

Carleton University Department of English

WINTER 2023

ENGL 3916A / AFRI 3916A: SPOKEN WORD POETRY WORKSHOP

**Prerequisite(s):** third-year standing, a 2000-level creative writing workshop, and permission of the instructor.

**Thursdays, 11:35am - 2:25pm Location: SA 505**

**Professor: Nduka Otiono**

**Office Hours: Thursdays 2.30-4.30pm and  
by appointment**

**Email:** [ndukaotiono@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:ndukaotiono@cunet.carleton.ca)

Spoken Word: “A broad designation for poetry intended for performance. Though some spoken word poetry may also be published on the page, the genre has its roots in oral traditions and performance. Spoken word can encompass or contain elements of rap, hip-hop, storytelling, theater, and jazz, rock, blues, and folk music.”

—Poetry Foundation

**I. Course Description:**

This intermediate-level workshop-based course explores traditions and forms of spoken word poetry while requiring students to create and perform their own spoken word poems. The course begins by examining traditional oral performance origins of spoken word art, and throughout the term combines theory and praxis to enable students to develop their own distinctive spoken word styles in writing and performance. As a workshop-based course, students are required to develop their own portfolio of poems and to showcase these through weekly performances, peer reviews, and digital archiving. Students are expected to prepare short presentations on specific themes and forms of spoken word assigned by the instructor or chosen by the student, share their weekly compositions in advance with the class, participate in respectful and candid oral critiques of class presentations, and submit written responses to assigned Readings.

**II. Learning Outcomes:**

- Students expected to emerge from this course with a tangible creative project in the form of a **Chapbook** or collection of peer-reviewed spoken word poems and a portfolio of performances.
- Students to develop sharp critical awareness (critical Readings, critical thinking, and critical writing skills), self-editing skills, and offering constructive peer review to fellow writers/students.
- Students are expected to hone spoken word performance skills on stage and electronically/digitally. Students to create digital platforms to showcase their work.

### III. Required Texts:

Note: All the texts required for this course are available electronically. You can find them either through the MacOdrum Library, or they will be made available by the instructor through Brightspace/Ares.

#### Basic reference texts for further Readings:

1. Merrill, Miles, and Narcisa Nozzica. *Slam Your Poetry: Write a Revolution*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2020. Print. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/lib/oculcarleton-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=6166730>
2. Eleveld, Mark, and Marc Smith. *The Spoken Word Revolution : Slam, Hip Hop & the Poetry of a New Generation*. Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2004. Print.

### IV. Course requirements:

To successfully complete this course, students must take note of the following:

- Encouraged to share in Brightspace any resources related to the course that they encounter in their personal research for the benefit of the whole class.
  - The success of this workshop and your development as a writer/artist/student depends upon attending the sessions regularly, contributing to discussions, and fully engaging in workshops. You should, therefore, be ready to circulate your creative work among your peers and have it openly discussed. As well as receiving and considering the comments of others on your writing, you will offer your peers constructive, thoughtful feedback as well.
  - Have access to the university e-mail account and library databases. All communication for the course must be written from your valid Carleton email address. I will send out important information, notes, announcements, and changes in the schedule via email. It is your responsibility to check your Brightspace and Carleton email account in a timely manner to receive all the information I send out.

Email etiquette: Please ensure that there is a clear subject line to which your message pertains—include the course number. Do not be sloppy and casual in your messages to me. I consider all emails to be documents, so please be cautious as to what you write in them. Before sending urgent emails remember that it may take at least two business days for me to reply to emails.

- Attend all lectures. There is a direct link between attendance and success. Participation in classes is vital for fostering your understanding of the course materials. If you miss classes, it is your responsibility to find out about any changes made to the schedule, or any assignments which were announced in class. I will not provide notes to students who miss classes.
- Submit all assignments electronically via Brightspace by midnight on the eve of the due date—except where otherwise stated. All assignments are mandatory. There is a 2% penalty per day for late papers. If a late submission of a paper or an assignment is unavoidable due to personal or medical reasons, please inform me before the due date. I do not accept papers that are submitted after assignments have been graded, typically about weeks after submissions.

- Come to class prepared—ensure to have read the texts and watched the videos scheduled for each week. If there are changes to the schedule, the students will be informed either in class or via Brightspace.
- Ensure that the use of laptops, cellular phones, and other digital devices is limited to course-related activity. These devices should not become a distraction in class. Students engaged in other activities with their laptops may be asked to leave the class.
- Avoid sexist, racist, and homophobic remarks as these will not be tolerated in class. You must be respectful of all minority groups, always. Talking in class while others are speaking will not be tolerated. Any behavior considered disruptive to the professor and/or fellow students is prohibited. Students engaging in such behaviour will be dealt with according to university regulations.

