Twentieth-Century Poetry:
The Long and the Short

Fall 2019 ◄ Humanities 324 ► T 4:00-6:30

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& by appointment

This course in modern and postmodern literature will involve extensive thinking about both the longest and the shortest texts that can be properly defined as poems. In it, we will consider how a succession of styles for short poems evolved in the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s, and also how these smaller units have been related to subsequent larger structures, inviting, in turn, speculation about the nature and function of the twentieth-century "epic" (with reference to scope rather than any strict adherence to conventional definitions of the genre). In the process, we will also ask questions about writing and reading, influence and canonicity. The project of this course ultimately involves defining the art of poetry at its limits, through careful and extended attention to form.

Each of the three main modules entails an extended consideration of a productive relationship between a writer who is known principally for developing a more terse or sparse style and another who is known for publishing a major long poem. In this way it means to trace a tradition of innovative writing through the twentieth century, from Objectivist to Projectivist to Language-Centered Poetries. However, it will conclude with an experimental contemporary epic — M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* — that both draws upon and complicates this tradition in a manner that reveals much about the literary culture of the present.

Students will produce a research project in three stages during the latter half of the term. Creative as well as critical research projects are welcome, though the specific terms of any creative project must be determined in advance and in consultation with the instructor.

Required Texts:

- Lorine Niedecker, *Collected Works*
- Louis Zukofsky, *Anew: Complete Shorter Poetry*
- ---, *"A"*
- Robert Creeley, *Collected Poems, 1945–75*
- Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*
- Ron Silliman, *The Age of Huts*
- M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*

Try searching the <amazon.com> marketplace or <abebooks.com> for deep discounts on these editions.

Recommended Texts:

- Louis Zukofsky, *Prepositions+*
- Robert Creeley, *Collected Essays*
- Charles Olson, *Collected Prose*
- Bruce Andrews, *Paradise & Method*
- Rae Armantrout, *Collected Prose*
- Ron Silliman, *The New Sentence*
- *The Language Letters*, ed. Matthew Hofer and Michael Golston

Requirements: Final grades will be based upon participation and formal writing assignments.

Participation. Up to 10 points per session, 150 points (30%). Consistent attendance is crucial for this discussion-based course. More than **one** absence will affect the final grade, and a **third** missed class will result in administrative withdrawal, without credit. If you anticipate missing a session on a day not among the holidays observed by UNM, please keep that in mind when considering how to make use of your permitted absence. Every student who maintains perfect attendance — combined, of course, with appropriate preparation — is eligible for a 10% bonus (not to exceed 100%). If you wish to drop *any* course, including this one, that is your option and your responsibility.

In addition to regular in-class participation, each student will be responsible for

1) posting to a UNM Learn discussion board, no later than **midnight** of the day before each session, one large, synthesizing question about the reading (that does not reduplicate any previously posted questions), and

2) synopsizing, synthesizing, and presenting — in a small group to be determined in week one — the key concepts of the recommended readings for one section of the course (no more than 20 minutes).

Writing Assignments (3). 50 points (10%), 90 points (18%), & 210 points (42%). Each research project for this course, whether critical or creative, will develop in a series of stages: the first entails the composition of three surprising, contestable, and critically relevant prospective theses toward a substantive research project; the second involves your elaboration on your chosen thesis in a brief prospectus accompanied by a short annotated bibliography; the last stage is your articulation of a researched argument or creative work of 3,600-4,500 words (approximately 12–15 pages).

Accommodation Statement. Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you need alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, contact this service without delay to ensure your needs are met. Further assistance is available through the Bachelor and Graduate Programs office.

Library and Tutorial Services. UNM provides many library services as well as some tutorial services for distance students. For library services, go to http://www.unm.edu/libraries/ to contact a librarian. For tutorial services, go to http://caps.unm.edu/online to explore UNM's online services.

