

CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR: POETRY
POETICS OF THE RHIZOME

ENG 453 Fall 2016
MW 10:00–11:20am AW 408

The poem is meant to be a network
rather than a single rope of thought.
– Adonis

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Note. You'll help me out some if you e-mail me from your *Western* e-mail account.

PREREQUISITE. You must have taken and passed English 353 to take this course.

COURSE TEXTS. You'll need to purchase the following texts. All are available at the bookstore but don't wait too long to buy them. If you purchase them elsewhere, please be sure to get the right edition.

Robert Creeley, *Collected Poems, 1945–1975*
John Taggart, *Is Music*
Will Alexander, *Towards the Primeval Lightning Field*
Rumi, *Essential Rumi* (Barks trans.)
Jean Valentine, *Break the Glass*
Coral Bracho, *Firefly under the Tongue* (Gander trans.)

Other readings will be available on Canvas as PDFs or links (marked "CV"). You're responsible to bring to class *in hardcopy* all texts in which reading has been assigned for that day. If there's an exception to this requirement, I'll let you know beforehand.

COURSE DESCRIPTION. A plant that grows by rhizomes spreads laterally underground, sprouting new plants where chance prompts it or opportunity allows. A rhizomatic plant lets go of where it came from. Extends indefinitely. Sprawls and breaks the rules. Makes its own rules and it don't look back. Diverse and plural, no voice but voices, connects and connects some

more. Think aspen, orchid, ginger, bamboo. Think poison oak, horsetails, bunch grass. We're past good and evil here, beautiful and ugly, rhizome's where the shit gets real.

We're going to meet the poem, poetry, as rhizome—as a conversation without edges—as messy sprawling webs of language that circle the globe, link human prehistory to the present moment, and embed human speech and action in a more-than-human world. Our focus will be your own work, but we'll also touch in with ways of thinking-about-poetry, feeling-through-poetry, sympathetic with rhizome mind. That means, among other things, opening the canon wide. So we'll bring far-flung poetries close: the indigenous oral tradition of a nearby bioregion, touching homoerotic love songs of a Sufi mystic to his god, touching surrealist prose poems that tap the suffering and power of a worldwide African diaspora. It also means tuning our ears to the non-human: in our background will be the work of ecopoetics to divine, through the dowsing wand of poetry, a human place in the green and toothy world.

Student learning objectives. Just so you know. This course will help you achieve these student learning outcomes of the English Department: (1) Write effectively in a variety of genres using appropriate conventions. (2) Read accurately and critically in a variety of genres and media in relation to a variety of discourses, cultures and historical periods.

Note on workload. It's a five-credit course. You should expect to devote 15 hours a week to it—five hours of class time, plus ten further hours of homework. Some weeks the load will be lighter, some heavier, especially toward the end of the quarter. If circumstances will prevent you from devoting this much time to the class, please consider taking it at another time.

TASTE OF RHIZOME MIND. Long before the World Wide Web, there was a worldwide web. Human beings are recent guests in that web—guests often rude and destructive, but sometimes stunned with awe, or love.

[T]he Great Subculture which runs underground through all history ... [a] tradition that runs without break from Paleo-Siberian Shamanism and Magdalenian cave-painting; through megaliths and Mysteries, astronomers, ritualists, alchemists and Albigensians; gnostics and vagantes, right down to Golden Gate Park.

– Gary Snyder, "Why Tribe"

Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couch-grass, or the weed.... The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is al-

ways an outside where they form a rhizome with something else—with the wind, an animal, human beings.... “Drunkenness as a triumphant irruption of the plant in us.”

– Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

I would describe poetry as ecology in the community of words.

– Jed Rasula, *This Compost*

This old plum tree is boundless. All at once its blossoms open and of itself the fruit is born. It forms spring; it forms winter. It arouses wind and wild rain.... Its whirling, miraculous transformation has no limit. Furthermore, the treeness of the great earth, high sky, bright sun, and clear moon derives from the treeness of the old plum tree.

