

SPRING 2019

Early Modern Poetics

Prof. Rebeca Helfer

This course will explore early modern English literary theory-in-practice, with a particular focus on how issues and strategies related to memory helped to shape a poetics of recollection. Throughout the course, we'll pursue the complex and fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of the history of poetics, which blurs the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, and which emerges from and engages with a wide range of fields, including philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, rhetoric, theology, history, and in most contexts, with issues of politics and power. In many respects the aim of this course is to appreciate how such interdisciplinarity, or multidisciplinary, fundamentally challenges any notion of early modern poetics as narrowly literary or rhetorical, and instead as fundamentally expressive of long-held debates about the social role of stories and their place in both individual and collective memory. Starting with Philip Sidney's seminal defense of poetry, his 16th-century **Apology for Poetry,** we'll consider fundamental principles of Renaissance poetics – imitation and innovation or invention, and the role of image-making and imagination therein – as well as the broader interdisciplinary dialogue and debate about poetics that informs Sidney's writing and, indeed, early modern poetics. From here, we'll look back to key works by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, and Augustine, and then forward to consider the reception and transformation of classical and medieval poetics in the early modern period, engaging with important Italian works by Dante, Petrarch, and Castiglione, as well as exemplary English texts that include Sidney's **Astrophil and Stella,** Spenser's **Faerie Queene,** and Shakespeare's **Sonnets** and **Hamlet.**

Public and Counterpublics

Prof. Martin Harries

This course will explore the place of the “public” in theories of literature and art. It will proceed from the assumption that we do not know in advance how an artwork has a public or how artworks belong to the “public sphere.” Debates about this term, the English translation of Jürgen Habermas' *Öffentlichkeit*, will provide our starting point. Does the public sphere contain embodied publics, or is it always marked by an abstraction from the bodies of readers or spectators? Habermas seems to imply that, while theater may have an audience, it is not part of the public sphere: co-presence is not where the public sphere does its discursive work. Does a gathered audience, then, have no “public” force?

Beginning with Habermas and ending with one version of the present, we will trace the dialectic of discourses concerning the formation of the public and discourses about the aesthetic, paying special attention to theater and performance. We will track the relationship between embodied publics and various forms of broadcast and other mass media. Might historically distinct forms

of publics for theater and other forms of performance form themselves precisely in relation to mass culture's patterns of interpellation and address? What are these counterpublics that gather in negative relation to the mass-mediated public sphere?

Publics and Counterpublics: this course steals its title from Michael Warner's book. Primary examples will include plays and performance pieces from the eighteenth century to the present, including George Lillo's *The London Merchant*, George Aiken's adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, short plays by Samuel Beckett, and a few contemporary plays and performance pieces. Other readings for the course will include texts by Christopher Balme, Lauren Berlant, Cornelius Castoriadis, Elizabeth Dillon, Nancy Fraser, Habermas, Miriam Hansen, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Peggy Phelan, Nicholas Ridout, and Warner.

Genre and Television

Prof. Michael Szalay

Description TBD

The Ways of Death

Prof. Elizabeth Allen

This course will explore literature of crossing from life to death (and back). From privileged visits to the underworld in Homer and Virgil to King Arthur, once and future king, to the "wormy circumstance" of John Keats's "Pot of Basil"; from the medieval Orpheus who brings his dead wife home to George Saunders's *Lincoln at the Bardo* and Ali Smith's *Artful*, this course will explore the permeable membrane between the living and the dead, and the crafts that arise from and carry us through these realms. Western attitudes toward death have shifted over time, and literature registers this history; yet literature also resists customary and habitual frameworks, rendering death mobile, sensory, *live*; not just an impasse but a spatial and bodily experience. Indeed, arguably, the living travel in the world of the dead, with bodies buried beneath our feet and cultures buried beneath our architecture. The fact of death haunts the living, and although our emphasis will be on the possibility of travel in the world of the dead, we will also explore some ghosts, perhaps in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

The course aims to gather insight from both historical and philosophical accounts, including works such as Philippe Ariès's The Hour of Our Death, Jacques Derrida's Aporias, Frank Kermode's Sense of an Ending, Allen Kellehear's A Social History of Dying, Jacques Choron's Death and Western Thought, and others.

Modern Poetry, or The Naming of Parts

Prof. Oren Izenberg

This course seminar pursues two related inquiries. We will consider a selection from the diverse and sometimes internally contradictory archive of poetic practices that have been labelled “modern” or even “Modernist” – terms that are somehow supposed to accommodate compression and fragmentation, *and* the development of elaborate sequences and structures; impersonality *and* the cultivation of highly identifiable signatures; intense philosophical skepticism *and* idealist abstraction, aesthetic withdrawal *and* political engagement. At the same time, we will pose a set of theoretical questions relevant to modern (American) poetry (and in some cases, emerging historically alongside it). These will focus on a few notionally basic aspects or qualities of poems that we tend to invoke pretheoretically, or that remain standing despite the crushing weight of prior theoretization. These include: *tone, image, form, metaphor*, and a few others. We will ask: What is a “tone,” and where in a poem is it located? What is a “form” and does it have an alternative? Can there be a theory (or politics) of metaphor? Posed locally, these questions will help us to explore the history and theory of modern poetry; posed more generally, they will help us to think through the profound problems, and equally profound interest, of interpreting—and even describing— poems. Authors might include: Eliot, Hughes, Moore, Stein, Stevens, Williams.

Workshop in Academic Publishing

Prof. Ted Martin

This course has one primary goal: to help you prepare and submit an article for publication. In the first half of the quarter, we will discuss what makes a successful journal article; how to decide which journal to submit to; what the review process is like; and what the difference is between an article and other forms of academic writing, like a dissertation chapter. In the second half of the quarter, we will spend our time intensively workshopping your article drafts in class, with the aim of offering each student a clear plan for revision and submission. The final week of the course will be devoted to drafting and discussing materials for the job market.

Please note: this course is intended for students in or beyond their third year.