

LIT-78770

11:45 AM - 1:15 PM in H307

Poetry of the Ocean: Liquefying the Humanities

People have always been drawn to the ocean. Covering 71% of the planet and containing 99% of the Earth's habitable space it is easy to understand why—the ocean is vast and everchanging, inhabited by strange creatures that move through its depths. In this course we will consider how this fluid environment and the creatures that live there have inspired modern and contemporary poets, and in turn how these poets' texts have offered new models for understanding human experience. Beginning with the Romantics and French Symbolists, we will see how ocean-inspired poetry has been at the forefront of 20th and 21st C. poetry movements, including Modernists, Language poets, poets of the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, digital poets, and recent ecopoets, discovering along the way how the ocean has inspired new modes of thinking that emphasize linguistic, interpersonal, and ecological interconnections over division.

Required Texts:**Course Packet****Jack Spicer, *After Lorca*****(orig., 1957, reprint 2021) ISBN-13: 978-1681375410****Aracelis Girmay, *The Black Maria*****(2016) ISBN-13: 978-1942683025**

“Poetry behaves like a bird, or like an aeroplane, or like water, or in any case, like a fluid. Its flow constitutes an immanent totality realized in the ‘material’ of speech and transmitted through the fluid channels of culture.”

-Mark McMorris, “Ah Noh Music Dat: Speech in the Discourse of Nationalism,” *Disasporic Avant-Gardes: Experimental Poetics and Cultural Displacement*, 163.

Reading List

1. Ocean Introductions – April 11

- 1) Helen Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses*, Chapter 1 [Have read before coming into class]
- 2) William Carlos Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1923)
- 3) Jack Spicer, “Any Fool Can Get Into an Ocean” (1946)
- 4) Julian Talamantez Brolaski, “the tools of poetry” (2022)

2. Various Ways of Understanding the Ocean – April 18

- 1) Prof. Pinnix's Notes- The Oceanic Feeling
- 2) Excerpt, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman “Introduction: Stories Come to Matter,” *Material Ecocriticism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014: 1-10.
- 3) Author unknown, “The Seafarer” (ca. 900 AD)
- 4) Mary Oliver, “The Waves” (1986)

3. The French Symbolists - The Ambiguous Ocean Inside – April 25

- Charles Baudelaire, “Man and Sea” (1857)
Charles Baudelaire, bio, “The Voyage” (1861)
Arthur Rimbaud, bio, “The Drunken Boat” (1871)
Tristan Corbière, bio, “Paris at Night” (1873)

4. A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance – May 2

3 editions of *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (orig. 1897)

- 1) Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, French Edition, 1914.
- 2) *A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*, English Translation, Trans. Daisy Aldan, 1956.
- 3) *A Roll of the Dice*, English Translation, Trans. Robert Bononno and Jeff Clark, 2015.

5. The Open Text – “the reader is thus deposited ‘at sea,’// located in a poem which surrounds or environs him or her” – May 9

- 1) Stéphane Mallarmé, “Crisis of Verse” (1897), from *Divagations*, Trans. Barbara Johnson, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007: 201-211.
- 2) Lyn Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure” (1983), from *Writing/Talks*. Ed. Bob Perelman. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985: 270-291.
- 3) [Online] Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, *Sea and Spar Between* ver. 1.0.2 (orig. 2010, updated 2020).
https://nickm.com/montfort_strickland/sea_and_spar_between/index.html (2020)
- 5) Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland, “Cut to fit the toolspun course: Discussing Creative Code in Comments.”
https://nickm.com/montfort_strickland/sea_and_spar_between/sea_spar.js (2010)
- 6) [Online] Leonardo Flores, “‘Sea and Spar Between’ by Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland.” January 2, 2013. <https://ilovepoetry.org/?p=117>

6. Unmoor – H.D.’s Sea Garden – May 16

- 1) Stacy Alaimo. “Unmoor,” from *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking*, Eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017: 407–420.
- 2) H.D. *Sea Garden*, London: Constable and Company, 1916.
- 3) Excerpt, Wolfgang Wicht, “‘Language Is Made out of Concrete Things’: The Imagist Movement and the Beginning of Anglo-American Modernism,” from *Anglistik und Englischunterricht* 79 (2013): S. 79-98. 92-94.
- 4) [Online] H.D. biography, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hilda_Doolittle

7. Federico García Lorca and Jack Spicer – Undercurrents of Influence – May 23

- 1) [Online] Federico García Lorca biography
https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Federico_Garcia_Lorca
- 2) Federico García Lorca, “Theory and Function of the *Duende*” (1933), Trans. J. L. Gilli, from *Toward the Open Field: Poets on the Art of Poetry, 1800-1950*, Ed. Melissa Kwasny, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004: 197-208.
- 4) [Purchase in hardcopy – Course Text] Jack Spicer, *After Lorca* (orig., 1957, reprint 2021), New York: New York Review Books, ISBN-13: 978-1681375410.

