

GESM 110g: Seminar in the Arts (4.0 units) The multi-faceted history of the creative act, its analysis, production, and context as a representation of human experience. (Satisfies GE-A, The Arts) ... open only to freshmen.

POEMS, PLAYS, and POLITICS: The Making of the Citizen in Poetry and Performance

Professor Brighde Mullins

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"Girl with Megaphone" by Dolk

"Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." –Percy Bysshe Shelley

Course Description:

All writers inherit a cultural and political climate. All writers face the fact that writing a home truth often means betraying tribal affiliations. What are the legacies of these experiences? What are the pressures that writers face in terms of expression and self-expression? Seamus Heaney said, "I became a writer when my roots crossed with my reading." In this class we'll look at how a writer's work intersects with the social-political milieu, the times, the zeitgeist. We'll look at how representative writers have addressed larger than personal concerns in their writing. Study of contemporary dramatic texts and poems will form most of the reading and discussion. This class will require critical writing as well as creative writing and is open to all students. Writing exercises will act as a springboard to the imagination, encouraging students to think about their writing—and themselves—in different ways.

Learning Objectives:

- students will gain in the capacity to read and respond to the work of poets and playwrights across cultures;
- students will cultivate an ability to respond critically and creatively to the texts;
- students will improve in their ability to respond to multicultural voices and will demonstrate, through discussion and through writing, understanding of the texts at hand;
- students will cultivate an appreciation for poetry and theatre and will study the human contexts and conditions that create these forms as modes of expression, protest and critique;

- students will recognize both the pleasures and the challenges of experiencing diversity.

Required Texts:

Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness. Edited by Carolyn Forché

Angels in America by Tony Kushner

Vietgone by Qui Nguyen

I Am Not Your Negro by James Baldwin, text assembled by Raoul Peck

2.5 Minute Ride and Well, by Lisa Kron

Real Women Have Curves, by Josefina Lopez

Citizen by Claudia Rankine

Supplementary Materials: Excerpts from these texts will be discussed throughout the semester. They will be available on Blackboard:

Aristotle's *Poetics*, translated by S.H. Butcher

Baldwin, James. *The Devil Finds Work, An Essay*

Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space*

Esslin, Martin, *The Anatomy of Drama*

Fuchs, Elinor, *A Visit to A Small Planet* (essay)

Hanisch, Carol, *The Personal is the Political* (essay)

Grading Breakdown:

30% Weekly Close Reading Worksheets

30% Midterm

30 % Final examination

10% Class participation

Course Requirements

- your active and constructive participation in class discussion;
- keeping up with the assigned reading;
- worksheet assignments, as given and to be submitted on time.

Class Structure:

Class sessions will be divided into lectures, discussion and in class viewing of clips.