

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY, 362 Prof. Molly Bendall, SPRING 2018, MWF-11-11:50

In this course we will look at some of the trends, schools, and movements present in contemporary American poetry in the last 50 years. We will consider how inspiration and “materials” for a poem are used and where they come from. We’ll consider sources, such as autobiography, social conditions, history, current events, other art forms, and archives. We will focus on close readings of individual poems and read both well-known poets and new poets with recent books. Poets include Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Allen Ginsberg, Frank O’Hara, Etheridge Knight, Adrienne Rich, Jorie Graham, Yusef Komunyakha, Mary Ruefle, Julianna Spahr, Arthur Sze, Natasha Trethewey, Franny Choi.

MUCH Participation, 3 papers, written responseS, creative assignments, .

WEEK Jan 8,10,12

- M-- Introduction and poets of the post-war era A look at “Confessional” poems Anne Sexton. With “Lullaby”
- W-- Read Anne Sexton “Wanting to Die” and “The Abortion” pg. 288 Plus handout.
- F -- Read and discuss “Red Riding Hood,” and “Elegy for Sylvia” **RESPONSE DUE**

WEEK 2 Jan 15,17,19

- M HOLIDAY
- W--- Sylvia Plath handout with “Beekeeper’s Daughter,” “Stars Over the Dordogne,” “Child.”
- F -cont. Sylvia Plath discussion with “Daddy” and “Edge” and riddle poems.

WEEK 3 Jan 22,24,26

- M---Cont. Sylvia Plath reading and discussion.
- W--- Gwendolyn Brooks and The Black Arts Movement **RESPONSE DUE** “A Song in the Front Yard,” and “The Lovers of the Poor” pgs. 182-183
- F----Cont. Gwendolyne Brooks and Etheridge Knight,

WEEK 4 Jan 29, 31, 2

- M—cont. discussion of Black Arts Movement, Etheridge Knight “The Idea of Ancestry, pg. 314 PLUS handout
- W—**RESPONSE DUE.** Read Frank O’Hara “Steps,” “Poem,” and “The Day Lady Died.” Pgs. 250 plus handout.
- F---Cont. O’Hara and begin Allen Ginsberg “America” Handout

WEEK 5 Feb 5,7,9

- M—Cont. Allen Ginsberg and beat poets.
- W--- Discuss Gregory Corso’s “Marriage” pg. 298, plus handout.
- F---**POEM DUE—Your own.** Discuss poems incorporating Documents and archives. Bring *The Work Shy* to class. **BOOK REQUIRED**

WEEK 6 Feb 12, 14, 16

M—**PAPER DUE** on a poem by one of the previous poets,
Read poems in class.

W-- Discussion of poems with Archives and Document by Philip Metres,
Rebecca Dunham, Cynthia Hogue, Robin Coste Lewis, and *The Work Shy*
by The Blunt Research Group **

F-- More poems incorporating Documents and archives

WEEK 7 Feb 19, 21,23

M—HOLIDAY

W—Discussion on *The Work Shy*, attend **VISIONS AND VOICES EVENT 7PM REQUIRED**

F--- Discuss “Diving Into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich **RESPONSE DUE**

WEEK 8 Feb 26, 28,2

M—Cont. Adrienne Rich with “Orion,” “Planetarium” p.293, and “Phantasia of
Elvira Shateyev” and “Rape Poem”

W-- Discuss Yusef Komunyakaa “Tu Do Street,” “Thanks.” and
“Facing It” pgs. 439-441

F-- Philip Levine poem, “They Feed They Lion” and others.

WEEK 9 Mar 5,7,9

M—Discuss the Book, *Bellocq’s Ophelia* **BOOK IS REQUIRED**

W-- cont. discussion of *Bellocq’s Ophelia* **RESPONSE DUE**

F—In class exercise with small groups

WEEK 10 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11 Mar 19,21,23

M—Discuss Arthur Sze’s poems, Handout

W—Cont. discussion of Arthur Sze’s poems

Attend Reading, on Thursday at 4:30, REQUIRED

F-- Read Alberto Rios “Nani” pg. 502, Garrett Hongo “The
Legend” pg. 475, Marilyn Chin “How I Got that Name” pg 534. And Ocean Vuong
And Layli Long Soldier.

WEEK 12—Mar 26, 28, 30

M—“Meditation Poems” Discuss Frank Bidart’s “Ellen West” pg 356, C.K. Williams
“Blades” pg,344 And “This Happened” & Charles Wright “California Dreaming”
pg.332

W—cont. discussion of meditation poems with Jorie Graham, “Other”
“Fission” and “Soldatenfriedoff”

F—Cont. discussion

WEEK 13 April 2, 4, 6
M—Discuss poems with “Surreal” and fabular elements with Charles Simic, James Tate, Mary Ruefle
W—**PAPER DUE.** On poem (s) from poets from the 2nd half.
Cont. discussion of “Surrealism” with Mary Ruefle and Ruth Madievsky.
F-- Cont. discussion

WEEK 14 April 9,11,13
M—Read and Discuss Franny Choi’s *Death by Sex Machine* **BOOK REQUIRED**
W—Cont. Discussion of Franny Choi’s *Death by Sex Machine*
F-- Look and Listen to Some Spoken Word Poets:

WEEK 15 April 16,18,20
M Handout with Flarf, conceptualism, concrete poems, Centos, and erasures and Manipulations with Simone Muench, Ronald Johnson, Jen Bervin, Ashbery Harryette Mullen, Sharon Mesmer, Phillip B. Williams.
W—Cont. discussion of conceptual poems.
F—In class exercise

WEEK 14—April 23, 25, 27
M—**POEM DUE,** Discussion and instructions for final paper.
W—READ poems in Class
F—cont . Class poems

***FINAL ESSAY DUE ON EXAM DAY.** 12 Plus pages.

REQUIREMENTS

- Class Participation and preparedness means **HAVING TEXTS AND HANDOUTS AND READING THEM BEFORE CLASS** is **MANDATORY**
- Attendance is crucial for the class for your participation grade.
- You are responsible for the reading you missed if you are absent.

- 3 Papers—“close readings” of one or two poems by poets we have read in class
TWO 4-6 pages. THIRD AND LAST Paper 12 PLUS pages.

- Quizzes, written responses, poems and class group discussions.

- Papers must be handed in on time. For every calendar day late, your grade will be lowered.

-GRADING

30% 2 SHORT Papers (4-6) pgs.

40% LONGER PAPER (12 +)pgs.

15% Class Participation and preparedness,

15% Brief written responses and poems

OFFICE HOURS MON & WED 2-3pm 407 TAPER HALL

TEXTS REQUIRED:

Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry, Ed. Rita Dove

The Work Shy by The Blunt Research Group

Belloccq's Ophelia by Natasha Trethewey

Death by Sex Machine by Franny Choi

bendall@usc.edu