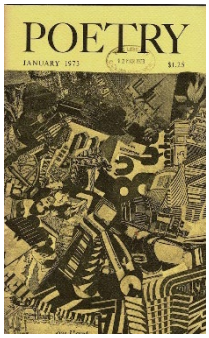
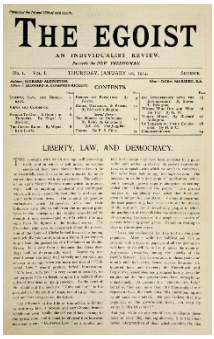
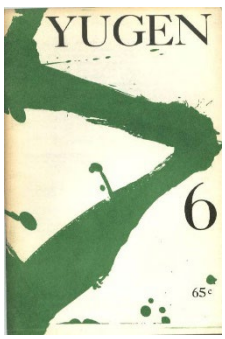
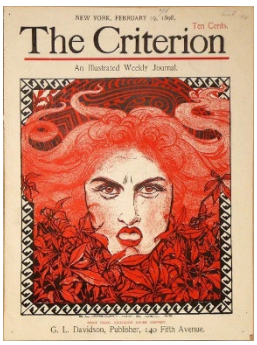
20th-Century American Poetry: Manifestos, Modernisms, and Magazines
Instructor: Sarah Jingyu Liu









Tutorial Description: In the 20th century, everyone had an opinion about what poetry should be—especially the Americans. This course examines various aspects of 20th-century American poetry through a series of manifestos, a form of writing that Mary Ann Caws defines as a proclamation of "what it wants to oppose, to leave, to defend, to change." What motivations lie behind these manifest proclamations? In what ways did these two disparate forms—the poem and the manifesto—feed into each other? How did the manifesto contribute to the formation of an American poetic identity? Most weeks, we will read up to three manifestos alongside a number of related poems and secondary texts. Two of the weeks will be dedicated to exploring little magazines, which served as both a platform for poets to publish their works as well as a means to forge alliances and generate discourse with fellow poets. Poets we will read include Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Langston Hughes, Khalil Gibran, Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich. Critical subtopics include postcolonialism, Marxism, and feminist/queer theory.

Tutorial Goals:

- To gain an understanding of certain American poetry movements in the 20th century.
- To write a 20–25-page research paper.
    - To develop a research question as well as a critical bibliography of methods and viewpoints around that question.
    - To put secondary criticism in conversation with your own ideas.
- To gain an understanding of certain critical subtopics that have been formative for the discipline of literary studies.

Assignments:

- Short Essay (10%, due by Week 4): 5-6 pages of extended close reading of a primary text or an application of a critical model to a literary text.
- Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography (15%, due by Week 8): 2-page prospectus of your intended project, 8-10 source annotated bibliography.

- Draft (15%, due by Week 11): partial (at least 10 pages) or full
- Final Paper (40%, due reading period): 20-25-page research paper.
- Participation (20%): come to class prepared for discussion of the readings.
- Conference Presentation (ungraded): 5-minute presentation of your research to your peers at the Junior Tutorial conference.

Academic Honesty: Please do not plagiarize others or use AI. Remember to cite your sources.

Attendance: You are allowed one free absence, no explanations necessary. Subsequent absences without proper documentation will affect your grade. In the case of extenuating circumstances, please communicate with me in a timely manner.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers for disabled students related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the Disability Access Office (DAO). Accommodations do not alter the fundamental requirements of the course and cannot be implemented retroactively. Students should request accommodations as early as possible since they may take time to implement. Students should notify DAO at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.

All texts for this course will be provided on Canvas.

Week 1: Apollo's Privilege
Primary texts:
- "The Poet" from *Essays: Second Series* (1844) by Ralph Waldo Emerson
- "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass* (1892 ed.) by Walt Whitman

Secondary texts:
- Chapter 1: "The Concept of the Avant-Garde" from The Theory of the Avant-Garde (1968) by Renato Poggioli, 15 pgs.
- Chapter 1: "A Revolutionary Formation" from *Whitman the Political Poet* (1989) by Betsy Erkkila, 22 pgs.
- "The Poetics of the Manifesto: Nowness and Newness" (2010), published in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (ed. Caws) by Mary Ann Caws, 14 pgs.

Week 2: The Pound Era
Primary texts:
- "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" (1913), published in *Poetry*, and "A Retrospect" from *Pavannes and Divisions* (1918) by Ezra Pound

- "The Imagists: 'H.D.' and John Gould Fletcher" from *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (1917) by Amy Lowell
- Selected poems by H.D., Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, and Ezra Pound from *Des Imagistes, An Anthology* (1914)

Secondary texts:

- "Ezra Pound and Walt Whitman" (1955), published in *American Literature* by Herbert Bergman, 6 pgs.
- Introduction to *Orientalism* (1977) by Edward Said, 30 pgs.
- "Critical Dreams: Orientalism, Modernism, and the Meaning of Pound's China" (1999), published in *Twentieth Century Literature* by Eric Hayot, 23 pgs.

Week 3: Correspondences

Primary texts:

- "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919), published in *The Egoist* by T.S. Eliot
- "The Waste Land" (1922), published in *The Criterion* and *The Dial* by T.S. Eliot
- Selected poems from *Observations* (1924) by Marianne Moore

Secondary texts:

- Selections from *Minima Moralia* (1951) by Theodore Adorno
- "Presenting Miss Moore, Modernist: T.S. Eliot's Edition of Marianne Moore's *Selected Poems*" (1994), published in *Journal of Modern Literature* by Andrew Kappel, 22 pgs.

