This course will thrust students headlong into the dark cobwebby interiors of the modern poem. We'll look closely at how modern poems became modern, looking at several revolutions in thinking about what poems are --- beginning in England in 1798, coming to Walt Whitman’s and Emily Dickinson’s America in the 1850s, stopping in Harlem in the 1920s and ending up online. We'll look at how modern poems are actually put together, considering such elemental concerns as image, voice, structure, etc. And we'll also write our own poems, sometimes with these examples as our models. Students will leave this course with a deeper understanding of the lineage of the modern poem and what makes the modern poem go. And combined with the generous and critical attentions of the workshop, students will come to the same understanding of their own work.

The class is divided in two: We will go over the readings and sometimes do writing exercises based loosely on them in order to help us figure out what the authors are doing. And of course we'll also workshop your poems. In keeping with the college’s goals for you of Reading, Writing, Research and Public Speaking, this course will ask you to engage in all four; we will read poems, we will write poems and responses to them, we will research an area of modern poetry of your choosing, and you will present on that research, as well as present your own poems, to the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Each of you should come to class ready to discuss the reading for that week. You'll hand in 4-5 critical discussion questions about the reading. Not questions like “how many pages long is this?” but more like “how does Langston Hughes’ essay relate to Whitman’s preface to LEAVES OF GRASS?”. As a guideline, use the general topic for each class to guide your questions. Be analytical, look closely at structure, methods, techniques, etc.
- You’ll also turn in 2 copies of a half page write-up for each of the poems up for discussion that day in workshop—one copy is to hand in to me, the other for the student who was workshopped.
- Participation, of course, is not only required, but necessary. A class like this simply doesn’t work without your participation.
- Shelley wrote ODE TO THE WEST WIND without electricity, so please – no phones or laptops. It’s just for a couple of hours. I won’t check my phone while we’re in class together; please don’t check yours.
YOUR GRADE WILL BE BASED ON:

- Participation. I’m not grading you on whether or not I think your poems are amazing. I’m grading you on your participation in our little community of learners. This includes showing up and being an active participant in our discussions, as well as handing in the write ups on the readings and workshop poems. Excused absences need a doctor’s or other appropriate note; more than 2 unexcused absences will lower your letter grade a half step (i.e.: B to B-). An absence on a day you are to be workshopped is so dreadful, let’s not find out what happens if you do this.

- A large part of your grade is turning in a poem each time you are up for workshop; that means emailing your poem to all of us, on the day of class the week before your workshop. Emailing it late is an annoyance and a slippery slope, and will not be tolerated. THIS IS INFLEXIBLE.

- For Week 5, everyone will turn in a short (4-5) page paper comparing and contrasting Eliot’s and Williams’ views on poetry, in particular their use of the Demotic Voice. How do each of them fit into our timeline so far? Which one of them is the heir of the Demotic as handed down by Wordsworth, Whitman, Dickinson, etc?

- Your final research paper. This will be loosely based on our exploration over the course of the semester of the notion of the Demotic in poetry. We will discuss this further during the semester. The paper should be 10 pages. You will also do a brief presentation of your research to the class.

POINT BREAKDOWN

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<td>Participation:</td>
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<td>Paragraphs on your classmates' poems:</td>
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<td>Critical Discussion Questions:</td>
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<td>Mid-term paper: Eliot VS WCW</td>
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<td>Your poems for workshop:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper + Presentation</td>
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<td>TOTAL POINTS:</td>
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DISABILITY DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

DIFFICULT MATERIAL

We will always assume the speaker in a poem is fictional; it’s the polite thing to do. However, if the nature of your creative work is particularly disturbing, or seems to be a cry for help, I am going to email you to make sure all is well. If you would like to send me an email putting this work in context before submitting, please do. Also it should be taken for granted that the basis of all art is conflict and that you may be exposed to challenging subjects or language while reading poems. Please see me or contact me if you have any concerns.
And remember that the NYU Wellness Center is always there for you. The NYU Wellness Exchange Hotline can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (212) 443-9999.

THE WORKSHOP

It’ll work like this: We’ll write out at least half a page of comments on each poem to hand to the poet after we’re done discussing the poem. You will also give one to me. During discussion, you can read from your paragraph if you like, but you don’t need to. This is to make sure you have thought out your ideas on the poem’s strengths and weaknesses, and it’s also something the poet can return to later, to digest, and use what’s useful.

The comments should begin by focusing on what is working in the poem; what its strengths are. Then you should make suggestions for how the poem could be even more successful.

I’ll divide the class into groups for the workshop so you’ll always know what day your poem is due.

On the first day of class, we will go over the workshop model, how to think about and comment on poems, and some of the major poetic terms I’ll want you to use.
Your poem should in some way reflect the reading(s) for the week; they can be imitations of the poems, or use the same form, or deal with the same subject matter. Please come to class prepared to talk to us about how you did this.

