

English 741
**Seminar in American Studies:
Thinking Through Modern American Poetry**

West Virginia University, Fall 2016

Wednesdays, 7-9:50pm, Colson Hall G10

Instructor Johanna Winant

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- Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-11:30am

Rationale What is a lyric poem? And, given the broad variation and wild experimentation that characterize modern American poetry, how can we define, or even describe, the modern American lyric? Addressing these questions is the goal of this course, and we'll approach from two dovetailing directions. First, we'll read significant works in lyric theory written by American literary critics and scholars from New Criticism on. Second, we'll read lyric poems by modern American poets that take up these same questions *ars poetically*, in and by means of poetry. This course will familiarize students with modern debates in lyric theory and give you more background in modern American poetry. But it will also prompt students to investigate not just aesthetic and poetic categories and criteria, but also more general intellectual ones, including what counts as thinking and theorization in the first place, and why.

Assignments You will be responsible for writing seven blog posts of approximately 500 words each and an article-length essay.

Calendar

Wednesday, August 17

T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Wednesday, August 24

Ezra Pound, selections from the *Cantos*
Hugh Kenner, selections from *The Pound Era*

Wednesday, August 31

Wallace Stevens, selection of poems
Marjorie Perloff, "Pound/Stevens: Whose Era?"
Helen Vendler, "Introduction" and chapter 1 from *On Extended Wings*

Wednesday, September 7

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*
Lyn Hejinian, *My Life*, and "Two Stein Talks" from *The Language of Inquiry*

Wednesday, September 14

Emily Dickinson, selection of poems
Sharon Cameron, the first chapter of *Lyric Time*
Virginia Jackson, the introduction to *Dickinson's Misery*

Wednesday, September 21

Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* and a section of *Pierce-Arrow*
Brian Lennon's review of *Pierce-Arrow* in the *Boston Review*

Wednesday, September 28

Hart Crane, "Proem" and "The Broken Tower"
Allen Grossman, "On Communicative Difficulty in General and
'Difficult' Poetry in Particular: The Example of Hart Crane's 'The
Broken Tower'" from *True-Love* and "My Caedmon: Thinking About
the Poetic Vocation," from *The Long Schoolroom: Lessons in the Bitter
Logic of the Poetic Principle,*" and a selection of his poetry

Wednesday, October 5

Marianne Moore, selection of poems
Elizabeth Bishop, selection of poems

Wednesday, October 12

Maureen McLane, *My Poets* chapters on Bishop, Stein, Stevens, Moore,
Susan Howe, also some of *This Blue*

Wednesday, October 19

John Ashbery, *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, essays on Stein and Bishop
Frank O'Hara, selection of poems
Oren Izenberg, "The Justice of My Feelings for Frank O'Hara"
from *Being Numerous*

Wednesday, October 26

Anne Carson, "Prologue" and first two chapters of *The Economy of the
Unlost*, and "The Glass Essay"

Wednesday, November 2

Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, selections from *Columbarium*
Abstract due for final essay

Wednesday, November 9

Jonathan Culler, "Genre" from *Theory of the Lyric*
Virginia Jackson, introduction to *Dickinson's Misery*

Wednesday, November 16

Ben Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry* and selections from *Angle of Yaw*

Wednesday, November 30

Presentations