8. Language Poetry and the Ocean-inspired Text - May 30

- 1) Bob Perelman. “Before Water” and “Afterword,” from *Dibur*, Special Issue on the Long Poem, Is. 4, Spring 2017, Edited by Uri S. Cohen, Michael Golston, and Vered K. Shemtov: 103-115.
- 2) Kit Robinson. “‘Before Water,’ After Years: Bob Perelman and the Turn to History.” *Jacket* 39, 2010. <http://jacketmagazine.com/39/perelman-robinson.shtml>
- 3) [Online] Bob Perelman. “Prof. Bob Perelman reads from Before Water – a long poem,” at The Long Poem Conference, Columbia University, New York City, October 13-14, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uHXv7h90KI>

June 6- No class meeting, Reading week

9. Language Poetry and Oceanic Parataxis – June 13

- 1) Bob Perelman, “Parataxis and Narrative: The New Sentence in Theory and Practice,” *American Literature*, vol. 65, no. 2, 1993: 313–324.
- 2) Lisa Jarnot, “Sea Lyrics” (1996)
- 3) Prof. Pinnix’s Notes: On the Atomic Structure of Water and Action at a Distance

10. The Black Atlantic – June 20

- 1) Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley. “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* Vol. 14, No. 2–3 (2008): 191–215.
- 2) Robert Hayden, “Middle Passage” (1962)
- 3) Excerpt, M. NourbeSe Philip. *Zong!*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. “Notanda” (excerpt), “Zong #1”, “Zong #4”, “Eboṛa” (excerpt)
- 3) [Online] Clipping, “The Deep” (2017). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT1ujfuXFVo> (for the lyrics: <https://genius.com/Clipping-the-deep-lyrics>)

11. The Mediterranean – June 27

- 1) [Purchase in hardcopy – Course Text] Aracelis Girmay, *the black maria*. Rochester: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2016.

12. Ecopoetry and the Human-affected Ocean – Looking to the Pacific – July 4

- 1) Margaret Ronda. “Anthropogenic Poetics.” *minnesota review* Vol. 83 (2014): 102-11.
- 2) Excerpt, Evelyn Reilly, *Styrofoam* (2009) New York: Roof: 8-13, 60-65.
- 3) Chris Jordan, “Midway: Message from the Gyre.” 2009-today.
<http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway> [trigger warning- images of albatross bodies that died from ingesting plastic. Please see the “about this project” link at bottom of the webpage for more information.]
- 4) Michelle Huang, “Ecologies of Entanglement in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.” *Journal of Asian American Studies* Vol. 20, No. 1 (February 2017): 95-117.
- 5) Transpacific Literary Project, “Opening the Folio: Plastic.” *The Margins*, Oct. 25, 2018.
<https://aaww.org/opening-the-folio-plastic>.

Be sure to read the individual poems in *The Margins*’ special issue on plastic. These poems are quoted in the “Opening the Folio: Plastic” introduction and are linked at the bottom of the webpage.

13. Ecopoetry – I, You, and the World – July 11

- 1) Juliana Spahr, *That Winter the Wolf Came*. Oakland: Commune Editions, 2015.

14. Buffer Day -July 18

Either 1) A day in case I (the instructor) get sick and need to postpone a class, 2) if conversation for a class one day spills over in a way that requires two class sessions, or 3) a class space for discussing ideas, concepts, and drafts for final essays. This class session may end up being constituted by a unique class format, such as break-away group sessions, small group conversations, one-on-one conversations, etc.

15. July 18

Workshop Final Essays – Bring **hardcopies (printed-off versions)** of your essay draft into class.

Course Notes

Course Requirements

You will be expected to attend class, be prepared for class (have read the texts and performed the expected preparatory work), be engaged in class conversation, supply me with two Reading Responses (in hardcopy), and complete a Final Term Paper.

Final Term Paper: 70% of grade

Reading Response 1: 10% of grade

Reading Response 2: 10% of grade

Class Engagement: Attendance, Insights Journal, Preparedness: 10% of grade

Attendance

You're expected to attend class. I'll take attendance each class as a means of keeping track of student engagement, which may affect your final grade via class engagement, but I don't have a strict attendance policy (ex: beyond x # of absences you fail the class).

If you know you will be absent (for instance because of sickness, a death in the family, etc.) send me an email to let me know. I also recommend you message your peer[s] after class to get a summary of the class conversation, etc. to help you stay up to date with the course conversation. You can always let me know if you have any questions.

Final Term Paper

I'll give you a prompt for this, but basically the final term paper is an opportunity to dig deeply into a concept or text you find interesting. I will work with you on developing your focus, as will your Course Peer Group. Expected size is around 3,000+ words/ 10 + pages (double-spaced), using MLA citation practices and with an attached bibliography.

Final Essays will be due by **15 August** in .docx format. This is one month after our final course session. It will be important that I receive your Final Essay by this date (earlier is fine) because I will be leaving Germany at the end of August. I will supply you with a Dropbox link for uploading your essay and will respond to your Final Essay with comments.

I understand that some students may be taking the course for less-than-full credit amounts. Please speak with me directly about your assessment.

Reading Responses

Over the course of the semester, I would like for you to supply me with **two** reading responses. These are due in **hardcopy** at the beginning of class, handed to me directly.

The first Reading Response is **due by** Class #7: Federico García Lorca and Jack Spicer – Undercurrents of Influence – **May 23**.