– Eihei Dōgen, “Plum Blossoms”

Most of each thing
is whole but contingent
on something about
the nearest one to it

– Fanny Howe, “The Splinter”

Common threads here are multiplicity and interdependence. There’s no one way to be human. There’s no one way to be a poem. There’s no one way to be at all! And no one way to say so.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS. For each class you’ll read poetry or prose about poetry (poetics). You’ll also write in response to either a journal prompt or a creative exercise that’s cued by the reading. In addition to these regular assignments, you’ll undertake three projects of some scope: two interactive presentations and a rhizome of your own construction.

Reading. Some of the reading is challenging! The poetry may not offer the usual lyric satisfactions; the prose may enact unfamiliar meanings in unfamiliar ways. Be patient. Be open-minded. Be on the lookout for clues the text gives you as to how to read it. Read actively and unhurriedly with an engaged and undivided mind. Read with pencil in hand; underline, star, question, flag, exclaim, respond. And, of course, bring to class any text in which reading has been assigned for that day—*this is a course requirement*.

Journal writing. I’ll often assign a journal exercise that explores some aspect of the reading. Journal exercises should be handwritten in a notebook dedicated to that purpose. Think of this notebook as a word bin where you compost your moments of reading writing thinking seeing hearing speaking and feeling. In that spirit, feel free to use it for explorations other than assigned, but please keep class notes somewhere else. You’ll submit your journal at the end of the

quarter, and it's worth a good chunk of your final grade, so please take care in both its use and its presentation. *Please also be sure to bring your journal to every class and to our conferences.*

Creative exercises. These are more considered than journal exercises but still quite exploratory. The prompts are usually very open-ended and sometimes that may frustrate you. Try to hear the openness as an invitation to invent. Once you've handed an exercise in, you're free to take it further however you please, or to just forget about it. I take creative exercises in and grade them on the tick-system (see below). I may ask you to bring copies.

Presentations. Each of you will sign up to present on one poetry text *and* on one poetics text (listed on the last page). In some cases you'll be collaborating with a fellow student and in *all* cases with me. *You're required to meet with me and your co-presenter at least a week before your presentation.* Sign-up happens soon, so please acquaint yourself with the course texts ASAP.

Now in case this sounds boring-ordinary to y'all. I find, in practice, presentations turn quickly into something scruffier and more fun. First, because I expect presenters to work interactively, asking questions of the class, following up with clever questions of their own—"Socratic method." (If you just talk to us for 30 minutes, no pass.) Second, because my job is to ask pesky questions myself, getting everyone to dig deeper. Third, because these are some weird-ass texts, and what makes them difficult, also makes them live, long i.

Every group has its own chemistry, so I'm not going to say more about what it'll be than that, because I don't know. A theme of the class, just so you know, will be the value of not-knowing.

DIY rhizome. Two French thinkers, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, fastened on the rhizome, a not uncommon way plants have of propagating, as an image of how communities, discourses, psyches, texts might be organized to emphasize interconnectedness, heterogeneity, polyphony, multiplicity—against the usual Classical stress on hierarchy, singularity, central authority. (Familiar reference points? Patriarchy, the State, the typical lyric poem.) I've posted on Canvas the essay in which they lay out, somewhat bewilderingly, their rhizome-notion, and we'll consider excerpts from it over weeks to come.

But passive reception of others' ideas is not in the spirit of the rhizome. (No dichotomy, certainly not passive-active, is in the spirit of the rhizome; the rhizome is a duality-smashing hammer.) So you're going to build your own rhizomes. And because the rhizome is by nature inductive, collaborative, emergent, and metamorphic, I don't know too well what that looks like yet.

What I do know. The rhizome you make will be *heterogeneous*—it's going to involve more than just text, it'll be multimedia. It's going to investigate *interconnection* somehow. It's probably going to straddle the line between *theory* and *praxis*—between making art and thinking about art—just

as the poetics texts we're studying do. And all of you are going to contribute to the refinement of the assignment itself. This project will be due at the end of the quarter.

Participation. Finally, and no surprise here, I'll be counting on your alert, considerate, lively participation in all aspects of our work together. In particular this means attentive consideration of your peers' work. It's a tender undertaking we begin here today; please at all times be kind to each other. One way to kindness, when discussing another's work, is to reframe thoughts that begin with "I like" or "I don't like" with the words "I noticed." More on that soon.

