

**Fall 2009**  
**English Department**

**ENGL 5601: Twentieth-Century Poetry**  
**Hybridity, History, and Subjectivity:**  
**Long Poems of the Long Twentieth-Century**

**Classes Wed. 1:00-4:00 Location: DT 1816**

**Instructor: Brenda Carr Vellino**  
**Office: 1815 Dunton Tower**  
**Office Hours: T/Th: 3:00-4:00; W 4:00-5:00**  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course investigates the long poem as one of the major innovations in twentieth and twenty-first century literary forms. Celebrated for its embrace of diverse literary and non-literary genres, the long poem may interweave elements of the epic, the novel, the lyric, autobiography, biography, history, photographs, newspaper articles, court records and diverse cultural practices. The long poem is, as Virginia Woolf once said of the novel, “a capacious hold-all,” as it extends itself through juxtaposition, serializing, sequencing, and interrogative recontextualization of voices, intertexts, and discourses. I am especially interested in how the long poem’s expansive form and archeological depth may prove ideally suited to explorations of multi-layered concepts of subjectivity, history, language, memory, community, ecology, and nation. Some questions we may consider include the following: What are the temporal and spatial effects of structures of extension, expansion, accumulation, association, and juxtaposition? What are the consequences of structures of layering, palimpsest, accumulation, simultaneity, disjuncture, and rupture? How does the contemporary long poem work with or against the epic impulse to sing the “tale of the tribe,” a singular story of communal identity? How does it refashion quest narratives which dramatize longing for self-identity and self-revelation, territorial location, familial and national origins, each associated with the autobiographical, mythic, and epic narrative impulse? When is the mixing of forms, discourses, and voices related to the postcolonial mixing of languages, cultures, and ethnic/racial identities?

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1 long poem annotation and commentary (2-3 pgs); due Class 2:	10%
1 critical annotation of/introduction of key argument in scholarly article on weekly long poem: due in class:	
10 %	
2 short response papers (2 pages; may be in poetic form):	
10%	
Essay Proposal with annotated Works Cited: Due via email Nov. 20th:	5%
Seminar (30 - 40 minutes)	
30%	
Essay: Due Dec. 16th: (15-20 pages) -	
35%	

**Course Policy:** Students must complete all assignments to receive final grade. In a seminar class, attendance is not optional. Missing more than two classes without a significant and documented reason (health, family crisis etc.) will result in a penalty of writing a final exam. Students are expected to come to class with poems and critical articles read, annotated, and ready for discussion.

**COURSE TEXTS** (Available at Mothertongue Books, Bank and Sunnyside or Course Folder:/Photocopy Room 1812A)

**Key: CF: Course Folder**

Muriel Rukeyser. from *U.S. I*: "The Book of the Dead," 1938, (The Gauley Bridge poems). (CF)  
Anna Akhmatova. *Requiem* (1942-50), 1963. (CF).  
H.D. *Trilogy*. 1944-46. New Directions, 1973.  
William Carlos Williams. *Paterson*. (1946-1958), New Directions, 1992.  
Daphne Marlatt. *Steveston*. Ronsedale Press. 1974, 2001.  
Adrienne Rich. *Atlas of the Difficult World*, New Directions, 1991.  
Derek Walcott. *Omeros*, New Directions, 1990.  
Brand, Dionne. *Inventory*. McClelland & Stewart, 2006.  
Louise Halfe. *Blue Marrow*. 2nd ed. Coteau Books, 2005.  
Gary Snyder. *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. 1996.  
Lillburn, Tim. *To The River*. McClelland & Stewart, 1999.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Wk 1/Sept. 16th: Genre Questions & Modernisms

\*Lynn Keller, "The Twentieth-Century Long Poem." *The Columbia History of American Poetry*. Jay Parini and Brett C. Miller, eds. New York: Columbia, 1993: 534-563. (CF)  
\*from *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1993): entry on the "Modern Long Poem" and "Lyric Sequence": pp. 791-792, 727-729. (CF)  
\*Keller, Lynn. "Introduction: Pushing the Limits of Genre and Gender: Women's Long Poems as Forms of Expansion." *Forms of Expansion: Recent Long Poems by Women*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1-17. (CF)

