

Creative Writing, Comparative Writing

CL 50 (CCN: 15108)

TWTTh 3:00–5:30p

Course website: creativewritingcomparativewriting.wordpress.comBox folder: berkeley.app.box.com/folder/137867619583Mary Mussman (mary.mussman@berkeley.edu)Office Hours: [by appointment](#)**Course Overview**

What is a comparative poetics? Across which boundaries does poetry move—and move us? This creating writing course takes up the question of how poetry moves across form, language, media, the self, geography, and our readerly expectations. Over the course of the summer session, we will pair the practice of writing our own poetry with the critical reading of poetic texts and one another's work. Each week of this course is organized around a theme: form(ation), translation, mixed-mediation, narrativization, re/dislocation, and experimentation. These six themes will both serve as the basis for weekly prompts and will also center our discussions of poetry by Rosa Alcalá, Jen Bervin, Sagawa Chika and Sawako Nakayasu, Lyn Hejinian, Bhanu Kapil, Douglas Kearney, M. NourbeSe Philip, Simone White, and others. These discussions will ground twice-weekly workshops (which will open with discussions of a published poem), in which we will share and discuss work in progress.

By the end of the course, each of you will have produced a portfolio of poems, given a presentation or performance of your work, and developed a statement on poetics; you will also have gained skills in approaching poetic texts ranging from Middle English lyric to contemporary multi-lingual translations, from life writing caught up in the present to works entangled in historical archives—skills that will prepare you to read poetic texts in the future and that will offer a foundation for your own writing practices.

Required Texts*How to Wash a Heart*, Bhanu Kapil**Mouth: Eats Color*, Sagawa Chika and Sawako Nakayasu†*My Life*, Lyn Hejinian**Nets*, Jen Bervin†*Zong!*, M. NourbeSe Philip***Texts on Box**

“A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance,” Stéphane Mallarmé

“f.u.gitivity” and selected multimedia works, Douglas Kearney

“The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France,” Blaise Cendrars

“You, Very Young in New York,” Hannah Sullivan

19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei, Eliot Weinberger†

Dear Angel of Death and “bound together by this matter,” Simone White (selections) †

Drift, Caroline Bergvall (selections) †

Evening Oracle, Brandon Shimoda (selections) †

MyOTHER TONGUE, Rosa Alcalá (selections) †

“notes on the state of whiteness,” in *JUST US*, Claudia Rankine

Socialist Realism, Trisha Low (selections) †

The Nancy Reagan Collection, Maxe Crandall (selections) †

Women in Concrete Poetry 1959–1979, ed. Alex Balgiu (selections) †

Selected works by Douglas Kearney, Simone White

→ Other audio and visual works will be available through the course website.

*Available online for unlimited user access.

†Available through HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Services digital lending. Note: only one user can access these texts online at a time, so please do not count on using this mode of access during classtime. These texts are part of our course reserves to give context for selections that we’ll read from book-length collections (and as a last-resort back-up for shipping delays). If you are otherwise unable to access these texts, please let me know.

Requirements and Grades

10% Attendance and *quality* of participation

10% Critical responses

20% Peer feedback

15% Weekly poems (+ précis)

5% Statement draft

10% Revisions (+ described changes)

30% Final portfolio (~15pp. + statement)

Course Website

All course materials can be found here: www.creativewritingcomparativewriting.wordpress.com.

I will post updates on Monday of each week with (1) in-class activities and (2) assignments due.

You should upload all assignments to our Box folder, where you will also be able to find PDFs of readings: berkeley.app.box.com/folder/137867619583.

Writing

The central aim of this course is to develop and refine the practice of writing and writing about poetry. Writing requirements include in-class writing exercises, a weekly poem (or set of poems) accompanied by a précis, critical responses on assigned readings, critique of peers' work, and a final portfolio of revised poems accompanied by a short statement on poetics of ~400 words (i.e., a single-spaced page). Weekly prompts and detailed instructions of assignments can be found on the course website.

Reading

We will pair our own writing with poems and critical essays that will help us probe how language works across boundaries that make up the contours and edges of poetic form and content. Readings will be discussed on the day they are listed. You *must* come prepared to discuss assigned readings; if you are unable to attain print copies, most of the texts are available online or via course e-reserves. If you are having trouble with the readings, come see me in office hours. Brief critical responses to our readings will be due on **Box** the night before class discussions. These responses will be a space to voice questions and confusions, to articulate impressions and reactions, and to practice analytic and interpretive skills.

Office Hours

...are *there for you*. Please schedule an appointment during the first week of class, just to introduce yourself. Individual meetings with me will be a valuable format for receiving feedback, as they provide space for one-on-one discussions of your writing that complement all-class critiques. For individual meetings, please email me work that you'd like to discuss at least two days before our meeting. Sign-ups are available on the course website.

Attendance and Participation:

Class begins promptly at 3:10p. You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty, after which each unexcused absence will result in a 2.00% deduction from your course grade; after more than three absences you should expect a failing grade. For an absence to be excused, you must notify me in advance (if possible) with adequate excuse.

Our classroom will be a space for collaborative discussion. In order to develop a space of trust, it is important that everyone engages in our classroom community. I expect you to voice your own insights, ideas, confusions, and questions during our discussions, and also to listen and respond to your peers. If you have concerns about speaking in class, come see me in office hours.

Conversely, I expect you *not* to engage in any disruptive or rude behaviour including but not limited to: unexcused lateness, sleeping in class, interrupting class discussion, failing to bring books to class, failing to complete homework, etc. I may not comment or correct you when I see this kind of behavior, but I will certainly take it into account when calculating your grade.