Note on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism. Unfortunately, academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism, has become a serious problem at colleges and universities all over the United States — and it will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarism is defined as any instance of claiming, whether intentionally or not, other people's **words or ideas** as your own. The University, College, English Department, and I expect you both to compose your own work and to provide full and accurate citations for all specific language and concepts — words, phrases, sentences — that you take from outside sources, including the internet. Any infractions of UNM's policies on academic integrity will be reported to the English Department and Dean of Student's office and will result in dismissal from this class with a final grade of "F." For the university's policy statements on academic dishonesty, please refer to *The Pathfinder* and the *UNM Catalog*.

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL (SIX KEY POINTS)

1. For this discussion course, every mouth in the room must be reserved for conversation. Neither food nor gum will be permitted during our sessions; you may, however, drink any beverage you like.

2. Electronic paraphernalia should be neither seen nor heard during our short time together. You should turn your phone off or to silent. You should not text or surf the web. You should not read unrelated material. Any breach of this obvious and straightforward code of classroom conduct will result in being counted absent for the session.

3. Regular and timely attendance is crucial to success in a discussion-oriented course. Anyone more than 10 minutes late to class will be counted absent. Be sure to arrive on time, if not early.

4. While disagreement is fundamental to critical discussion, it must be registered in turn and framed in language free of personal slur or ethnic, gendered, sexual, or religious stereotype. Our discussions will take place in a respectful and tolerant climate: neither gestural nor vocal disrespect of people or ideas is acceptable.

5. You need not raise your hand in order to be recognized. You need not ask my permission to leave the room. But we all need to attend to the conversational dynamic and do our best not to disrupt it.

6. Given that some class business may be conducted via email, each student will be responsible for checking his or her UNM email account regularly. If you do not use your UNM email account, please set it to forward official messages to whatever account you prefer.

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

This entails your timely completion of every reading assignment and full participation in discussions, which means, of course, much more than simply "doing the reading." The most successful students will be those who consistently give the material serious attention — and this requires more than a quick reading. Plan to read our texts more than once, think about them rigorously, and look up key references, terms, etc. Come to class ready to discuss how what you have read has interested, surprised, or even perplexed you. The real goal here is not to showcase expertise, but rather to contribute meaningfully to a lively and inquisitive discussion. In order to foster and sustain such a group dynamic it will be necessary for you to address your comments to the entire class (not just to me). The good news is that I do not grade on a curve, so a collegial and collaborative atmosphere benefits everyone.

You will earn points each day based on the quality (not quantity) of your contributions:

- **10** points indicates that you offered thoughtful insights, comments, and/or questions;
- **8-9** points suggests you were a somewhat less active participant in our discussion;
- **7** points may be earned simply by reading a few lines of any relevant text aloud;
- **6** points is what you will get for silently but attentively occupying a seat in class;
- **0** points means that you were late, distracted, or otherwise absent that day.

All prose is available on **UNM Learn**. Supplemental poems are on **Learn** or at **eclipsearchive.org**

Schedule of Class Sessions (subject to change)

From Objectivism to *"A"*

Required reading

From Louis Zukofsky's *Prepositions+* — "An Objective"

Recommended reading

From Louis Zukofsky's *Prepositions+* — "Poetry/*For My Son When He Can Read*," "A Statement for Poetry" "William Carlos Williams," "Ezra Pound," "About the Gas Age," "Program: 'Objectivists' 1931," "Sincerity and Objectification," "'Recencies' in Poetry," "Louis and Celia Zukofsky: Translating Catullus," "foreword to *"A"* 1–12), & "Interview"

Week 1	T (8/20)	Introduction to the course and some thoughts about modernism
Week 2	T (8/27)	**Lorine Niedecker**: *Next Year or I Fly My Rounds Tempestuous*, *New Goose*, & "*New Goose" Manuscript* **Louis Zukofsky**: *Anew*, *Some Time*, & *Barely and Widely* **First presentation**: theories of objectivist writing
Week 3	T (9/3)	**LN**: *For Paul and Other Poems*, Poems 1957–59, Poems 1960–64, & *Homemade/Handmade Poems* **LZ**: *I's (pronounced* eyes*)* & *After* I's
Week 4	T (9/10)	**LN**: *North Central* & *Harpsichord & Salt Fish* **LZ**: *Catullus*, *80 Flowers*, & "Gamut"
Week 5	T (9/17)	**LZ**: "*A*" 1–7
Week 6	T (9/24)	**LZ**: "*A*" 8–12
Week 7	T (10/1)	**LZ**: "*A*" 13–24