\*A short Modernist long poem: T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925) - HO

### Wk 2/Sept. 23rd: Documentary Modernism: Muriel Rukeyser, "Book of the Dead"

\*Thurston, Michael. "Documentary Modernism as Popular Front Poetics: Muriel Rukeyser's "Book of the Dead." *Modern Language Quarterly*. 60.1 (March 1999): 59-74. (CF)

### \*Poetry annotation and analysis due

### Wk 3/Sept. 30th: International Modernism: Anna Akhmatova, *Requiem*

\*Harrington, Alexandra. "Introduction." and "Requiem--the Upturned World and the

Disintegrating Self.” *The Poetry of Anna Akhmatova: Living in Different Mirrors*. London, UK; Anthem Press, 2006: 11-30; and 87-112.

**Wk 4/Oct. 7th: Mythopoeic Modernism: H.D., *Trilogy***

\*Dekoven, Marianne. Excerpts from “Modernism and Gender.” *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999: 174-176, 182-190.

**or**

\*excerpts from articles on H.D.’s *Trilogy* under the H.D. entry, Modern American Poetry Site: [www.english.illinois.edu/maps/](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/)

**Wk 5/Oct. 14th: Urban Pastoral: William Carlos Williams, *Paterson***

\*Mikkelson, Ann. “‘The Truth About Us’: Pastoral, Pragmatism, and *Paterson*.” *American Literature*. 75.3 (Sept. 2003): 601-27. (CF)

**Wk 6/Oct. 21st: Late Modernism of the Local: Daphne Marlatt, *Steveston***

\*Charles Olson, “Projective Verse.” (CF)

\*Egan, Susanna. “The Shifting Grounds of Exile and Home in Daphne Marlatt’s *Steveston*.” *Tracing the Autobiographical*. Eds. Marlene Kadar et al. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005.

**or**

\*Curran, Beverly. “In her Element: Daphne Marlatt, the Lesbian Body, and the Environment.” *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Ed. J. Scott Bryson. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2002: 195-206. (CF)

**Wk 7/Oct. 28th: Citizen Poet: Adrienne Rich, *Atlas of the Difficult World***

\*Gwiazda, Piotr. “‘Nothing Else Left to Read’: Poetry and Audience in Adrienne Rich’s ‘An Atlas of the Difficult World.’” *Journal of Modern Literature* 28.2 (2005): 165-188: Available electronically through the library databases.

**Wk 9/Nov. 4th: The Diasporic Long Poem: Derek Walcott, *Omeros***

\*Zoppi, Isabella Maria. “*Omeros*, Derek Walcott and the Contemporary Epic Poem.” *Callaloo* 22.2 (1999): 509-528.

**or**

Rotella, Guy. “Derek Walcott: ‘The Sea is History,’ *Omeros*, and Others.” *Castings: Monuments and Monumentality in Poems by Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, James Merrill, Derek Walcott, and Seamus Heaney*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, 2004.

**Wk 9/Nov. 11th: Archive of the (Im)Possible: Dionne Brand, *Inventory***

\*Lousley, Cheryl. “Witness to the Body Count: Planetary Ethics in Dionne Brand’s *Inventory*.” *Canadian Poetry*. 63 (Fall/Winter 2008): 37-58.

**Wk 10/Nov. 18th: Indigenizing the Long Poem: Louise Halfe, *Blue Marrow***

\*Cook, Meira. “Bone Memory: Transcribing Voice in Louise Bernice Halfe’s *Blue Marrow*.” *Canadian Literature*: 16.6 (2000): 85-110.

**Wk 11/Nov. 25th: Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End***

\*Murphy, Patrick D. “The Calligraphy of Water on Rock: Mountains and Rivers Without End.” *A Place for Wayfaring: The Poetry and Prose of Gary Snyder*. Corvallis: Oregon

State UP, 2000: 178-208.

