

## Women's Lyric and Lyricism

Professor Sarah Dougher, Portland State University, Winter 2010

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Class meets Tuesday nights in ASRC 220

### Course Objectives

This course explores women's expressions through lyric poetry and lyrics. We will take a cross-temporal approach to determine methods of analysis and interpretation, working with the lyrics of Sappho and her translators, H.D., Hildegard of Bingen, Emily Dickinson, and a wide variety of 20th century poets, blues artists, rappers and songwriters.

### General Course Requirements

1. **Come to class and actively participate.** If you have to miss class for some reason, please gather the information you missed from a classmate.
2. **Bring a reflection question each class day. Type this question and print it out. Put your name and the date at the top!** As part of your participation evaluation, you are required to bring a question on the day of class (9 questions total). The question can ask for clarification, or reflect on issues you found interesting about the reading. You may include information from your outside reading and experiences as well. These questions should not have yes/no answers, nor should they be factual questions that are easily answered with basic research.
3. **Memorize three poems.** You may choose poems from any of the books we are reading; in addition, you may pick a poem/lyric from another context but you must get my permission. You will recite your memorized poem/lyric in front of the class on February 2, February 9 and March 2 so plan accordingly. Please bring a hard copy of your poem with your name on the top to class on the day you recite it.
4. **Write and turn in two analysis papers.** These papers serve as your response to the material in two of the three sections of our class. 3-5 pages in length, they should present a clear and well-reasoned analysis of one or more poems/lyrics or poetic/lyrical movements that we have studied up to that point. These papers are due at the end of the class on February 9 and March 9.

### Grade Breakdown

Class attendance and participation: to get full credit, you arrive on time for class, you stay for the whole class, and you participate actively in discussions.	5 points for each class, 10 classes= total 50 points	
Weekly questions: to get full credit, your question is on time, typed, and provides reflection on the week's materials.	5 points for each question, 9 classes=total 45 points	
Three memorized poems/lyrics: to get full credit, your poem is accurately memorized and well delivered. You choose a range of poems to memorize, each from a different author. You bring a copy of the poem with your name to class the day of your recitation.	10 points for each memorization, total 30 points	February 2, February 9 and March 2
Two analysis papers. Your work will be graded on the following criteria: does the paper clearly and succinctly describe the relationship between form and meaning in the poem? Is the paper well written, without grammatical, spelling or formatting errors? Does the paper use APA citations correctly, if it uses citations?	20 points for each paper, total 40 points	February 9 and March 9
Final Exam	20 points for the final	March 9
Total points achievable in the class: 185	A=outstanding work; B=excellent work; C=average work; D=below average work; F=inadequate work	

I do not accept late work. If you are absent on the day something is due, please email it to me on the day it is due. If you can't come to class because of illness, you will not receive attendance and participation points for that day unless you make arrangements with me about make up work.

