

Surveying Poetry Online Today: Contemporary American Poetry

UCLA, ENG 173C, Winter 2018

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Office Hours: TuTh 1:00-2:00pm & by appointment

Meeting Time: TuTh 4:00–5:50

Surveying Poetry Online Today (SPOT) is a collective research workshop committed to exploring poetry unfolding in the present. What does poetry on the internet look like? Where can it be found? In what forms and on which platforms? Who writes it and how is it read, or played, or displayed? How do we understand poetry appearing on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Soundcloud, Youtube, and Steam? Over the quarter, we will explore these questions as we develop a collective public resource that surveys poetry online today. Developing our speculative resource, we will experiment with modes of visualizing, mapping, organizing, analyzing, remixing, and destroying contemporary poetry online. Working from a creative digital humanities perspective, this course seeks to construct new ways of knowing what contemporary poetry is—and will only arrive at a series of answers through our mutual experiment. We will examine platforms for experimental poetry like *Jacket2* and *PennSound* alongside popular resources like *Poets.org* and *Poems Daily*. Taking inspiration from initiatives like the VIDA Count, which examines race, gender, sexual identity, and ability in popular poetry publications; we will interrogate the politics and ethics of this landscape as we gather its data. In lockstep with these large-scale questions, we will conduct close readings of selected works of contemporary poetry that emerge throughout the quarter. No previous technical experience is necessary.

Required Texts

All required creative and critical readings will be made available online.

Weekly readings designated as **SPOT PDFs** will be required in print for annotation and discussion (max ~25p per session).

Syllabus Info: dsnelson.bol.ucla.edu/~spot/2018.html (short version: v.ht/spot2018)

As a general outline for the course, take note that these are broad strokes subject to change. This course is interactive, growing and responding to its users. Each week will build on previous weeks, class conversations, and the directions that our study of poetry online happens to follow. The most up-to-date critical reading, creative input, and digital experiments can be found online at the course syllabus link above. The syllabus will only be completed after we finish the course, and all research (including your own) has been collected.

Google Group Email: spot-ucla@googlegroups.com

Weekly responses (creative, conversational, or organizational) to the course group are required. General exploration and sharing is encouraged. Posts due at 11:59pm on Wednesdays.

Collective Production: spotpoetry.us

This course will be structured as an online aggregation initiative via a WordPress site, with students acting as a research collective and publisher. Each week of the course will cluster around a specific theme, with an accompanying featured poetic work and a set of critical readings to serve as departure points for your own projects. Students will respond to these inputs in the form of short weekly experiments. The format of these brief experiments will vary from week to week.

Grading Policy

Operating as an open format research collective, the primary grading consideration will be lively and timely engagement with the weekly assignments within a group format. This includes writing and conversations that will occur not only in the classroom but also online. The final will be a 12-15 page research paper **or** a creative project with a 3-5 page—or equivalent—research statement; in either case, the final will be graded for depth of engagement with course materials. **Finals are due Friday March, 23rd at 11:59pm.** The final grade breakdown will divvy up along these lines:

Participation: 20%

Calculated according to attendance, active participation, and Google Group posts.

Wordpress Posts: 30%

Calculated on a pass/fail basis for each posting: posts must respond critically *and* creatively to weekly content.

Presentation: 20%

Calculated on a pass/fail basis: presentations deliver poetry for course engagement in any format for 10 minutes (min).

Final project/essay: 30%

Calculated according to the coherence, depth, and originality of the argument presented in any format.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

A fair portion of what we publish in this course will constitute some form of fair use, appropriation, or reframing activity. This will be a frequent topic of conversation. In general, smart plagiarism is *obvious* while stupid plagiarism is *malicious*. Avoid stupid plagiarism (which might also be called academic dishonesty, and is, by necessity, reported). We will cover this topic extensively on our first meeting.

Attendance Policy

Unexcused absences will cut into your participation percentage. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with me *both before and after* the absence.

Accessibility

If you require academic adjustments based on a disability, you must register with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE). CAE will assess your needs, determine reasonable academic adjustments, and work with you to implement academic adjustments. When possible, students with disabilities requiring academic adjustments should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of each term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. You may contact the CAE at (310) 825-1501, go to the CAE office at A255 Murphy Hall, or access the CAE website at www.cae.ucla.edu.