## V. Evaluation:

1) **15%** Spoken word performances at the weekly workshop: Every other week, each student will perform their poems at the workshop. Further details to be provided in class.

2) **15%** Readings Response:

Students will submit a 1000-word critical response to the assigned Readings.

Details to be provided in the assignment prompt. **Due on February 1.**

3) Midterm: **10%**: Students will submit 1,500-word description and rationale for their final chapbook and spoken word performance project. We will discuss these in the workshops and offer advice, feedback, and other comments to support students as they move ahead with final their projects. **Assignment due on March 1.**

4) **15 %** Attendance and active engagement in the workshops: The success of this workshop and your development as a writer/artist/student depends upon attending the sessions regularly, contributing to discussions, sharing useful resources on Brightspace, and fully engaging in workshops. Consequently, students must attend and actively engage in the workshops and on the course Brightspace.

5) **45%** Final exam project: The final exam (project) comprises two sections: **a)** The final Chapbook (**30%**), and **b)** The final spoken word performance (**15%**) on the last day of class, *April 6*. Please note that the final spoken work performance shall be open to the public and will be held at a venue to be announced. Students are required to workshop their work-in-progress by Readings Week, and again towards the end of term, so there is time to consider feedback before the final submission. Each student will have the opportunity to workshop their project(s) at least twice.

The Chapbook shall be professionally packaged in a bound volume, complete with a well-designed cover. **Due on April 27.**

## GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)	F= 0-49 (0) – Failure: no academic credit
A = 85-89 (11)	B - = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)	

A - = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)	
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)	

The following additional final course grades may be assigned by instructors:

**DEF** Official deferral of final exam (see "Petitions to Defer")

**GNA** Grade not available. This is used when there is an allegation of an academic offence. The notation is replaced with the appropriate grade for the course as soon as it is available.

**IP** In Progress – a notation (IP) assigned to a course by a faculty member when: At the undergraduate level, an undergraduate thesis or course has not been completed by the end of the period of registration.

**WDN** Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

#### **WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY**

**January 20, 2023:** Last day to withdraw from early winter courses with a full fee adjustment.

Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

**April 12, 2023:** Last day of full winter, late winter, and fall/winter classes.

#### **PETITIONS TO DEFER**

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply within five working days to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered.

## **VI. Weekly Course Schedule**

### **Week 1: Introduction**

**Jan. 12**

- Introduction: Review of course outline; introduction to the workshop, its goals, themes, and expectations.
- Backgrounds to the course: What is Spoken Word Poetry?
- Readings due:
  1. [What Is Spoken Word Poetry? \(with pictures\) \(infobloom.com\)](https://www.infobloom.com)
  2. Poetry's power with Lebo Mashile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE4iwghV4xQ>
  3. Susan B. A. Somers-Willett, "From Slam to Def Poetry Jam: Spoken Word Poetry and its Counterpublics." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* Vol. 10, No. 3/4 (2014).  
<http://liminalities.net/10-3/spoken.pdf>
- *Sign up for presentations and manuscript submission dates.*

**Week 2: Understanding Spoken Word****Jan. 19**

- Workshop: Project proposals
- Discussion topic – The creative process. Students to engage in open discussion of what they understand by “inspiration,” “perspiration,” and “the creative process.” Demonstrate with personal examples. Amanda Gorman - Presentation & Readings:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cZUI3hRBB4>
- Presentations: Micro spoken word poetry performance (Open Mic)
- Readings due:
  1. Okoye, Chike, and Stella Okoye-Ugwu. “From Minstrelsy to the Spoken Word Poet: Oral Tradition and Postcolonial Nigeria.” *Cogent arts & humanities* 8.1 (2021): n.p. Web.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311983.2021.1933306>
  2. Richard Bauman, “Verbal Art as Performance.” *American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Jun., 1975)*, pp. 290-311 (22 pages)
  3. “9 Public Speaking Tips, from Spoken Word Poet Pages Matam.”  
<https://www.adobe.com/express/learn/blog/9-public-speaking-tips-according-to-spoken-word-poet-pages-matam>
  4. “5 Tips on Spoken Word.” <https://powerpoetry.org/actions/5-tips-spoken-word>
  5. How to Write Spoken Word Poetry  
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-spoken-word-poetry>

**Week 3: “The Word Made Flesh”****Jan. 26**

- Presentations
- Workshop manuscripts/projects
- Readings due:
  1. Curwood, Jen Scott, and Katelyn Jones. “A Bridge Across Our Fears: Understanding Spoken Word Poetry in Troubled Times.” *Literacy (Oxford, England)* 56.1 (2022): 50–58. Web. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1111/lit.12270>
  2. Raphael d’Abdon, “Go Fetisa Lekoalo/Beyond Literature: Orality, Poetry and Music in Post-apartheid Spoken Word Poetry.” In *Oral Literary Performance in Africa: Beyond Genre*. Edited by Nduka Otiono. London: Routledge, 2021. 210-229.

