

# A Conversation with Poetry

## ENG 461-01, Senior Seminar

Dr. Daniel Donaghy

Fall 2017

Tuesdays, 4:00 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.

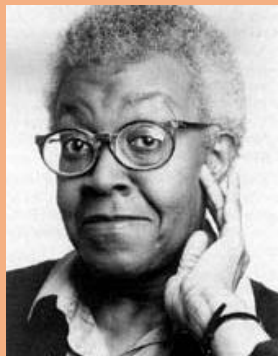
In this creative writing seminar, students will engage with poetry and poetry writing to explore their lives, their personal and cultural histories, and to gain an appreciation of and access points for the conversations that have been happening between artists (primarily poets, in this course, but not exclusively) and their texts for centuries.

Our course we will examine questions such as, What does it mean to be a poet? How can I be one? To whom do I have responsibility when I write? What is 'truth'? Who are my literary ancestors? How can I acknowledge them in my work while also breaking new ground? What is the relationship between personal beliefs and experiences and the cultural and political contexts in which one creates art? Is all personal poetry political in some way? What are the relationships between form and meaning? What does it mean to "steal like an artist?" How can I do that and still sound like myself? What does my poetry writing voice really sound like? What are my obsessive subjects? What questions and memories reside in those subjects that I can explore in a book-length collection of poetry?



The first semester of this seminar will examine poems that have started or continued such intertextual conversations and discuss the lingering questions within those works. We will focus on poems written over the past twenty-five years, but will also frequently examine running conversations in poetry that trace

back to the nineteenth century and beyond. We will also examine the cultural contexts in which each writer worked/is working and study videos, interviews, and essays related to the topics that these writers' work raise.



A sampling of the writers we'll read in this course: Matsuo Bashō, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling Brown, Yosa Buson, Countee Cullen, Martin Espada, Ross Gay, Nikki Giovanni, Robert Hayden, Terrance Hayes, Seamus Heaney, Homer, Kobayashi Issa, Langston Hughes, Etheridge Knight, Audre Lorde, Marilyn Nelson, Pablo



Neruda, Li Po, Claudia Rankine, William Shakespeare, Patricia Smith, William Stafford, Natasha Trethewey, and Walt Whitman.