Technology

Laptops or comensurate devices will be necessary for Thursday sessions. On Tuesdays, they will be generally banned. I welcome any questions about technology or technical tasks at any point of the quarter.

Learning Outcomes

Develop and articulate close and distant readings of contemporary poetry, across an array of genres, platforms, and poetic media.

Weekly Workflow and Assignment Expectations

Mondays: Make Wordpress post using any experimental approach to the previous Thursday's dataset, describe the significance of your outcome. Due: 11:59pm	Tuesdays: Discuss group critical reading and one featured poet in class. Each week's SPOT PDF must be printed and annotated in advance of class.	Wednesdays: Post reflections on the featured poet readings and/or thoughts on critical reading to the private group listserv (posts may be of any length). Due: 11:59pm	Thursdays: Collective aggregation of poetic content in course workshop, with Student Presentations on poetic discoveries.
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Course Schedule

I. Introduction & Overview

Week 1: Introductions, Definitions, & Orientations: [SPOT PDF 1](#)

Jan. 9

Reading: Course Syllabus, Introduction
Marie Buck, "[My Favorite Poem](#)" (1.9.18)
Brandon Brown, "[For My Future Children](#)" (2016)
Book: [The Good Life](#) (Big Lucks, 2016)
Interview: [Hyperallergic](#) (Dec, 2016)
B.B. Readings: [PennSound](#) (2004-2015)

Prof Intro: [Epic Lyric Poem](#) (Troll Thread, 2015)

Setup: Course URL Options / Wordpress / Google Groups / Names and Introductions / Collective Reading

Survey Query: Who are you? What is this class? What do you want? What does poetry want? How to work it?

Jan. 11

Reading: N. Katherine Hayles, "[How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine](#)" (2010)

In-Class Viewing: [Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries, Spritz](#) and [Readsy](#)

Setup: WordPress, Presentation Signups

Techniques: Google, Google NGram, Google Docs, Annotation Tactics

Survey Query: What is Poetry? How do you read it? Where is it? How do you index it? What might be a useful resource?

Event: Extra credit for attending [Srikanth Reddy](#) poetry reading at the Hammer Museum, 7:30pm.

II. What is the Internet (re: Contemporary American Poetry)?

Week 2: The Internet as a Conduit to Poetic History: [SPOT PDF 2](#)

Jan. 16

SPOT PDF Compilation: Thomas Fink and Judith Halden-Sullivan, "[Reading the Difficulties](#)"

Excerpts from [Recalculating](#) and [Girly Man](#)
Bernstein, "[The Art and Practice of the Ordinary](#)"

Featured Poet: [Charles Bernstein](#)

Explore CB [EPC page](#)
Explore CB Audio and Video on [PennSound](#)
Explore [262 Syllabus](#) & [Wreading Experiments](#)

Recommended Exploration: See the Complete Author List at [Eclipse](#) for an expanded list of (pre- and post-) *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* poets

Jan. 18

Reading: [Wikipedia: Poetry](#)

Techniques: MediaWiki Book Creator

Absentee Prompt: Start with "Poetry" and add pages as you explore through links. Assemble a book that compiles an anachronistic journey through the history of poetry.

Week 3: The Internet as a Conduit to Poetry in Sound: [SPOT PDF 3](#)

Jan. 23

Reading: Christine Hume, "Improvisational Insurrection: The Sound Poetry of Tracie Morris" (See SPOT PDF)

Recommended: Dana Gioia, "[Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture](#)"

Jan. 25

Reading: Deanna Fong, "[Spoken, Word: Audio-Textual Relations in UbuWeb, PennSound and SpokenWeb](#)"

Recommended: Peter Middleton, "[How to Read a Reading of a Written Poem](#)"

<p>Featured Poet: Tracie Morris</p> <p>Required Listening: Poemtalk Podcast on Morris' "Slave Sho to Video aka Black but Beautiful" (MP3: 40min)</p> <p>Close Listening episode with Morris and Bernstein: Conversation (30min) and Reading (25min)</p> <p>Recommended Exploration: See the complete list of authors at PennSound. For recommendations, see the Featured Resources.</p> <p>Presentation(s): Clinton, Madeleine: Henry Hills, Money (1985) (Making Money PDF)</p>	<p>Techniques: Audacity David Jhave Johnston, MUPS (see also) SpokenWeb: Audio Archives</p> <p>Survey Query: How Does Online Poetry Interface with the Poetry Reading (Recording)? What can be done? How and where to listen? To map or collect? How might we transform?</p> <p>Presentation(s): Danielle, Kristine: Jaap Blonk, Dada poetry and Ursonate</p>
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Week 4: The Internet as a Conduit to Poetry in Video: [SPOT PDF 4](#)

