

The Mosaic of Memory and Lyric Form

Led by Dr. Robin Davidson

The Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva writes, “The whole event of poetry—from the poet’s vision to the reader’s reception—takes place entirely within the soul, that first, lowest sky of the spirit.” In the twenty-first century—an age of email, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.—we, as writers and teachers, can easily lose ourselves (and our students) in a flood of social media and the many voices we encounter on the screen. In this seminar, we will explore craft across a range of literary texts seeking what Tsvetaeva calls the “event of poetry” and distinguishing that event from the ordinary commerce of our daily lives. We’ll begin by asking ourselves what most compels us in the act of writing. We, as writers, are moved by particular memories, images, dreams, and other personal and historical concerns that haunt us, and we often find ourselves returning to those again and again. In our discussions, we’ll consider how such obsessions enter, shape the world of our writing—and can offer us a sense of agency, even transformation, as we grapple with these concerns through the lens of poetry and memoir. We’ll explore texts that engage us in a discussion of lyric form and hybridity—the use of verse, story, reportage, song, visual image, typography, as elements of poetic collage and artistic response. Through in-class writing exercises, we will begin to shape our own literary projects as mosaics evocative of the postmodern era in which we live and write and teach. Please join me this summer for what I’m confident will be a meaningful and *fun* creative process in the midst of our tumultuous historical moment.

Readings selected from:

- Jenny Bouly, *The Body: An Essay* in *The New American Essay*, ed. John D’Agata, *The Next American Essay*, (Graywolf Press, 2003).
- Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée (Restored Edition)*, (U California Press, 2022)
- T. Fleischmann, *Szyggy, Beauty: An Essay* (Sarabande Books, 2012)
- Carolyn Forché, *In the Lateness of the World* (Penguin Press, 2020)
- Joy Harjo, *An American Sunrise* (Norton, 2019)
- Tyehimba Jess, *Olio* (Wave Books, 2016)
- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014)
- Edward Vidaurre, *By Throat, By Miracle: New and Selected Poems*, (FlowerSong Press, *forthcoming*)
- Nicole Walker, *Micrograms* (New Michigan Press, 2016)