*or*

Dean, Tim. excerpts from "The Other's Voice: Cultural Imperialism and Poetic Impersonality in Gary Snyder's "Mountains and Rivers Without End." *Contemporary Literature*. 41.3 (Autumn 2000): 462-94. See 462-73, 484-94.

**Wk 12/Dec. 11th: Tim Lilburn, *To the River***

**\*essay TBA**

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **1 Poetry Annotation and Commentary (2-3 pages typed):**

- \*Each student will complete this assignment for the week two discussion of Muriel Rukeyser's "Book of the Dead."
- \*Please refer to the "Working with the Long Poem" guide as a starting point.
- \*underline, circle, and comment on text actively
- \*Look up references to words, place names, literary, and historical figures with which you are unfamiliar (annotations should include handwritten glosses on references and allusions)
- \*Read for patterns of recurrence: images, key issues, speakers, formal strategies
- \*Write a short commentary on one or two of these recurrences in a way that opens up insight into the long poem as a whole.

### **1 Critical Article Review & Discussion Leader (2-3 pages):**

While all seminar participants are expected to read one of the critical articles, one student will introduce the key issues taken up by a scholarly article in each class. Actively read the assigned critical article. Write an abstract of the article, elucidating the central questions, debates, or issues the author develops. Expand on the following questions: Identify the critic's theoretical, philosophical frameworks. Consider the usefulness, appropriateness of this framework to their discussion. Illuminate for your seminar mates what insights this article opens up for the long poem under discussion. Discuss any areas where you disagree with the critic's reading or would like to see more nuance or further development. Was there sufficient evidence for the critic's reading? Were there relevant issues that were under-addressed in this article? Prepare to lead a ten minute discussion on this article and hand in your review after the main seminar presentation.

### **2 Response Papers (2-3 pages):**

Choose two classes in which you are not giving a seminar or doing a scholarly article introduction. Write a short response paper on the long poem up for discussion on the given day. The forms your responses may take can vary. They may focus on a striking image motif, speaker, formal strategy, genre question, or philosophical, political issue. They may also take the form of a creative written or visual response (collage, built box, 3-D sculpture, drawing, painting etc.)

**Due date:** response papers are due in class on the day we discuss the long poem you write on unless there are outstanding circumstances.

## SEMINARS

\*I will introduce the key biographical, political, historical pressure points at the time of the composition of this long poem, but seminar presenter will also want to be familiar with these.

**\*Mapping your poem:** Develop an insightful reading of the particular long poem through discussion of how the sequence works in its entirety. Preview the key connecting questions, issues, motifs, and patterns ect. Perhaps consider how diverse and distinctive genres, documents, mediums, discourses, voices, images, and tropes contribute to the overall texture of the poem or how the poem extends itself formally; how does this contribute to its negotiation of questions of time, space, history, and subjectivity?

**\*Poetics:** Each presenter should provide a brief poetics synopsis and analysis: Actively read at least one interview or one essay on poetic vision, aesthetics, and politics by the long poem poet of the give week. Provide several key quotations from the poetics for your seminar mates (on handout). Consider whether the poet's ideas about how his/her poems work formally or philosophically actually translate to the practice of the poem or do not always quite match up. Give a concrete example from the long poem. Consider whether this poet's poetics were useful or illuminating to your understanding of the poem Why? Why not? Keep in mind that sometimes poetics represent a poetic ideal that is not always precisely realized in practice and that some poets can be intentionally opaque, frustrating, or cunning, while others seek an open-hearted exchange with the community of their readers.

**\*Reading Aloud:** Provide for reading aloud from segments of the long poem to get the oral/aural effects. This can have a surprising impact.

**\*Focusing Passages:** Pick one or two central segments from the poem to focus intensive discussion of the poem around. As with your poetry commentary from week 2, this could foregr

**\*Handout:** Offer a handout (1-2 pages) which should include "Key Quotations" from the poet's poetics when available, as well as outline of major motifs and key questions. Handouts should also include Focusing Questions and a Works Cited page.