Lateness Policy and Extensions

I expect you to turn in all assignments on time. That said, for extraordinary circumstances, I am willing to grant extensions with advance notice (≥ 24 h before a deadline). Late work without an extension will result in a 1/3 lower letter grade (B to B-, B- to C+, etc.) for each day it is late. After three days, late work will no longer be accepted.

Student Technology Equity Program: <https://technology.berkeley.edu/STEP>

Honor Code

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The hope and expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

Collaboration and Independence: Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one’s own independent work.

Cheating: A good lifetime strategy is always to act in such a way that no one would ever imagine that you would even consider cheating. Anyone caught cheating on a quiz or exam in this course will receive a failing grade in the course and will also be reported to the University Center for Student Conduct. In order to guarantee that you are not suspected of cheating, please keep your eyes on your own materials and do not converse with others during the quizzes and exams.

Plagiarism: To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action.

For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see, for example:
<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/misconduct/prevent-plag.html>

Academic Integrity and Ethics: Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity are of great importance in all facets of life. They help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are key to building trust within relationships, whether personal or professional. There is no tolerance for dishonesty in the academic world, for it undermines what we are dedicated to doing – furthering knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Accommodations & Disabled Students' Services

If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, work with the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) to request an official accommodation. The Disabled Students' Program (DSP) is the campus office responsible for authorizing disability-related academic accommodations, in cooperation with the students themselves and their instructors. You can find more information about DSP, including contact information and the application process here: dsp.berkeley.edu.

If you have already been approved for accommodations through DSP, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

Students who need academic accommodations or have questions about their accommodations should contact DSP, located at 260 César Chávez Student Center. Students may call 642-0518 (voice), 642-6376 (TTY), or email dsp@berkeley.edu

Undocumented Student Program: <https://undocu.berkeley.edu/>

The Centers for Justice and Community Education (ejce.berkeley.edu), which include the Multicultural Community Center and Gender Equity Resource Center, provide support for students of color, women, and LGBTQ+ students.

Berkeley's Counseling and Psychological Services (uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling), run through the Tang Center, work to “support the emotional, psychological, educational, social, and cultural development of all UC Berkeley students through a wide range of multiculturally based counseling, psychiatric, career, consultation, training, and educational services.” Many of CPS's services are offered for free to Berkeley students; others are provided at very modest fees. Students do not need to be covered by the Student Health Insurance Program to see a counselor.

The Path to Care Center (care.berkeley.edu) and the 24/7 Care Line at 510-643-2005 provide confidential, affirmative and non-judgmental support for survivors of sexual harassment, gendered violence and sexual violence. They help victims understand and access their existing options, rights and resources. You can learn more about Berkeley's sexual harassment policies and complaint resolution processes at ophd.berkeley.edu.

Berkeley's Student Learning Center (slc.berkeley.edu) offers a variety of programs to help you approach coursework in more strategic, balanced, and effective ways. These programs include writing tutoring, academic coaching, and workshops on learning strategies, as well as specific resources for transfer students and freshmen.

Schedule of Workshops, Readings, and Assignments

Week 1: Form(ation)

Tuesday, 6 July

Introduction

“Westron wynde, when wilt thou blow . . .”

Wednesday, 7 July

Workshop sign-ups

Identifying concerns, establishing curiosities

Discussion of poems selected by students

→ **Bring a poem to class**

Thursday, 8 July

Discussion: *Nets*, Jen Bervin; “notes on the state of whiteness,” Claudia Rankine

→ **Writing Prompt 1 Due**

Week 2: Translation

Tuesday, 13 July

selections from *MyOTHER TONGUE*, Rosa Alcalá

Workshop 1

Wednesday, 14 July

Discussion: *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, Eliot Weinberger (PDF); *Mouth: Eats Color*,
Sagawa Chika and Sawako Nakayasu

Thursday, 15 July

In-class collaborative translations

Workshop 2

→ **Writing Prompt 2 Due**

Week 3: Mixed-Mediation

Tuesday, 20 July

“f.u.givity” and selected multi-media works, Douglas Kearney

Workshop 3

Wednesday, 21 July

Discussion: selections from *Dear Angel of Death* and “bound together by this matter” (including related listening), Simone White; *ORCORARA 2010*, Elysia Crampton

Thursday, 22 July

selections from *The Nancy Reagan Collection*, Maxe Crandall

Workshop 4

→ **Writing Prompt 3 & Revisions Due**

Week 4: Narrativization

Tuesday, 27 July

“You, Very Young in New York,” Hannah Sullivan

Workshop 5

→ **Poetic Statement Draft Due**

Wednesday, 28 July

Discussion: *My Life*, Lyn Hejinian; *How to Wash a Heart*, Bhanu Kapil

Thursday, 29 July

selections from *Socialist Realism*, Trisha Low

Workshop 6

→ **Writing Prompt 4**

Week 5: Re/Dislocation

Tuesday, 3 August

selections from *Drift*, Caroline Bergvall

Workshop 7

→ **Revisions Due**

Wednesday, 4 August

Discussion: *Zong!*, M. NourbeSe Philip

Thursday, 5 August

“The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France,” Blaise Cendrars

Workshop 8

→ **Writing Prompt 5 Due**

Week 6: Experimentation

Tuesday, 10 August

selections from *Evening Oracle*, Brandon Shimoda

Workshop 9

Wednesday, 11 August

Discussion: “A Throw of the Dice . . .,” Stéphane Mallarmé; selections from *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959–1979*, ed. Alex Balguy

→ **Final Portfolio Due**

Thursday, 12 August

Final Performances