If you all bring generous and empathetic readings of your colleague’s poems to this course, it will be an exciting and generative experience for everyone.

There is much to be learned about how poems work or don’t from listening to and participating in everyone’s discussion --- perhaps more than you can get from discussion of your own poems. I expect everyone to bring a collegial sense of constructive criticism to the class. Just like I will.

**Office Hours**

My office is on the 3rd floor in the back of the Lillian Vernon Creative Writing Center (58 West 10th Street). Office hours are XXXX There’s a sign up sheet on my door. If you can’t make these times but need to see me, we can work something out.

**BOOKS**

Sleeping On The Wing; The Lyrical Ballads; Howl; The Harlem Renaissance Reader; The Breakbeat Poets; Gwendolyn Brooks’ Selected Poems; Nature: Poems Old and New; Joy of Missing Out; Flarf: An Anthology of Flarf; Nets; A Little White Shadow; Red – these are your textbooks, and are all available at the NYU Bookstore.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

**Week 1**

*Introduction/stuff/things – poetic terms; Haiku & Stevens divide into workshop groups*

*Homework: read introduction to SLEEPING ON THE WING pp.5-16 plus entire book Lyrical Ballads (all poems EXCEPT Rime of the Ancient Mariner) and Coleridge poems on NYUClasses (Frost At Midnight; The Nightingale; This Lime Tree Bower My Prison)*

**Week 2**

*LYRICAL BALLADS + Coleridge Conversation Poems [NYUClasses] + Gray/Collins examples [NYUClasses] + Practice Workshop/ Go Over Workshop Rubric Group 1 turns in poems*
Week 3

Whitman: Leaves of Grass (Original 1855 Edition): Preface pp. 5-24; Song of Myself pp. 25-86; The Sleepers pp. 105-115
Workshop Group 1

Week 4

Emily Dickinson from SLEEPING ON THE WING pp 39-44+ letter to TW Higginson and even better poems: #193 #298 #442 #632 #695 #719 #854 #1138 #1405 #1485 #1755 [NYUClasses]
Workshop Group 2

Week 5

William Carlos Williams vs Eliot from SLEEPING ON THE WING pp. 169-176; pp 137-146+ Tradition and the Individual Talent + 2 ancillary documents [NYUClasses]
Workshop Group 3

DUE THIS WEEK: your 4-5 page paper comparing and contrasting Eliot's and WCW's views of poetry and the Demotic.

Week 6

Whitman's descendants: Ginsberg HOWL entire book+ Frank O'Hara from SLEEPING ON THE WING pp. 239-248+ even better Frank O'Hara poems A Step Away From Them; Personal Poem;Adieu to Norman....; The Day Lady Died; To the Harbormaster;Rhapsody; Poem; plus PERSONISM [NYUClasses]
Workshop Group 1

Week 7

Dickinson’s Descendants- Ana Božičević JOY OF MISSING OUT; Gwendolyn Brooks SELECTED POEMS (including afterward pp.2-33; May Swenson NATURE: POEMS OLD AND NEW (foreward pp. xvii-xxiii; poems pp 3—127)
Workshop Group 2

Week 8

Harlem Renaissance as Whitman descendants read INTRODUCTION pp. xiii-xl; Hughes p.92-95; Bennett p.221-223; Cullen p.242-251; Hughes p. 256-270; McKay p. 289-298
Workshop Group 3
### Week 9

**The Breakbeat Poets – Hip Hop and Poetry** – Introduction xv-xxii; artists’ statements pp. 312-314; 319-329


### Workshop Group 1

### Week 10

**Collage/Flarf** --Goldsmith essay + Flarf online discussion [NYUClasses]+ FLARF: An Anthology of Flarf: Anne Boyer pp.12-18; Maria Damon pp. 25-26; Jordan Davis pp. 27-33; Katie Degentesh pp 34-56; Drew Gardner p. 82; Sharon Mesmer pp 156-175; K. Silem Mohammad pp 176-200; Eirikur Örn Norddahl pp 214-219; Gary Sullivan pp 237-252.

### Workshop Group 2

### Week 11

**Language As Material** – Gertrude Stein pp 82-94 in Sleeping On the Wing + John Yau Russian Letter; The Late Tale; Another Late Tale; Storied Fibs Piled High; Oval of Oxidized Potatoes; Muddy Putti Under Impecunious Sun; Ninety-Nine Yaupon Rosary Cycle; Borrowed Love Poems [NYUClasses]

### Workshop Group 3

### Week 12

**Erasure**—Visual Language? Jen Bervin, NETS, Mary Ruefle, A LITTLE WHITE SHADOW, Chase Berggrun, RED

Research Presentation to Class, Group 1

### Week 13

**Revision** – Bishop; Wright; Wilco examples [NYUClasses]

Research Presentation to Class, Group 2

### Week 14

Last Day of Class

Research Presentation to Class Group 3; Final Exam