend time on the MAPWEB and/or the Poetry Foundation site, reading the sections on at least one author that we are reading for that day and the excerpts of criticism on at least one poem. <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets.htm>.
http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poet_search.html
<http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/dashboard>; <https://www.poetryfoundation.org>.
 Read about the poet; read about a poem or two, read the history, look at photos, etc. (See also, the specific instructions for the notecards, above and below.)

Introduction: Theory and Terms

Week One. Jan. 17 & 19.

Tuesday: Introduction to the class. Introduction to analyzing and interpreting poetry.

Thursday: Elements of poetry. Read online before class:

Rachel Richardson, "Learning Image and Description"

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/articles/detail/70212>

Robert Pinsky, "The Pursuit of Form,"

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/articles/detail/70037>

Rebecca Hazelton, "Learning the Poetic Line,"

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/articles/detail/70144>

Rebecca Hazelton, "Adventures in Anaphora,"

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/articles/detail/70030>

Review or learn definitions for these terms: PARADOX, SIMILE, METAPHOR, METONOMY, SYNECDOCHE, EXTENDED METAPHOR, SYMBOL, IMAGE, ALLITERATION, ANAPHORA, END STOP, ENJAMBMENT, SYNTAX, PROSE POEM, RHYTHM, IAMBIC PENTAMETER, ONOMATOPOEIA, SONNET, HAIKU, LYRIC POEM, VISUAL POEM, SESTINA, FREE VERSE, DICTION, CONNOTATION, DENOTATION.[For reference see also, these PDFs in Blackboard: "The Organization of Poetry, and "Rhythm, Meter, and Sound" and/or more web sites of poetic terms listed on this syllabus.]

Poems: John Ashberry, "Paradoxes and Oxymorons," 304; Martín Espada, "The New Bathroom Policy," and "Blues for the Soldiers who Told You," 746; W.S. Merwin, "When the War is Over," 797; Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool," 791; David Ignatow, "The Form Falls in on Itself," 796.

People in Place, Displaced, Roaming

Week Two. January 24 & 26.

Tuesday: Mary Cornelia Hartshorne, "Fallen Leaves," 1; Wendy Rose, "Truganinny, 631; Louise Erdrich, "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," and "Dear John Wayne," 698; James Wright, "A Centenary Ode," 292; Heid Erdrich, "The Theft Outright," 766; Sherman Alexie, "Tourists," 780.

Thursday: Adrian Louis, all poems, 599. Japanese American Concentration Camp Haiku, 72; Jimmy Santiago Baca, "Mi Tio Baca El Poeta De Socorro," 678.

Week Three. January 31 & February 2

Tuesday: Maxine Kumin, "Voices from Kansas," 219; C.D. Wright, "What Would Oppen Say," "Dear Dying Town, 645; Juliana Spahr, from *Well Then There Now*, "The Incinerator."

Thursday: Elizabeth Bishop, "Questions of Travel," 24; William Bronk, "At Tikal," 146; Weldon Keys, "Travels in North America," 63; Robert Duncan, "Often I am Permitted to Return to a Meadow," 149; Barbara Guest, "Twilight Polka Dots," 159; Paul Blackburn, "At the Crossroad," "At the Well," 228; Lyn Hejinian from, *The Distance*, 536; Carolyn Forché, "The Colonel," "The Lightkeeper," 663.

Race in America

Week Four. February 7 & 9.

Tuesday: Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Boy Died in My Alley," "To Those of My Sisters" 143; Lucille Clifton, "I am Accused of Tending to the Past," "Reply," 470; Michael S. Harper, all poems, 486; Carolyn Rodgers, all poems 529. Gabriel Ramirez, "On Realizing I am Black," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEQHRs_8F08; Saul Williams, and "Ohm" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJHquOEChRg> and "Coded Language"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzY2-GRDiPM> and “Down for Some Ignorance,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuNyEzQUhuo>

Thursday: Marilyn Chin, “How I Got that Name,” 727; Sesshu Foster, “We’re Caffeinated,” “You’ll be Fucked Up,” “Look and look again,” “Life Magazine,” 734; Heid Erdrich, “True Myth,” 765. Lorna Dee Cervantes, “Refuge Ship and “Poema Para Los Californios Muertos,” 702; Martin Espada, all poems, 744; Eduardo C. Corral, “In Colorado My Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULqXR7_jtHQ

Week Five. February 14 & 16.