OUR CLASS TIME. Our time in class will generally fall into two halves. The first will be given mostly presentations and other engagements with the assigned reading. For this to go well everyone has to show up prepared. Please complete conscientiously all assigned work—including any reading, writing, viewing, or listening that day's presenters have asked of us. *Also be sure to bring the assigned reading—in hardcopy.* The second half will generally be given to peer critique.

Peer critique. You'll be generating a lot of work, in your several projects, and you can bring any of it you like to workshop—creative exercises, a journal assignment, DIY rhizome work, or something else you've written. (But see "Final important note" below.) Keep in mind that peer critique is a chance to develop creative work for your rhizome—so I expect for the most part you'll bring creative exercises or other creative work inspired by the reading. Try to bring work that feels to you rich with potential but somehow unfinished, incompletely realized, maybe for reasons you can't put your finger on.

Your work will come up for discussion several times. In general, workshop sessions will emphasize non-evaluative feedback, about which I'll say more soon. If your piece is being discussed, try to resist the impulse to explain, argue, or defend. I'll try to leave a minute or two at the end for you to ask questions.

Workshop logistics. I usually do workshop groups. Pro: everyone knows when they're set to come up, well ahead. Con: when someone doesn't bring poems on time, logistics get complicated. This time round, I'm going to try a workshop *queue*, see how that goes. Each class, I'll tell you who's got poems due next class, and who's got poems due class after that. Simple, right?

We'll see how it goes. You need to make your piece available the class *before* you're scheduled to be workshopped. That means bringing hardcopies, enough for everyone, unless your piece takes a form that's hard to reproduce—in which case, check in with me. Students who are late with their work will be discussed as time allows. *Please write your comments and queries on your peers' pieces before class begins.*

Conferring. I'll meet with each of you at least once in conference. This is a chance to discuss any aspect of the course you'd like, and is particularly good for close work on a piece you're working on, or for discussing the eccentricities of your writing process. Be sure to bring with you all the writing you want to discuss. Bring your journal too. I'm also happy to meet with you on other occasions—come by during my office hours, or make an appointment to see me.

Important note on reading. Put away the phone. Take out the earbuds. Close the laptop or whatever. Find a quiet undistracting place where your friends are not human or not talking or just *away*. Seriously? You won't get these poems, this prose, if you don't give the whole all of your mind to them. Rhizome's multiplicity, for sure, but also's single-pointedness, when time for that. Seriously also? I'll hear your griping about the difficulty cheerfully, but my first question's always gonna be, did you follow these directions, all?

And a note on our time together. I work by Socratic method. I ask questions meant to sharpen distinctions, shed light on unexamined premises, and enhance a student's own capacity for inquiry. It's a messy, improvisational process that sometimes falls flat and makes everyone (me included) feel awkward. Sometimes it looks sort of inefficient. And yet it's the West's oldest teaching method ever (older than the university, as an institution, itself) and has survived this long for a reason. It makes the student her own teacher. If it causes discomfort sometimes that's why. Or I think so anyway. Being asked to be your own teacher is not easy or comfortable.

COURSE POLICIES. I dislike rules but some practices I find make our time together kindlier.

Attendance. Please don't miss class unless truly urgent circumstances require you to. Please arrive on time. Please arrive prepared. You can be absent three times without harm to your grade. A fourth unexcused absence puts your final grade at some risk. A fifth lowers it by a full letter grade. More than five absences and you fail the course. Persistent lateness counts as absence. Device use on the sly (see below) earn you my displeasure and an absence. So will not bringing, or clearly not having done, the reading. You're responsible for any in-class work, assignments, or announcements you miss. Please don't e-mail me to ask what you missed—help me keep my workload manageable by saving my e-mail address for questions only I can answer.

Late work. All assignments should be handed in on the due date during the class period. I reserve the right to mark down or not to accept a late assignment. Please don't send me assignments by e-mail unless I give you the okay.