### Class schedule and readings

- Week 1, January 4: Introduction and orientation: What is Lyric? What is a lyric?  
Poetic terminology, scansion, “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” by Adrienne Rich
- Week 2, January 12: Lyric, epic and feminist poetics  
Read: “The Poetical is the Political: Feminist Poetry and the Poetics of Women’s Rights” by TV Reed, excerpted from *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (2005) You will get this from me by email in PDF form on January 5th.  
*Sappho Through English Poetry*, eds. Lewis and Jay, Introduction and through page 60
- Week 3, January 19: Sappho and HD, translation and theoretical models  
*Sappho: a New Translation* by Mary Barnard  
*Sappho Through English Poetry*, eds. Lewis and Jay, page 60 through the end  
*From Totems to Hip Hop*: Introduction and “The Imagists’ Manifesto (1915)” by Amy Lowell  
HD’s “translations” of Sappho  
You will get some Hildegard texts in the form of a PDF on January 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Week 4, January 26: Hildegard and the medieval context  
Hildegard of Bingen, please print out and bring the PDF sent to you.  
You will get a PDF of excerpts from Susan Howe’s book, *My Emily Dickinson*, on January 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Week 5, February 2: Emily Dickinson and Susan Howe  
*The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Johnson, Thomas H., excerpts  
*My Emily Dickinson*, (excerpts) by Susan Howe. Please print out the PDF I sent you and bring it to class.  
First poem/lyric recited in class
- Week 6, February 9: The Blues  
*Blues Legacies and Black Feminisms* by Angela Davis  
Second poem/lyric recited in class  
First analysis paper due
- Week 7, February 15: **No class today.**  
Instead, plan on attending a performance of Hildegard of Bingen’s music live on **Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**. This performance will cost approximately \$10, and will be held at the First Presbyterian Church, 1200 SW Alder Street. More details forthcoming.
- Week 8, February 23: The 20th century, feminist poetics  
*From Totems to Hip-Hop*, pp. 75-187. Also, p. 424-426 “from pro Femina” (1973) by Carolyn Kizer; p. 427-435 “The Introduction to Stealing the Language” (1986) by Alicia Suskin Ostriker; p. 436-453, “The Cannon” (1999) by Leslie Scalpino.  
You will get a PDF of excerpts from *Songwriters on Songwriting* by Paul Zollo on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Songwriters interviewed: Janis Ian, Yoko Ono, Joan Baez, and Carole King
- Week 9, March 2: What’s a song? What’s a poem? Conclusions  
*From Totems to Hip-Hop*, pp. 193-243.  
Please print out and bring the PDF excerpting *Songwriters on Songwriting* by Paul Zollo.  
Third poem/lyric recited in class  
We will also revisit “The Poetical is the Political: Feminist Poetry and the Poetics of Women’s Rights” by TV Reed, which we studied the second week of class. Please bring a copy of this essay to class.
- Week 10, March 9: **Final Exam**  
Second analysis paper due.  
*Please bring a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like to get your final exam and your second analysis paper back with comments.*

**Required books** are available at the In Other Words Women’s Books and Resources, 8 NE Killingsworth, and in the Women’s Resource Center during the first week of classes.

Barnard, Mary *Sappho: A New Translation*. Barnard, Mary. Univ of California Press, ISBN: 0520223128

Lewis, Caroline and Jay, Peter, eds. *Sappho Through English Poetry* (Poetica, #27), Anvil Press, ISBN: 085646273X

Ed. Johnson, Thomas H. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* Back Bay Books, ISBN 0316184136

Davis, Angela *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*, Vintage Books USA, ISBN: 0679771263

Ed. Reed, Ishmael *From Totems to Hip Hop: Poetry Across the Americas, 1900-2002*, Thunder’s Mouth Press, ISBN: 1560254580

#### Plagiarism policy:

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone else’s work as one’s own, and may show up in the following forms:

a. Verbatim copying without proper acknowledgment, b. Paraphrasing without proper acknowledgment. c. Theft of ideas without proper acknowledgment.

One key to understanding plagiarism is that the student’s intentions are not necessarily the problem. A student can be guilty of plagiarism without necessarily intending to “cheat” on an assignment.

Any student found plagiarizing risks losing credit.

A note about late work/ missing classes.

I do not accept late work. If you are absent on the day something is due, please email it to me on the day it is due.

If you can't come to class because of illness, you will not receive attendance and participation points for that day unless you make arrangements with me about make up work.

What constitutes "make up" work?

It is your responsibility to determine if you want to make up your absence. If you do, please let me know in the same communication letting me know you are ill/absent.

In your communication with me about your absence, please describe what you plan to do to make up the class.

Some ideas include:

Preparing a poem for presentation to the class that would have some relevance to the NEXT class you would be present at

OR

Reading an article or essay on the subject of the class you miss and write a two-page summary due at the next class.

I am open to other suggestions. Whatever make-up work you do is due the week following your absence.