

HNRS 122 - 002
3 Credits / Spring 2017

Reading the Arts: 20th and 21st Century Poetry from Around the World
MW 10:30-11.45 / Art and Design Building L008

Instructor: Vivek Narayanan
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Office Hours: TBA & by appointment

Note: I will reply to all emails within 24 hours, except on weekends.

Course Description

In the 20th century, the art of poetry seems to become newly aware of itself on a planetary level, in a way that's both intensely utopian and profoundly transnational – with translation helping those sparks to fly – but also impossibly vast, various and fragmented. Modern poetry, as you'll soon see, is not one thing but many. It would be foolish to promise to show you all of it in a single semester, but by leaping across times and time zones, this course will help you dip your toe in those waters.

The main point of this course is to give you a sense of the fascinating, deeply felt and sometimes crazy experiments with poetry that have happened over the past century or so. You will, hopefully, finish this course with a new sense of the possibilities available in recent and contemporary poetic traditions – but you'll have to keep your mind open and ears alert.

Learning Outcomes

Through a series of short weekly assignments, in-class writing exercises, an extended book review and a final portfolio, students in the class will explore and refine ways to think and write critically about poetry, and explore their own poetic practice inspired by the readings. By thinking through a series of debates – about what poetry is, what its obligations are, what makes a poem modern, the role translation has to play, and so on – we will also cautiously learn to see modern world poetry in its social and historical contexts.

Required Texts

-- Jerome Rothenberg & Pierre Joris (eds.), *Poems for the Millenium: The University of California Book of Modern & Postmodern Poetry* – Volumes 1 and 2 (published in 1995 and 1998 respectively)

- One small complete book of poetry by a single author – to be decided in consultation with the instructor
- All other required short texts and excerpts will be provided as PDFs on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading

--Class Participation (30%):

Class participation forms the single largest portion of your grade and will be based on the following factors: a) attendance – more than two unexcused absences will have a drastic effect on your grade; b) clear evidence of your having done all the readings before class; c) the degree, enthusiasm and quality of your engagement with in-class discussions and exercises; and d) your attendance at one extra-curricular poetry reading from my approved list.

--Weekly Discussion Board Postings (20%)

A minimum of ten weekly postings over the course of the semester. Postings will be either: a) a discussion (minimum 250 words) of some or all of the readings for the week; or b) a poem or provocation (post up to four poems over the semester) that either fulfills the specific creative assignment I give that week, or can be justifiably read as a response to the readings for that week.

--Book Review Essay – 5-7 pages (20%) – due Tuesday, March 21st

This will be a detailed essay on a book of poems by a single author, to be decided upon in consultation with the instructor. I will be walking you through a detailed list of suggestions soon.

--Final Revised Portfolio (20%) – due exam week:

The portfolio may include short prose pieces on the readings – including a revised and expanded version of a discussion post – or relevant poems that have been previously submitted to the instructor. Whether prose or poetry, you will be partly evaluated on the productive effort you've put into revising your work, and/or the overall improvement of your work over the course of the semester.

--Final In-class Presentations (10%):

A performance – broadly construed – in a form of your choosing (which can include a short lecture or talk). I'll be discussing this in detail with you as the semester goes on.

Course Policies

** Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.* Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu.

* ***Please do not use cell phones or pagers in class*** unless it is an emergency, and in that case, you should inform me and step out of the class. You can use your laptop or similar device to take notes in class, but no email, random surfing or social media, please. If you're looking distracted, I reserve the right to come round and see what's on your laptop screen during class.

* ***Do not plagiarize*** any of your work submitted for this class. Plagiarism and cheating will result in disciplinary action at the university level and an F in this course. Please make yourself familiar with the University Honor Code, which can be found at <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>. This website also provides you with information as to how to avoid violations of the Code and other resources. Plagiarism means using the words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. This includes copying directly or indirectly (paraphrasing) from the Internet or any other digital or print source. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, see me.

* ***If you are a student with a disability*** and you need academic accommodations, please see me and/or contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

* ***Students must use their Mason email account*** to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

The readings usually come to about 15-20 pages per class session, and include a mix of poems with some prose. Please note that poetry, although often short, can take more time to read than prose. Normally, you should plan on reading each poem at least three times: first, to take in the sound and experience of it, letting it wash over you, and from the second reading on to begin to closely observe what the poem is *doing*.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Note: In the schedule that follows, all numbers in square brackets refer to page numbers in volume one(I) or two(II) of *Poems for the Millennium*. Any readings or authors without square brackets next to them will be provided via pdf. Readings for different class sessions are sometimes separated by a *.