Classroom etiquette. Please, as I'm sure you know, no texting while in class, or e-mailing, web browsing, Facebook updating, etc. All devices should be stowed away for the duration unless we've made an explicit exception. Not in a pocket on vibrate—off and put away, please. Students who drift in and out while class is underway weaken our focus and find their participa-

tion grade suffers accordingly. Finally, please, no misogynist, racist, LGBTQ-phobic, or otherwise derisive work. If your material requires you to walk a fine line here, see me, we'll discuss.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the intentional presentation of another's work as your own. That or any other form of cheating is grounds for failure—of the assignment, likely of the course. If the offense isn't your first it may be grounds for expulsion from the university. That said, use of found material is a perfectly legitimate creative activity. How to make this sort of work work? Simple! Attribute. If you've used someone else's creation, anything from a sonnet to a beer bottle label, make sure the creator of that work is acknowledged, implicitly or explicitly. If you're unsure how to do this in a specific case, check with me.

ADA notice. If you'll need accommodations in this class, connect with Disability Resources for Students (website: www.wvu.edu/depts/drs; e-mail: drs@wvu.edu; phone: 360-650-3083) *in the first week of class*. For any accommodation that will require a significant change to course requirements, policies, or deadlines, you must also arrange to meet with me once DRS has sent its accommodation letter. Please understand that I can't apply an accommodation retroactively.

Grading. I don't grade individual pieces. I'd rather you write from your own excitement than for my approval. Your final grade comes together as follows:

journal: 10%
 creative exercises: 20% (on tick-system)
 presentations (2 x 15%): 30%
 DIY rhizome: 25%
 participation: 15%

The tick-system. Writing exercises are graded tick-plus (very good to excellent), tick (satisfactory to good), or tick-minus (unsatisfactory or incomplete). At the end of the quarter I convert your ticks to a letter grade as follows. You start with a baseline grade of B-. Every tick-plus pushes your grade up by 1/3 of a letter grade. Every tick-minus pushes it down by 1/3. For example, if I've assigned ten writing exercises, and you've received a tick on eight of them, a tick-plus on two, you'll receive a grade of B+.

As a studio course, this class offers grades less regularly than a seminar or lecture course would, and that can make some students nervous. If at any point you would like a provisional grade—what you would receive for your work in the course so far—e-mail me, and I'll send you one, with a brief explanation. This grade has no weight at all but may help you find your bearings.

Format guidelines. Unless an assignment asks otherwise, the work you submit must be typed, with one-inch margins, in a conventional font at a readable size (11- or 12-point), *single-sided* if

appropriate, *stapled* ditto. Verse single-spaced, prose double-spaced. Number the pages if there are more than one and put your name on each page. You should be at ease with these manuscript conventions before you submit work for publication.

Final important note. All work submitted for this course should have started *during* the course and should be written *for* this course. No work done for other classes (previous or concurrent) and no work done on your own more than, say, one week before today. I'm happy to look at revisions of older work in conference if they're still (or newly) alive for you.

COURSE OUTLINE. Homework is listed on the day it's due. Outlines are subject to change—please keep track of any changes announced. Canvas makes it easy to contact a fellow student by e-mail. If e-mail's too uncool-old-people, then get your texting on. Just please don't e-mail me with questions *anyone* here can answer. My e-mail's for questions *only* I can answer.

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RHIZOME

W 9/21 Intros. Review syllabus. Workshop schedule. Don't be multiple, be multiplicities.

F 9/23 Starting *Spring and All*.

Read. Williams, *Spring and All* 177-89 (to "whole—aware—civilized") (CV).

Journal exercise. What does "spring" mean in this text? (Pointers. Go to the title, to the prose, to the poems. Does the word mean one thing, several things, divergent things? If you feel the meaning slipping away from you, don't be anxious, that's actually supposed to happen. Welcome to rhizome mind. Just try to record the traces, the process.)

WEEK 2 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, *SPRING AND ALL*

M 9/26 More of *Spring and All*.

Read. Williams, *Spring and All* 189-206 (to "of a balcony") (CV).

Journal exercise. And "imagination"? What does *that* mean? Look, of course, to where he uses that word, but look also to where he uses what the word names.

Creative exercise. Write a poem that interrupts itself more than once. *Bring 22 copies.*

W 9/28 *Spring and All*, still more!