<p>Jan. 30</p> <p>Reading: LARB Symposium Part I, Part II</p> <p>Featured Poet: Claudia Rankine</p> <p>Video: Situation 1, 5, 7 (see above for 1)</p> <p>Sound: Explore PennSound Page</p> <p>Text: Citizen: An American Epic</p> <p>Recommended Exploration: See cinempoems collected at Moving Poems (see Top Ten lists for direction.)</p>	<p>Feb. 1</p> <p>Required: CYOV (choose your own video) poetry crawl. See cinempoems collected at Moving Poems (see "Videopoetry" links for more options.) See also: UbuWeb Film and PennSound Cinema.</p> <p>Reading: Dawn Lundy Martin, Dossier: on Race and Innovation (<i>boundary2</i>, 2015)</p> <p>Techniques: iMovie, VideoGrep, Supercuts, Collection</p>
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Presentation(s):

Sam:

Kendrick Lamar, "[ELEMENT](#)" (+ [Gordon Parks](#))

Joseph:

Mary Lambert, [Body Love \(Part 1 & 2\)](#)

Survey Query: How Does Online Poetry Interface with Movies of Poetry? How do you find moving image poetry on the internet? Where can you see it? How can you organize it? What forms and formats and genres can you recognize? What shared poetic strategies or divergent approaches do movie poems take? How would you categorize these works? How might we, as a class, seek to gather or inventory poetry in video on the internet?

Presentation(s): Ileana

Hannah: Su Friedrich, "[Sink or Swim](#)"

Week 5: The Internet as a Conduit to Poetry in Print: [SPOT PDF 5](#)

Feb. 6

Reading: Tan Lin, [Seven Controlled Vocabularies 1st \(Lulu\) Edition](#)

Optional: Snelson, [Heath: a prelude to tracing the actor as network](#)

Featured Poet: [Tan Lin](#) (EPC)

Lin, "[The Patio and the Index](#)" (Triple Canopy)

Rhizome Interview, "[A Book Is Technology](#)"

[Bomb Interview](#) with Katherine Elaine Sanders

Tan Lin at [PennSound](#)

[Edit 7CV](#)

Recommended Exploration: See print-on-demand

Feb. 8

Reading: Paul Soulellis, "[Search, Compile, Publish](#)"

Optional: Lisa Gitelman, [Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents](#)

Techniques: Print on Demand Platforms

Survey Query: How Does Online Poetry Interface with Print Poetry? In what modes and on which forums is poetry published today? How does contemporary poetry interface with paper-based dissemination?

Presentation(s): Joeanna

poetry collections, including [Post-Digital Publishing Archive](#), [Troll Thread](#), [Gauss PDF](#), and [Hysterically Real](#).

Presentation(s): Julie, Yoon Joo

II. What is Poetry (re: the Internet)?

Week 6: Poetry as Platform Genre: [SPOT PDF 6](#)

Feb. 13

Reading: Molly Fischer, "[The Instagram Poet Outselling Homer Ten to One](#)" (*The Cut*)
Priya Khaira-Hanks [on Rupi Kaur](#) (*The Guardian*)
Kazim Ali, "[On Instafame & Reading Rupi Kaur](#)" (Poetry Foundation)
Ben Davis, "[State of the Culture II, From Post-internet Art to Influencer Art to... Mystery Art](#)" (2017)

Featured Poet: [Rupi Kaur](#)

Watch: [YouTube](#) Videos

Explore: [Too many articles](#) to list

Recommended Exploration: Explore related instapoets listed at [HuffPo](#), [Teen Vogue](#), [In Defense](#), and especially the Instagram hashtag [#instapoet](#)

Presentation(s): Waffa, Megan, Mignon

Feb. 15

Reading: Brad Troemel, "[Art After Social Media](#)"
Johanna Drucker, "[Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display](#)"

Platforms: Ranjit Bhatnagar, [Pentametrone](#)

Techniques: [StoryMapJS](#)

Survey Query: How to read poetry as reblogging, following, commenting, and hearting? How do poetic forms develop over platforms? How do specific platforms transform #poetry? How can we find or map poetry in an array of social media sites?