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From Projectivism to *Maximus*

Required reading

From Charles Olson's *Collected Prose* — "Projective Verse" & "Letter to Elaine Feinstein"

Recommended reading

From Olson's *Collected Prose* — "Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself," "Human Universe," The Resistance," "Proprioception," & "Robert Creeley's *For Love: Poems 1950–1960*"; *Pleistocene Man*; *The Special View of History*

From *The Collected Essays of Robert Creeley* — "Louis Zukofsky: *All: The Collected Short Poems, 1923–1958*," "For LZ," "All Ears Hear Here," "Introduction to *The New Writing in the U.S.A.*," "Charles Olson: *Y & X*," "Charles Olson: *In Cold Hell, in Thicket*," "Charles Olson: *The Maximus Poems, 1–10*," "'An Image of Man . . .': Working Notes on Charles Olson's Concept of Person," "A Note on the Objective," "A Note on the Local," "A Quick Graph," "A Sense of Measure," "Notes Apropos 'Free Verse,'" "I'm given to write poems," "The Writer's Situation," "Writing," "Inside Out," and & "Was That a Real Poem or Did You Just Make It Up Yourself?" & "Form"

Week 8	T (10/8)	**Robert Creeley**: *For Love* & *Words*
		Charles Olson: *In Cold Hell, in Thicket*
		Second presentation: theories of projectivist writing
	F (10/11)	**Open submission period begins**: three theses assignment
Week 9	T (10/15)	**RC**: *Pieces* & *Thirty Things*
		CO: *The Distances*
Week 10	T (10/22)	**CO**: *The Maximus Poems*
Week 11	T (10/29)	**CO**: *Maximus Poems IV, V, VI*
	F (11/1)	**Three theses assignment due** (5pm in HUM311)
Week 12	T (11/5)	**CO**: *The Maximus Poems: Volume Three*
		Open submission period begins: prospectus & bibliography

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From Language to *The Age of Huts*

Required Reading

From *The Language Letters*, ed. Matthew Hofer and Michael Golston — letters 1–36

Recommended Reading

From Ron Silliman's *The New Sentence* — "Disappearance of the Word, Appearance of the World," "For *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*," "Of Theory, To Practice," "The New Sentence," & "Zyxt"

From Bruce Andrews's *Paradise & Method* — "Index," "Text & Context," "Writing Social Work & Political Practice," & "Total Equals What: Poetics & Praxis"

From Rae Armantrout's *Collected Prose* — "Why Don't Women Do Language-Oriented Writing?" "Poetic Silence," "Feminist Poetics and the Meaning of Clarity," "Irony and Postmodern Poetry," "Cheshire Poetics," "The Short Poem," & Interview with Lyn Hejinian

Week 13	T (11/12)	**Bruce Andrews**: *Corona* & *Vowels*
		Rae Armantrout: *Extremities*
		Third presentation: theories of language-centered writing
	F (11/15)	**Prospectus and bibliography due** (5pm in HUM311)
Week 14	T (11/19)	**BA**: *Film Noir* & *Praxis*
		RA: *The Invention of Hunger*
Week 15	T (11/26)	**Ron Silliman**: from *The Age of Huts*, *Ketjak*, *Sunset Debris*, & *The Chinese Notebook*

Moving Outward: The Twenty-First Century Epic

Week 16	T (12/3)	**M. NourbeSe Philip**: *Zong!* (including Glossary, Manifest, Notanda, & *Gregson v. Gilbert*)
Week 17	M (12/9)	**Research essay due** (5pm in HUM311)

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