Read. Williams, *Spring and All* 206-221 (to “sliding into nothing”) (CV).

Journal exercise. “Writing is not,” says Williams, “a searching about in the daily experience for apt similes and pretty thoughts and images.” Hmm. “It is not a conscious recording of the day’s experiences ‘freshly and with the appearance of reality.’” Wait a second. Isn’t that what we’ve been trying to teach you as student writers to do? What is writing a poem, for Williams, if not all that? And, what is writing a poem, for you?

F 9/30 *Spring and All*, at an end.

Read. Williams, *Spring and All* 221-236 (CV).

Journal exercise. *What* depends on a red wheelbarrow? Be particular.

Creative exercise. Write a poem that enacts or embodies spring.

WEEK 3 ROBERT CREELEY, *PIECES* & CHARLES OLSON, “PROJECTIVE VERSE”

M 10/3 *Pieces*, commenced.

Read. Creeley, in *Collected Poems, Pieces* to 412.

Journal exercise. How is he using the line? How is he using the line end? (Pointers. Consider how his line may be different from the sort of line you’re used to—shorter, maybe, maybe more jarringly enjambed. How it plays with or against the syntax of the sentence. How it resembles, or doesn’t, Williams’s line. How you breathe as you read the poem—silently, aloud.)

W 10/5 *Pieces, en fin.*

Read. Creeley, in *Collected Poems, Pieces*, remainder.

Creative exercise. Compose a short poem with no metaphor or simile in it.

F 10/7 “Projective Verse.”

Read. Olson, “Projective Verse” (CV).

Journal exercise. “FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT,” writes Olson, attributing the thought to Creeley. (1) What do you take the thought to

mean? Press hard on each of the terms, “form,” “content,” “extension,” “never more than.” (What would the obverse mean, content as an extension of form?) (2) Does it seem true of Creeley’s poems in *Pieces*? Explain.

**WEEK 4 JOHN TAGGART, “THE ROTHKO CHAPEL POEM” AND OTHERS
& DENISE LEVERTOV, “SOME NOTES ON ORGANIC FORM” AND OTHERS**

M 10/10 Taggart, begun.

Read. Taggart, “The Rothko Chapel Poem.”

View. John Taggart reading “The Rothko Chapel Poem” (CV).

Journal exercise. Compare your experience of reading the poem on the page to that of hearing (and seeing) Taggart read the poem aloud. Consider line and line break, pace, emphasis, articulation, intonation. At some point in your answer, do detailed work on a passage of a few lines, one where how your eye reads differs significantly from how your ear hears Taggart—and maybe where Taggart’s reading of the poem *changes* how you read it on the page.

W 10/12 Taggart, ended.

Read. In Taggart’s *In Music*: “Peace on Earth,” “Sumac,” “Babble Babble,” “Were You,” “Monk,” “Magdalene Poem,” “In the Kitchen,” “Pastorelle 7.”

Creative exercise. Compose a poem rich in repetitions. (Pointers—take *one* of them to heart *if* it’s helpful there—don’t try to heed all three. ¶ Try to make each repetition a net gain in energy. ¶ Ask yourself, does each repetition *do* something new? ¶ Or, try to make the repetitions intuitive, not mechanical, what the poem wants to do, not something imposed on it from outside.)

F 10/14 Levertov’s “organic form.”

Read. Levertov, “Some Notes on Organic Form” and other essays (CV).

Journal exercise. Levertov distinguishes three approaches to form—form imposed upon the material (“invented” or “set forms”), the material sustained in its formlessness (“free verse”), form discovered within the material (“organic form”). Which mode do you think Williams is working in? Creeley? Taggart? What about you—which sort of poem have you been drawn to write?

WEEK 5 GHANDL OF THE QAY AHL LLAANAS, FROM *NINE VISITS TO THE MYTHWORLD*
& JOHN CAGE, "LECTURE ON NOTHING"

M 10/17 Ghandl begun.

Read. Ghandl's *Nine Visits*, Introduction, "The Way the Weather Chose to Be Born," "Spirit Being Living in the Little Finger," "In His Father's Village ...," (CV).