Presentation(s): Krystal, Katrina

Week 7: Poetry as Internet Vernacular: [SPOT PDF 7](#)

Feb. 20

Reading: Zach Blas, "[Contra Internet](#)" see also, on [DIS](#) Hito Steyerl, "[Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?](#)"

Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme, "[May Amesia Never Kiss Us on the Mouth](#)"

Featured Poet: [Sophia Le Fraga](#)

"[I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE INTERNET](#)" in IRL, URL (Troll Thread)

"[Feminist](#)" on Coconut Poetry

Videos on Gauss PDF: [W8ING 4](#), [TH3 B4LD 50PRAN0; or, English Made Easy](#), and [UND3RGROUND L0V3R5: A Comedy-Ballet without Dance or Music](#)

Interviews: [HTMLGIANT](#) and [AQNB](#)

Reviews: Alejandro Miguel Justino Crawford, "[First Reading of W8ING 4](#)" / [Motherboard](#) on [W8ING 4](#) / Creators on [UND3RGROUND L0V3R5](#) / Harry Burke, "[Page Break](#)"

Recommended Exploration: See Imperial Matters, Claudius App (defunct), Internet Poetry, etc.

Presentation(s): Will, Rebecca

Feb. 22

Reading: Jessica Pressman, "[The Posthuman Reader in Postprint Literature: Between Page and Screen](#)"

Paul Stephens, "[Stars in My Pocket Like Bits of Data](#)"

Viewing: Abbas & Abou-Rahme, "[Unforgiving Years](#)"

Techniques: [Voyant](#), Translation, Emoji

Survey Query: What is the voice of internet poetry? Who speaks, and how? How might we listen to the vernacular of the network? In what ways does poetry respond to emerging linguistic constructions?

Presentation(s): Audrey, Robert

Week 8: Poetry as Computation: [SPOT PDF 8](#)

Feb. 27

Reading: Allison Parish, "[Exploring \(Semantic\) Space with \(Literal\) Robots](#)"

Optional: Harry Giles, "[Some Strategies of Bot Poetics](#)"

Wooley, et al. "[How to Think About Bots: A Botifesto](#)"

Sarah Jeong, "[How to Make a Bot That Isn't Racist](#)"

Mark Sample, "[A protest bot is a bot so specific you can't mistake it for bullshit](#)"

Featured Poet: [Allison Parrish](#)

Portfolio: [Selected Works](#)

Twitter Bots: [All Bots](#) (see esp: [@everyword](#), [@PowerVocabTweet](#), [@libraryofemoji](#), [@deepquestionbot](#))

Game: [Lexcavator](#)

Interview: "[What It Means to Be an Experimental Computer Poet](#)"

Talk: "[Lossy Text Compression](#)" at !!Con

Podcast: [Commonplace](#) with Rachel Zucker

Leonardo Flores, [12 Bots Inspired by @everyword](#)

Recommended Exploration: Ishac Bertran, [{code poems}](#) (2012), Brian Kim Stefans, [Introduction to Electronic Literature: Freeware Guide](#)

Mar. 1

Reading: David Stayley, "[On the 'Maker Turn' in the Humanities](#)"

Taeyoon Choi, [Poetic Computation Reader](#)

See also:

Rosa Menkmen, [The Glitch Moment\(um\)](#)

Techniques: [Cheap Bots, Done Quick](#), Automation, Bots, IFTTT

Survey Query: How does poetry respond to computational systems? What does automation enable or restrict in poetic production? Can an algorithm make a beautiful poem?

Presentation(s): Luca

Week 9: Poetry as Venue for Performance: [SPOT PDF 9](#)

Mar. 6 Finals Prep	Mar. 8 Reading: Susan B. A. Somers-Willet, The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry (introduction) Recommended: Javon Johnson, Killing Poetry: Blackness and the Making of Slam and Spoken Word Communities Featured Poet: Mayda del Valle The University of Hip Hop (excerpts SPOT PDF) See, esp, Del Valle performance videos Additional videos, Google Recommended Exploration: Intersections of activism and poetry at #BlackPoetsSpeakOut (see coverage on Matter or lessons in Mosaic); Button Poetry ; US Latinx Voices in Poetry
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IV. Future Directions & SPOT Launch

Week 10: Conclusions & Reflections

Mar. 13 TBD and Conclusions	Mar. 15 TBD and Launch Party
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