ENG 510, Fall 2014
Poetry as Difference
Professor Lauri Ramey
Thursdays, 6:10-10:00 pm

You are welcome to contact Professor Ramey for further information. Please be sure to request the first assignment from the professor or department in August. All course materials will be electronic or provided to you in class. There are no required textbooks.

Course Description:

Throughout its history, lyric poetry’s “difference” from other types of communication—even from other literary genres—has been considered an integral part of its identity. As a genre that has consistently defied expectations and reinvented itself, two hotly debated questions are: “What is poetry?” and “How do you read a poem?” We will focus on a wide range of British, American and world poetry in translation from the origins of the genre to the present. Students will be encouraged to arrive at their individual answers to these two questions and ask others. Drawing on many world cultures and historical periods—in addition to the Anglo-American canon—we will read and consider song lyrics, oral and spoken word poetry, concrete and visual poetry, political and protest poetry, poetry by those who have been marginalized, inter-media and digital poetics, experimental and innovative poetry, and more. We will combine creative and critical approaches to focus on poetry’s ability to represent difference in meaningful ways. We also will discuss canon formation and marginalization as we create our own poetry canon as a class project. Participants will gain broad exposure to the past and present of poetry and poetics, actively contribute to the course’s direction, and gain tactics and confidence to engage with poetry that seems “different.”

Teaching Methods:

Teaching methods will include readings in poetry and poetics, manifestos and criticism, seminar discussions, class activities, presentations by visiting poets and performers, lectures, primary source research, student presentations and intensive writing experience.

Grading:

Evaluation methods and criteria, which will be fully explained, are inquiry-driven, based on student-centered learning formats, and oriented towards fulfilling individual goals in a collaborative environment.

Special Events and Activities:

Visiting poets and performers will be an integral part of the curriculum. Some highlights will be a musical performance and workshop on modern British poetry related to the World War I Centennial; focus on the historic Furious Flower African American Poetry Conference; a poetic symposium on the 50th anniversary of the “Freedom Summer” and international civil rights movements; a class poetry and jazz performance; and events sponsored by Statement Magazine and the Center for Contemporary Poetry and Poetics.
Assigned and Suggested Materials May Come from Some of the Following Resources, Among Others:

You will be provided with websites, and online and print journals, such as aufgabe, Writers’ Chronicle, American Poetry Review, Fences 2, electronic poetry center, PENN Sound and Ubuweb.