Tuesday: Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, up to page 58

- <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/27/color-codes>
- <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/04/23/claudia-rankine-new-way-writing-about-race/>
- <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/reconsidering-claudia-rankines-citizen-an-american-lyric-a-symposium-part-i/#!>

Thursday: *Citizen*, pages 59-104

Week Six. February 21 & 23.

Tuesday: *Citizen*, 104 to end

Thursday: No class. Time off for attending an event outside class.
 First paper due in my mailbox.

Gender, Sex, Love,

Week Seven. February 28 & March 2

Tuesday: Ann Sexton, “Her Kind,” 327; Sylvia Plath, “Daddy,” 413; Adrienne Rich, “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers,” and “Diving into the Wreck,” 343; Etheridge Knight, “Hard Rock,” “Idea of Ancestry,” 397; Sherman Alexie, “Indian Boy Love Song,” 776.

Thursday: Robert Lowell, “To Speak of Woe that Is in Marriage” and “Man and Wife,” 115; Robert Creeley, “For Love,” “Age,” 276; Gregory Corso, “Marriage” 388; Mona Van Duyn, “Toward a Definition of Marriage” 189; Galway Kinnel, “The Vow,” 315; Louise Glück, “Vespers” [More than. .] 549; Ai “Twenty-Year Marriage” 626; Denise Levertov, “The Ache of Marriage” 203; Gary Snyder, “Beneath my Hand and Eye” 956; Robert Hass, “A Story

About the Body," "Forty Something," "Sonnet," 532; Jack Keroac, "The Perfect Love of Mind Essence," 192.

Week Eight. March 7 & 9.

Tuesday: Seminar Paper Prospectus due at the start of class.

Whitman, "In Paths Untrodden," <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/calamus-paths-untrodden>; Allen Ginsberg, "Love Poem on Theme by Whitman," "Who Be Kind To," 267; Robert Duncan, "My Mother Would be a Falconess," "The Torso Passages 18" 149; Mark Doty, "Homo Will Not Inherit," "The Embrace," 1183; Richard Siken, "Visible World," "A Primer for Small Weird Loves," 783. Regi Cabico, "A Queerification"

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/queerification>

Keith Jarrett, "A Gay Poem," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf-TM3DZtuo>

Thursday: Adrienne Rich, "Twenty One Love Poems," 945; Judy Grahn, "Carol," "I Have Come to Claim" 521; Audre Lorde, "Outlines" 443; and Lorde, "Love Poem"

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/love-poem-2> Ana Castillo, "Seduced by Natassa Kinski," 689. Alix Olson, "Gender Game":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar5oT8jhtOo>

Max Binder & Morgan Crist, "Real Boy/Real Girl,"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK3qJ65Wlwc>

Week Nine. March 14 & 16. **Spring Break**

Animals Nature, Environment

Week Ten. March 21 & 23.

Tuesday: Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish," "Pink Dog," 17; William Everson, "Canticle for the Waterbirds 36 & 795; Galway Kinnel, "The Porcupine," "The Bear," 309; Philip Levine, "Animals are Passing from Our Lives" 335; Thylia Moss, "There Will Be Animals," 706; Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Starfish" 704. Anita Endrezze, "Return of the Wolves," 685.

Thursday: CD Wright, "Song of the Gourd," 640; W. S. Merwin, "For a Coming Extinction" and "Far Along in the Story," 320 & 326; Gary Snyder, "Straight-Creek—Great Burn," 385; Carolyn, Forché, "Morning on the Island," 665; Mary Oliver, all poems 464. Linda Hogan, "Song for the Turtles in the Gulf," <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/song-turtles-gulf>

Week Eleven. March 28 & 30.

Tuesday: No class.

Annotated Bibliography Due in my mailbox by 4:30 on Wednesday.

Thursday: Juliana Spahr, *Well, Then, There, Now*.