**\*Focusing Questions:** Provoke insightful discussion about the poem through a minimum of three well-articulated, incisive focusing questions. You may intersperse these throughout your seminar. Invite dialogue, discussion, and participation from your seminar-mates.

**\*Annotated poems;** All students are required to hand in an annotated copy of your poem. You may hand in your book. Please annotate in pencil only!

**\*Presentation Style:** I discourage simply reading a seminar paper, but I do require well-developed seminar notes to be handed in at seminar's end. I also discourage Power Point Presentations because they typically take away valuable time from reading and thinking and also render the classroom experience passive and screen-centric. I am open to debate on this point.

**\*Proper oral crediting of sources in seminars:** Oral quotations in seminars should be indicated orally with such markers as “I Quote from” to begin and “End Quote” to end or “these ideas are developed from critic x in his/her study titled x.”

## RESEARCH ESSAY

\*Your research essay will focus on a single poet and long poem This poet may be the same as that of your seminar if you expand and develop your insights.

\*You will need to provide a Selective and Comparative Critical Biography (consulting at least 2 sources with at least 1 non-internet source; Sources from the electronic library-based databases are not considered internet!)

\*See Modern American Poetry Site (MAPS) compiled by Cary Nelson and the Literature Resource Centre for starting points.

\*Many of the priorities identified for the seminar apply for the essays in that I want you to demonstrate an insightful, contextualized and/or theorized engagement with major questions raised by your chosen poem. These may include questions of genre, history, language, nation, memory, ecology, subjectivity, body, social identities, agency, transgression, re-vision, negotiation, contradiction, and hybridity.

\* Use literary criticism selectively and to enhance your argument. Do not let the critics’ readings undermine or overwhelm your own critical potential and voice.

**\*Essay Proposal:** All students should submit a proposal to me on email by Nov. 20th. This proposal should include a working thesis and plan of development which sets forth your argument and primary and secondary resources including poetics, critics, theorists, key terms etc. You should also include an **Annotated Works Cited** with at least 3 out of 7 source annotated (your annotation should provide a one paragraph summary of the main pts. and the usefulness to your working thesis). Your overall works cited should include a diversity of kinds of sources such as one article, one book, one essay or interview on poetics where available.

\*You may go outside of poets in the course anthology for your essay, but if you do so, please attach a copy of the poem with your essay.

\*Essay Due Date: Dec. 16th The student doing a seminar in the last week of class is granted a one week extension from their seminar date.

**Essay Submission Requirements Checklist:**

\*Brainstorming, pre-writing notes, and thorough notes on the poems: I want to see strong engagement with the writing process.

\*Copy of poem if not in anthology

\*SASE envelope if you want your essay returned with comments or indicate to me that you will pick up your essay from me in the winter term.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Intellectual honesty and commitment is considered the ground rule of any university level course. If you have been tempted to use someone else's work as your own in the past and if you find yourself presently tempted because of stress, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about the extenuating circumstances, so that we can work together to create the space and means for you to do work of the highest integrity. Plagiarism is not only theft of someone else's work, but it also plants a seed of mistrust and alienation in the teacher-student relationship and robs the student of the joys of genuine intellectual inquiry and discovery. Please ensure that all sources (including biographical and internet) you use in seminars and essays are properly credited. "Grey areas" of plagiarism sometimes arise from confusion about what counts as "putting things in your own words" or paraphrase. This would include direct quotation or mostly direct quotation from a source or sources you *do* document in your seminar or essay but *do not* indicate is direct quotation. If you change a word or three in a critic's sentence, this is *not* acceptable paraphrase. Put altered words in brackets and put the whole sentence in quotes. For further information on plagiarism see the statement on "Instructional Offenses" in the Carleton Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Please register with the Paul Menton Centre (500 UNI Centre) at 520-2608 to obtain a Letter of Accommodation for any special needs. Then, please make an appointment with me so that we can work together. Please note the following deadline for submitting completed forms to the PMC for formally scheduled exam accommodations: March 11, 2005 for April exams.

### **For Religious Observance:**

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may

contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

**For Pregnancy:**

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.