This schedule might be subject to small tweaks and changes. I will keep you updated ahead of time of all upcoming readings.

Monday Jan 23:

What is Poetry? A Sample of What's to Come.

Wednesday Jan 25:

What is Poetry? Some Possible Origin Myths

Required Reading: Robert Frost: *The Figure a Poem Makes* (prose)

Optional Reading (we'll look at these in class):

Ezra Pound – Confucius [Volume I: p.734] / “Orpingalik” [I: pg. 735] / Aborigine Sound Poem / “Lily Events” [I: 742-3] / “Ifa Suite in Praise of the Oracle” [I:748-50] / “Three for Bear” [I:752-53] / Seven Songs & Song Pictures [I: 754-5] / From The Thunder, Perfect Mind [I:778-80] Doc Reese, Bessie Smith, Naftali Bacharach [I:783-92]

// Sangam era poem from Tamil / Robert Herrick – *Whenas In Silks My Julia Goes*

Monday Jan 30:

The Turning

Whitman – “This Compost” [I: 28-30] / Baudelaire – Fuses 1 & 2 [I:31-32] / Lautremont – from *Maldoror* [I:39-42] // Dickinson – “There’s a Certain Slant of Light” / Hopkins – “The Windhover” / Tagore – *On My Birthday* / Tagore (prose) – “Poet Yeats”

Wednesday Feb 1 & Monday Feb. 6:

New, or Really Old? Ways of Being Modern

Eliot – “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” / Yeats – “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” / Pound – “In a Station of the Metro” / Pound – from *Cathay* / Pound – from *ABC of Reading*

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Gertrude Stein [I: 99-104] / William Carlos Williams [I: 360-63]

// Laura Riding / Robert Graves and Laura Riding, “A Survey of Modernist Poetry”

Wed Feb 8 & Monday Feb 13

Futures Pt 1: Manifestoes and Madness

Apollinaire – “The Little Car” [I:128-129] / Huidobro – from *Altazor* [I:406-16] / Mina Loy – “Three Moments in Paris” [I:138-141] / Marinetti, from the *Futurist Manifesto* [I:196-8]

// Mina Loy – *Feminist Manifesto* // *Blast Manifesto*

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// Fernando Pessoa: Poems by Alberto de Caiero, Alvaro De Campos & Ricardo Reis / Prose by Pessoa

Wed Feb 15 & Monday Feb 20

Duende: Consciousness and Mystery

Lorca, "Sketches", "Prelude", [I:453-454] "Ode to Walt Whitman" [I: 457-62] /Vallejo [I:400-403]

// Lorca: Theory and Play of Duende / Jibananda Das

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Mandelstam - Poem No. 286 (On Stalin), [I:393-4] and "If our antagonists take me..." in "LAST POEMS", Commentary [I: 396-7] / Hagiwara Sakutaro - "Chair", "Spring Night" (157-8) + Commentary (159-60)

// Rilke - a poem and some prose / Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice Cream

Wed Feb 22

Futures Pt 2: DADA, Merz and Zaum

Kurt Schwitters, "Desire", Portrait of Herwarth Walden" [I: 327-328], from "Ur Sonate" [I: 332-3] / Hugo Ball, Sound Poems [I: 292-297] / Tristan Tzara, "from DADA Manifesto" [I: 299-305] / Francis Picabia, "Portrait of Tristan Tzara" [I:322]

//Velimir Khlebnikov, On Poetry / On Contemporary Poetry (prose)

Monday Feb 27 & Wed March 1

Futures Pt 3: Troubled Visions, Social Dreams

Aime Cesaire, from "Notebook of a Return to My Native Land", "The Miraculous Weapons" [I: 575-582] / Macumba Word [I:561] / from "I, Laminaria" [II: 73-74] / Leopold Senghor (prose), "Speech and Image: an African Tradition of the Surreal" [I:564-5] / Amos Tutuola, from My Life in the Bush of Ghosts [II: 158-60] / Paul Celan, "A Death Fugue" [II: 24-25]