**Week 4: Forms of Spoken Word – Beat Boxing****Feb. 2**

- Presentations
- Workshop manuscripts/projects
- Readings due:
  1. “Beatboxing, rap, and spoken word Creating contemporary music and lyrics inspired by culture and heritage” <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/eb8fb436-e14f-404f-8d47->

[cf12f4b186f5/beatboxing-rap](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cf12f4b186f5)

2. Beatbox Freestyle by Badaboom Tee. <https://poetrysociety.org.uk/poems/beatbox-freestyle/>
3. How to beatbox in 6 steps: With this beginners' course everyone can learn to beatbox!  
<https://seboom.com/en/how-to-beatbox>
4. "Hip Hop: A Culture of Vision and Voice"  
<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/>

### **Week 5: Publishing Poetry—chapbooks, lit-mags and literary competitions Feb 9**

Readings due: "How to Self-Publish a Chapbook" By Trish Hopkinson.

Kevin Larimer, "Publishing 101 for Poets"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QpNU6l8PCE>

DIY video talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeOMTZGLUyQ>

- Presentations
- Workshop manuscripts/projects

### **Week 6: Spoken Word and Millennial activism (Part 1)**

**Feb 17**

Presentations

Workshop manuscripts/projects

Readings due:

Chepp, V. (2016). "Activating Politics with Poetry and Spoken Word." *Contexts*, 15(4), 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504216685109>

**Readings Week: February 20-24, University Closed**

### **Week 7: Spoken Word and Millennial activism (Part 2)**

**Mar. 2**

- Presentations
- Workshop manuscripts/projects
- Readings due:
  1. Walkington, L. Speak About It, Be About It: Spoken-Word Poetry Communities and Transformative Social Justice. *Crit Crim* 29, 649–666 (2021).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-020-09510-8>
  2. Crystal Leigh Endsley; Performing Blackness: Spoken Word Poetry and Performance. *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 1 January 2014; 24 (1-2): 110–120. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5325/trajincschped.24.1-2.0110>

**Week 8: Home and Apocalypse****Mar 9**

- Presentations
- Workshop manuscripts/projects
- Readings due:

Jennifer Burton, Saskia Van Viegen, “Spoken Word Poetry with Multilingual Youth from Refugee Backgrounds,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 10.1002/jaal.1178, 65, 1, (75-84), (2021).

<https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jaal.1080>

Facing History and Ourselves, “‘Home’ by Warsan Shire:

<https://www.amnesty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/home-by-warsan-shire.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwp4uB5R6Bw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwp4uB5R6Bw>

**Week 9: Visual Art and Poetry (Ekphrastic poetry)****Mar. 16**

- Presentations
  - Workshop manuscripts/projects
  - Readings due:
1. Ekphrastic poetry –  
[https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/poetry\\_and\\_art/downloads/ekphrasis.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/poetry_and_art/downloads/ekphrasis.pdf)
  2. How to construct visual poem  
([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWpMB6gmBYA&ab\\_channel=GettyMuseum](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWpMB6gmBYA&ab_channel=GettyMuseum))
  3. Art and poetry  
[https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/poetry\\_and\\_art/downloads/poet\\_artists\\_2017.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/poetry_and_art/downloads/poet_artists_2017.pdf)

**Week 10: Workshop—Chapbook and final performance prep****Mar. 23**

Presentations

Workshop manuscripts/projects

**Week 11: Workshop—Chapbook and final performance prep****Mar. 30**

Presentations/Rehearsals

Workshop manuscripts/projects

**Week 12: Final Presentations****Apr. 6**

## VII. PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” According to the Department examples of plagiarism include the following:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another’s data or research findings.
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks.

*Please note that submitting without permission substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit is prohibited in this course.*

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

## VI. Statement on Student Mental Health

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

**Emergency Resources (on and off campus):** <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

### Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

### Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>



- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

## VII. Statement on Pandemic Measures

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are [a number of actions you can take](#) to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

**Feeling sick?** Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you should follow Carleton's [symptom reporting protocols](#).

**Masks:** Masks are no longer mandatory in university buildings and facilities. However, we continue to recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are aware that personal preferences regarding optional mask use will vary greatly, and we ask that we all show consideration and care for each other during this transition.

**Vaccines:** While proof of vaccination is no longer required to access campus or participate in in-person Carleton activities, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get a full course of vaccination, including booster doses as soon as they are eligible and submit their booster dose information in [cuScreen](#) as soon as possible. Please note that Carleton cannot guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact [covidinfo@carleton.ca](mailto:covidinfo@carleton.ca).

## VIII. Requests for Academic Accommodations

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students

with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>