Week 4: Magazine Week I

First paper due (no readings)

We will spend class this week looking at a number of little magazines that published poetry from before World War II, such as *Poetry*, *The Egoist*, *The Criterion*, *The Dial*, *The Crisis*, *Fire!!*, *The Nation*, *The New Masses*, and *The Liberator*.

- Recommended reading: "Little Magazines and Modernism: An Introduction (2005), published in *American Periodicals* by Suzanne Churchill and Adam McKible, 5 pgs.

Week 5: Harlem Renaissance, or the "flowering of Negro Literature"

Primary texts:

- "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) by Langston Hughes
- "If We Must Die" (1919) and selections from *Harlem Shadows* (1922) by Claude McKay
- Selected poems from *Cane* (1923) by Jean Toomer

Secondary texts:

- "The Negro and Language" from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) by Fanon, 23 pgs.
- "Notes for an Oppositional Poetics" (1990) by Erica Hunt, 16 pgs.
- "The Harlem Renaissance as Postcolonial Phenomenon" (2006), published in *African American Review* by Robert Philipson, 16 pgs.

Week 6: The American Proletarian Poetry Movement
Primary texts:
- Selections from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Marx and Engels
- "Towards Proletarian Art" (1921) by Mike Gold
- "Ballads of Lenin" (1933) by Langston Hughes
- "Dirge" (1935) by Kenneth Fearing

Secondary texts:
- "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935) by Walter Benjamin, 26 pgs.
- Chapter 3: "The Proletarian as New Negro; the New Negro as Proletarian: Mike Gold Meets Claude McKay" from *New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (1999) by William J. Maxwell, 30 pgs.
- Excerpt from Chapter 1: "'Leftward Ho!': Migrations of Writers, Critics, and Magazines in the 1930s" from *Beleaguered Poets and Leftist Critics* (2011) by Milton A. Cohen

Week 7: Bestselling Poet of the 20th Century
Library Research Session
Primary texts:
- 1920 bylaws for the Pen League in "Arrabitah" from *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography* (1950) by Mikhail Naimy
- Selections from *A Chant of Mystics, and Other Poems* (1920) by Ameen Rihani
- Selections from *The Prophet* (1923) by Khalil Gibran

Secondary texts:
- "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990) by Stuart Hall, 16 pgs.
- "Eliminating Diasporic Identities" (2008), published in *PMLA* by Iman Meshal, 8 pgs.
- "Mahjar Legacies: A Reinterpretation" from *Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora* (2013, ed. Alsultany) by Jacob Berman, 15 pgs.

Week 8: Magazine Week II
Prospectus and annotated bibliography due (no readings)
We will spend class this week looking at a number of little magazines that published poetry after World War II, such as *Beatitude*, *The Black Mountain Review*, *Origin*, *The Floating Bear*, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, *C: A Journal of Poetry*, *Yugen*, *This*, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, *A Hundred Posters*, and later issues of *Poetry*.

Week 9: Poetics of Projection
Primary texts:
- "Projective Verse" (1950), published in *Poetry New York* by Charles Olson
- "Some Notes on Poetic Form" (1965), published in *Poetry* by Denise Levertov
- Selected poems from *In Cold Hell, in Thicket* (1953) by Charles Olson
- Selected poems from *With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads* (1959) by Denise Levertov

Secondary texts:

- Preface to *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960* (1960) by Donald Allen
- Introduction to *Beyond Maximus: The Construction of Public Voice in Black Mountain Poetry* (2007) by Ann Day Dewey, 16 pgs.

Week 10: Poet Among Painters

Primary texts:

- "Personism: A Manifesto" (1959), published in *Yugen* by Frank O'Hara
- "Howl" (1956) by Allen Ginsberg
- Selected poems from *Lunch Poems* (1964) by Frank O'Hara
- Selected poems from *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975) by John Ashbery

Secondary texts:

- "Frank O'Hara and the Aesthetics of Attention" (1976), published in *boundary 2* by Marjorie Perloff, 28 pgs.
- "Tribes of New York: Frank O'Hara, Amiri Baraka, and the Poetics of the Five Spot" (2001), published in *Contemporary Poetry* by Michael Magee, 33 pgs.

Week 11: Sister Arts

Draft due

Primary texts:

- "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1985) by Audre Lorde
- *Twenty-One Love Poems* (1976) by Adrienne Rich
- Selected poems from *The Black Unicorn* (1987) by Audre Lorde

Secondary text:

- "An Interview with Audre Lorde" (1981), published in *Signs* by Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, 24 pgs.
- "Feminism and its Differences" (1990), published in *Pacific Coast Philology* by Teresa di Lauretis, 7 pgs.

Week 12: L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Beyond the Manifesto

Writing Workshop

Primary texts:

- "Barbarism" from *The Language of Inquiry* (2000) by Lyn Hejinian
- Selections from *My Life* (1987) by Lyn Hejinian
- Selected poems from *With Strings* (2001) and *Girly Man* (2006) by Charles Bernstein

Secondary text:

- "Beyond the Manifesto: Language Poetry and Lyn Hejinian's *The Language of Inquiry*" (2005) by Srikanth Reddy

Reading Period: Final paper due