The second Reading Response is **due by** Class # 12: 12. Ecopoetry and the Human-affected Ocean – Looking to the Pacific – **4 July**.

You can hand me your Reading Response on any class before, up to, and including these days, but Reading Response 1 must be handed to me by 23 May, Reading Response 2 by 4 July. Reading Responses should be about the text(s) that we're reading that day. Reading Responses are an opportunity to practice your academic prose and textual analysis skills. I will also respond to them with comments.

For Reading Responses, you are expected to present a clear **claim** that is supported with one or more specific **quotes** (be sure that your quotes include page #s when relevant) and **quote analysis** that explains the quote and supports your claim. Your quote selection and analysis should clearly relate to and support your claim. **This is a close reading exercise in which your analysis should clearly derive from the text(s) themselves.** Be sure to provide polished, clear, academic prose. As long as you're only referring to the text[s] we're discussing that day, a bibliography is not needed. Word Count expectation is 250+.

Insights Journal

In addition to annotating your readings (heavily), please keep an Insights Journal, in which you note and synthesize your thoughts, insights, and questions about the readings. Your own journal will be a part of our class conversation. For instance, I may ask you to, in small groups, go through your Insights Journals and decide on the most interesting insights or questions.

Annotating your texts and bringing your insights together in a journal will be helpful in developing your own understanding of the text[s], and in constructing your Final Essay.

Consider this as an opportunity to write through your thoughts after reading the texts and before attending the class section in which we discuss them.

I will not take up your Insights Journal, and they won't be exchanged. You may be asked to select and share sections from it with your peers, but the journal and what you write in it is wholly your own.

Annotating!

Remember, you should take notes on all texts you read, including *this* document. Annotating mean reading with a pen—you should jot down your ideas as they occur. This includes insights, questions, possibilities, etc. Having annotated a text means that you can more easily return to and develop your own insights.

A Note on Technology

This class will be fairly technology free. **Laptops are not allowed**, cellphones should be put away (except when used as clocks).

This class will be analogue (it will also be conversation heavy). In addition to your own Insights Journal, please be sure to bring a pen or pencil, paper, and the reading for that day. Remember, reading Responses will be handed to me in hardcopy (though the Final Essay will be submitted digitally).

For Classes 5 and 12, on 9 May and 4 July, we will be discussing digital poetry, so we may use phones or laptops to refer to these poem then,, but otherwise a lot of paper and pen.

I understand that one may need to use technology for very specific learning functions. If this is the case for you, please speak with me and it'll be fine for you to use your technology.

Class materials, like this syllabus, and important updates (like a cancelled class) will be sent to you via email. As such, please pay attention to your emails. Similarly, please contact me directly (and as frequently as needed) via email.

→ Please let me know if you have a preferred name or pronoun.

Office Hours (GF 112) and Email

I don't really have strict office hours, but I will be in my office before and after class. With that said, I'm happy to chat with you about the class, about any questions you have, what you're thinking about regarding the texts, etc.

I recommend that you email me about setting up a time to chat. Again, I'll be in my office after class, but we can also schedule a different day/time. Zoom conversations are also fine with me, and easy to schedule. If you would like to chat via Zoom we'll figure out a date/time and I'll send you an invite.

If there is a large demand for having conversations with me, perhaps toward the end of the semester as we begin on Final Term Papers, I may set up a Zoom chat schedule.

Email is always the easiest and best way to get in contact with me. Please feel free to email me at any time about anything. I generally reply within 24 hours or less, and certainly within 48. My email address is: aaron.pinnix@uni-konstanz.de.

If you have any questions/ concerns/ issues /troubles at all, **email me!** If you are confused about a prompt, are having troubles with any of your classmates, need to ask me anything, etc., **please let me know!** I am also happy to speak in person. **It is my goal to make sure that your learning experience is successful and satisfying.**

Course Conduct

Students are expected to cooperate in maintaining a classroom environment that fosters the learning experience of fellow students and faculty.

Academic dishonesty of any kind — cheating, plagiarism, ai-written text, etc. — will not be tolerated. Please contact me if you have any questions at all—I would always rather have a conversation with you about plagiarism before, rather than after, you submit your work.

Students are expected to respect both the professor and fellow colleagues in all venues of lecture and discussion. This includes refraining from personal attacks during discussion. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner fitting of a university classroom.

Be Mindful of Exclusionary Speech. Exclusionary speech amplifies existing social injustices in ways that isolate and exclude some members from full participation while privileging other members. Some cases of exclusionary speech are obvious, but most are subtle. For instance, exclusionary speech includes if a student declares romance “only involves the opposite sex” and then presents their classmates in hypothetical heterosexual relationships, or if a student misgenders a classmate, having difficulty accommodating his request for masculine pronouns. Because such speech and behavior isolates members of the course, students are expected to be conscientious about avoiding exclusionary speech and behavior. Rather, conversation should value and cultivate difference within the classroom.

- I am committed to making this course accessible to all students, each of whom have various learning styles. If you aren't finding the course accessible to you for *any* reason, please email me or speak with me and we will work toward a solution.