//B.S. Mardhekar / Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo

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Langston Hughes, "Montage of a Dream Deferred" [I:651-56] / Leon Damas "Just Like the Legend", "S.O.S." [I: 570-71] /Muriel Rukeyser, "The Speed of Darkness" [Vo. 2, 70-73]

//Langston Hughes (prose) "The Negro Artist" / Adil Jussawalla, from *Missing Person* / W.H. Auden, "Who Stands, the Crux Left of the Watershed" /Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool" and other poems

Monday March 6

Futures, Pt 4: Language Events

St.-John Perse, from "Anabasis" [383-5] / Surrealists: Language Events 1 & 2 [472-3]
Inger Christensen, "Alphabet 9, 10" [530-35]

// Raymond Queneau and OuLiPo

Wed March 8

What is Objective? Documentary and Matters of the Soul

Muriel Rukeyser, "The Dam" [724-727] / Charles Reznikoff, "Testimony" [546-51]
/ George Oppen, "Psalm" [vol. 2, 89]

// Robert Frost, "A Roadside Stand" / Elizabeth Bishop, "Filling Station" // Robert
Creeley, "I Know a Man"

[Spring break]

Monday March 20

The Villanelle and New Old-fashioned Forms

// William Empson, "Villanelle" / Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good
Night" / Theodore Roethke, "The Waking" / Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art" / Sylvia
Plath, "Mad Girl's Love Song" / Philip Larkin, "This Be the Verse", "Money" / Vikram
Seth, "All You Who Sleep Tonight"

Tuesday March 21: Book Review Essay Due

Wed March 22 & Monday March 27

Prophecy and Play

// Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" [with recording] / Allen Ginsberg, "Notes Written on Finally
Recording *Howl*" // Soumitra Mohan, "Luqman Ali"

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John Ashbery, from "Flow Chart" [II:292-296]

// Kenneth Koch & Allen Ginsberg, "Popeye and William Blake Battle to the Death"
[recording] / Frank O' Hara, "A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island",
"Why I am Not a Painter" / Arun Kolatkar, "Mein Manager ko Bola"

Wed March 29, Monday April 3 & Mon April 5

What is Translation?

// Multiple versions of Poems By: Pablo Neruda / Eugenio Montale / Tomas Tranströmer / Nicanor Parra / A.K. Ramanujan, from *The Interior Landscape* / Translation Channeling: Jack Spicer's *After Lorca*

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Francis Ponge, "The Oyster" [II: 619] / Vasko Popa, "Burning Shewolf" [II:177]

// Bolano, from "The Savage Detectives" / Harry Martinson, from "Aniara" / Pablo de Rokha, from "The Old Man's Song" / Carlos Drummond de Andrade, "Don't Kill Yourself" / Sylvia Plath, "Sheep in Fog"

Monday April 10 & Wed April 12

Politics, Performance & Poetics

Adrienne Rich [II:351-357] / Amiri Baraka, "Black Dada Nihilismus" [II: 420-22]/Kamau Brathwaite, "Stone" [II: 381-5] / On the Tamuzzi Poets (prose) [II:181-183]/Adonis [II: 187-191]

// Adrienne Rich, "Blood, Bread and Poetry" (prose) / Robert Hayden, "Malcolm X"

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// Ian Hamilton Finlay – assorted works / Raul Zurita, from *Purgatory*/Visual and Sound Art Redux

Wed April 12

Cross-cultural Forms: The Ghazal before and After Agha Shahid Ali

// Details of readings to be announced

Monday April 17 & Wed April 19

Poets With and Without History

// Marina Tsvetayeva, "Poets With History and Poets Without History" (prose) / Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory (prose) / Poems by Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Bei Dao, Xi Chuan, Ouyang Jianghe, Wislawa Szymborska, Shrikant Verma, Eunice De Souza, Kiwao Nomura & Les Murray

Monday April 24

Poetry, Music and Performance

// Black Star (Mos Def and Talib Kweli) / Mutabaruka / Louise Bennett / Bob Dylan / Leonard Cohen / Lesego Rampolokeng / Jeremy Cronin, "Insurgent South African Poetry" (prose)

Monday April 24 & Wed April 26

Poetry in the 21st Century: Details T.B.D.

Monday May 1 & Wed May 3

Catching Up / Student Presentations