Journal exercise. These stories may seem strange to you. And yet they spoke—meaningfully, powerfully—to those who told them and those who heard them. What then makes them strange to you? What *expectations* do you bring to poetry, to narrative, to narrative poetry, that these ones reveal to you by *not* meeting them?

W 10/19 Ghandl concluded.

Read. (1) Ghandl's *Nine Visits*, "The Sealion Hunger," "Those Who Stay a Long Way Out to Sea." (CV) (2) Robert Bringhurst, on oral poetries (CV).

Creative exercise. Write a poem that taps into myth consciousness. (Pointers. Not literary myth consciousness, Hera, Zeus, Leda and the swan, that sentimental crap. The myth consciousness of Ghandl's poems—all the world potentially sentient, stuffed with spirit beings. Awe, wonder, the sacred breaking down the door. To help that happen—no names of any gods or goddesses!)

F 10/21 Cage on nothing.

Read. Cage, "Lecture on Nothing" (CV).

View. Stephen Drury, "John Cage's Prepared Piano" (CV).

Journal exercise. Cage's prepared piano and his "Lecture on Nothing" are homologous—they have the same underlying shape. Both take a set structure (piano strings and spaces between them; lines on the page and spaces between them) and insert irregular objects in that structure (bolts and bits of plastic; words and phrases). But what then? and why? Why *bother* altering a piano in that way? What's the *use* of composing a talk in that way? How do you suppose Cage would justify it? And, do you buy it?

WEEK 6 WILL ALEXANDER, *TOWARDS THE PRIMEVAL LIGHTNING FIELD*
& AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, *DISCOURSE ON COLONIALISM*

M 10/24 Alexander, begun.

Read. In Alexander, *Lightning Field*: “Introduction: My Philosophical Matrix,” “Towards the Primeval Lightning Field.” (Pointer. Alexander said at a recent reading: “These poems are slippages. Each time you touch them they get away from you.” So when they get away from you, don’t think something wrong is happening. Remember your Creeley, things come and go, then let them.)

View. Alexander, “Where Are You From?” (CV).

Journal exercise. The poems in *Lightning Field* invite readers either to let the language wash over them, untroubled by whether specific meanings are caught or missed, or to inspect each clause precisely to extract those meanings. For most of your reading, allow the former, as above. But pick *one sentence* from the title poem and read it in the latter way. In your journal, first make sure you know what each individual word in the sentence is doing; look unfamiliar ones up. Then, consider how the words gain meaning, energy, charge as they’re compounded with other words. For instance, “lightning” on its own is pretty ordinary; “lightning field” makes a sudden linear bolt seem like a broad continuous plane—the lightning bolt becomes the sky it appears in. That’s an increase in energy. Add “primeval” and you add the dimension of *time*, a sense that this broad charged plane of energy is ancient, at our origins. Add “the” and it seems maybe we should *know* what this primeval lightning field is, it’s common knowledge, a shared reference point, a thought that both orients and disorients ...

W 10/26 Alexander, continued.

Read. In Alexander, *Lightning Field*: “Ratio as Wealth by Nomadic Lemur,” “Language: Leap as Inscrutable Physic.”

Creative exercise. Write a short *prose poem* whose vocabulary is Latinate but remains concrete.

F 10/28 Alexander, Césaire, Négritude.

Read. (1) Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (CV). Please also read the interview. (2) Bertrade Ngo-Ngijol Banoum, “Négritude” (CV).

Journal exercise. Césaire writes that “at the very time when it most often mouths the word [humanism], the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism, a humanism made to the measure of the world” (22). What do you take him to mean here? If Alexander’s poems are, similarly, a critique of Western humanism, and moreover an attempt at a broader and more diverse humanism, are *they* “made to the measure of the world”? How so? Or are they trying for something else? Go to work on passages from the poems as you develop your answer.

WEEK 7 RUMI, *ESSENTIAL RUMI* & BEDIENT, “AGAINST CONCEPTUALISM”

M 10/31 Rumi, begun.

Read. In *The Essential Rumi*, “On Rumi” and sections 1-4.

Journal exercise. When these poems speak in the imperative mood, to *whom* are they speaking? When they speak in the first person, *of whom* are they speaking? Don’t think these are easy questions. Go to the poems, work with specific lines, for answers.