"Things of Each Possible Relation," 52-71

Sources: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/juliana-spahr>
<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/a-catalogue-of-us-with-all-juliana-spahrs-well-then-there-now/#!>

<http://www.du.edu/denverquarterly/media/documents/Myers464.pdf>

Jenna Goldsmith, Interview with Juliana Spahr [PDF]

Week Twelve. April 4 & 6

Tuesday: Juliana Spahr, *Well, Then, There, Now*.

"Unnamed Dragon Fly Species," 72-93

"Gentle Now, Don't Add to Heartache", 123-133.

Exam, Seminar Papers, Presentations, Conclusions

Thursday: Exam: Bring bluebooks and pens, notecards, and your books.

Week Thirteen. April 11 & 13.

Tuesday: No class. Time for researching and writing seminar papers.

Thursday: No class. Time for writing seminar papers. I will be in my office during our class period to consult with you about your papers.

Week Fourteen. April 18 & 20

Tuesday: Peer editing of seminar paper. You must bring 3 copies of the rough draft of at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of research paper to class for peer editing in order to pass the course. Please arrive on time—peer editing time is important!

Thursday:

Seminar Papers Due by the start of class.

Watch poetry performance videos in class, enjoy snacks, celebrate!

Week Fifteen. April 25 & 27

Tuesday: Presentations [*attendance required*]

Thursday: Presentations [*attendance required*]

Week Sixteen. May 2nd & 4th

Tuesday: Presentations [*attendance required*]

Thursday: Presentations [*attendance required*]

- 2-page description//interpretation/critique of poetry performance due by or before this date [required].
- Closing Poem: Bring 6-25 lines of your favorite poem to read in class as a conclusion.

Evaluations: Please complete the electronic evaluations of the course. You should receive an email from the university with directions. Evaluations are extremely important to me, the instructor, to the department, and the university. Thank you!

Dr. Stacy Alaimo English 4399: Modern American Poetry.

PREPARING FOR CLASS

---Before each class, prepare by carefully reading all the assigned poems and any other assigned texts. Read the poetry out loud when possible, or listen to audio recordings of it.

---Then, choose one of the poems, reread it, and create your own analysis or interpretation. The thesis statement should be significant, revealing, arguable, precise and concise.

---Next, read additional background materials or criticism on the poem you have chosen. These materials are available on the MAP or Poetry Foundation web site. Explore cultural and historical backgrounds, biographical information about the poet, and various criticisms, readings, and interpretations of the poem.

---Prepare to briefly discuss, in class, your most significant findings. What are some of the “pivots” for multiple or divergent interpretations? What information helped you understand the poem? Which readings did you disagree with and why? How do the visual texts, if available, add to our understanding of the poem? What additional research would enrich your understanding of the poem.

---Finally, prepare one or more discussion questions for the class about the poem.

--Hand in an **index card** with the following:

1. A 1-3 sentence **thesis** about the poem—your original, arguable reading, encapsulated.
2. A significant quote from one of the sources on the MAP or Poetry Foundation site. (A quote that you would like to talk about.)
3. A discussion question for the class.

APPROACHES TO POETRY

1. Artistic aspects of the poem itself: form, structure, style, imagery, sound, etc. How does the poem, as a poem, embody its meaning? “Close reading.” Formal analysis.
2. What is the “argument” of the poem, if any, and how does it relate to #3?
3. What aspects of culture, politics, and history inform the poem? What is it referring to or commenting on? How does the poem try to intervene in its political moment? What change does it seek? How does it attempt to appeal to its reader?
4. Biography of the Poet—what is the relation between the life of the poet and the ideas or perspectives or philosophies of the poem?
5. Reception and criticism of the poem—key ideas, questions, debates. What do various critics think the poem means? Why? Do you agree or disagree? Why do they think the poem is interesting or important? What puzzles them or impresses them?
6. Literary history. How does the poem comment upon or reflect or depart from previous poems? Is the poem part of a particular movement? If so, explore further.
7. Relation of the poem to . . . visual arts, music, dance, performance, psychology, science, place, environment,
8. Analyze the poem considering gender, race, class, sexual orientation, colonialism, religion, capitalism, and other potent social categories, ideologies, and forms of power.
9. Draw upon critical theories such as structuralism, poststructuralism, Marxism, cultural studies, gender studies, or psychoanalysis to analyze such things as discourse, double voicing, subjectivity, social construction, commodification.