W 11/2 Rumi, concluded.

Read. In *The Essential Rumi*, sections 5-8 and “A Note on These Translations and a Few Recipes.”

Creative exercise. Write a poem of praise. *Or*, write a poem in the form of a recipe.

F 11/4 Conceptual poetry, for and against.

Read. (1) “A Brief Guide to Conceptual Poetry” (poets.org) (CV). (2) Bedient, “Against Conceptualism” (CV). *Please print out the Bedient and bring it to class.*

Journal exercise. What, for you, is the place of *thinking* in poetry—in the poems you write, in the poems you want to write, in the poems you’ve read you most love?

WEEK 8 JEAN VALENTINE, *BREAK THE GLASS* & LYN HEJINIAN, “THE REJECTION OF CLOSURE”

M 11/7 Valentine, the glass broke.

Read. Valentine, *Break the Glass*, parts I and II.

Creative exercise. Write a poem in memory of someone. *OR*, write a poem suffused with emotion by all that it does *not* say.

W 11/9 Valentine, Hejinian, unclosed.

Read. Valentine, *Break the Glass*, parts III and IV.

Journal exercise. Are Valentine's poems "open" or "closed," in Hejinian's terms? To put it another way, what is their relationship to "closure"? Do they reject it, yearn for it, disbelieve in it, stumble upon it unwittingly, what? (This exercise requires a clear understanding of Hejinian's use of the term "closure" — it's quite different from the popular sense used in, say, the phrase "I was looking for closure.") (It's also interesting to ask, what do these two senses of the term have in common?)

F 11/11 VETERANS DAY—NO CLASS

**WEEK 9 CORAL BRACHO, FROM *FIREFLY UNDER THE TONGUE*
& LORCA, "THEORY AND PLAY OF THE DUENDE"**

M 11/14 Fireflies!

Read. Bracho, in *Firefly*, Gander's introduction and pages 1–73.

Journal exercise. Pick one sentence from one poem. It should be of some length; it could maybe be a chain of sentence fragments, but it should still be long. (1) First, write it out in your journal as a paragraph. (2) Now write it out again in lines, but breaking the line differently than Bracho does. Try end-stopping where she enjambes, enjambling differently than she does, and so forth. Don't change wording or syntax, just line breaks. Try to make something poetically satisfying to you. (3) Compare your two versions (prose paragraph, differently broken verse) and address this question: in Bracho's poem, the part you've worked on, how does the line work in concert with the sentence? Focus on her poem, but use your alternative versions to learn more about the choices she's made. Remember that line and sentence are both ways of arranging our attention, and they can work with each other at one moment, against each other at another. Especially important are the line ends. Don't speak in generalities; focus on particular words, phrases, line breaks.

W 11/16 More fireflies!

Read. Bracho, remainder of *Firefly*.

Creative exercise. Write an ecstatic poem without any clichés, abstractions, or hackneyed or trite language. (Pointers. Etymology of “ecstatic”: *ex-* + *stasis*, to stand outside oneself. Surrealism is a way to do it. Jarred syntax is another. Enjambment also.)

F 11/18 Angels, muses, duende.

Read. (1) Lorca, “Theory and Play of the Duende” (CV). (2) Tracy K. Smith, “Survival in Two Worlds at Once: Federico Garcia Lorca and Duende” (CV).

Journal exercise. How and where has duende showed up in your work this quarter? How do you know it when it’s there? Since duende isn’t something you can command or turn on at will, how do you invite it to appear?

WEEK 10

M 11/21 **Rhizome workshop round begins: Jesse, Gabi, Jon.**

W 11/23

F 11/25 THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS

Week 11

M 11/28 **Rhizome workshop: Anlya, Natalie, Aliena, Lily, Jessica.**

W 11/30 **Rhizome workshop: Chris, Margaret, Sophie, Becca, Carleigh.**

F 11/2 **Rhizome workshop: Evan, Rosa, Athena, Rylee.** Course evaluations & fare thee well.

Rhizomes are due Monday December 5 at 9am in a box I’ll leave outside my office.

Please also remember to hand in your journal!