

University of California San Diego

Literatures in English (LTEN) 130GS | Contemporary British Poetry

Summer 2024 | Global Seminar | Edinburgh, UK

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The United Kingdom today has a diverse population, which is reflected in its vibrant poetry scene. This course surveys the current state of British poetry. It will look at how the tradition of western literature is being used to think about contemporary concerns, and it will keep returning to the question of what it means to be “British” in the 21st century.

Elements of this syllabus and the course are subject to change.

Lectures

Time: Mon, Tues, Wed 11a-1p

Location:

Technology Policy: Use of smartphones is not permitted in lecture. Laptops and tablets are allowed.

Office Hours

Given the varying schedule, I will offer weekly office hours on different days and times, announced at the start of each week. I am also available by appointment.

Assignments

You must fulfill *all* course requirements in order to pass the course. All times are local Edinburgh time.

- **Participation (30%)**
- **Poem Annotation Notes (10%)** – Will be checked once a week
- **Weekly Journal Responses (35%)** — Due Wednesdays @11:59pm (Weeks 1-5)
- **Concluding Conversation (5%)** — In-class, July 31
- **Reflective Essay (20%)** — Due July 31 @11:59pm

Course Texts

All texts are available as PDFs on Canvas.

Class Schedule: Topics & Readings

Week 1 (July 1-3)

Mon | Program Orientation (led by IFSA-Butler)

Tues | UK Poet Laureate 1

- Simon Armitage, “Stanza Stones” from *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic*

Armitage is the current UK Poet Laureate. He is known for the conversational style of his verse, his translations of English medieval texts, and his public poetry projects that embed poetry in the world.

Wed | UK Poet Laureate 2

- Simon Armitage, selected poems from *Paper Aeroplanes* and *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic*

Week 2 (July 8-10)

Mon | Home in the Highlands

- Thomas A Clark, selected poems from *Farm by the Shore* and *Threadbare*

Clark is a Scottish poet focused on the beauty of the natural world in the Scottish highlands and islands.

Tues | Nature & Tradition

- Alice Oswald, selected poems from *Woods, etc* and *Falling Awake*

*Oswald, the current Oxford Professor of Poetry, is known for her concern for nature and the environment as well as her engagement with ancient Greek texts, such as Homer’s Iliad in *Memorial* and the Odyssey in *Nobody*.*

Wed | Tradition & Hip Hop 1

- Kae Tempest, “Tiresias” from *Hold Your Own*

*Tempest’s verse engages with the boundaries between genders. In *Hold Your Own*, Tempest uses the Greek myth of Tiresias, the blind prophet of Thebes who lived as both a man and woman, to explore how gender affects one’s life experiences. Recently Tempest changed pronouns to “they” and their name to Kae Tempest. Tempest’s style is indebted to spoken word poetry and hip-hop.*

Week 3 (July 15-17)

Mon | Tradition & Hip Hop 2

- Kae Tempest, *Let Them Eat Chaos* (audio)

Tempest's 2016 album, Let Them Eat Chaos, takes a kaleidoscopic view of London's residents: men and women, young and old, working class and upper class.

Tues | What does it mean to be British today?

- Kayo Chingonyi, selected poems from *Kumukanda* and *A Blood Condition*

Chingonyi was born in Zambia and raised in the UK. His poetry reflects on living in the globalized, multicultural UK. He's particularly attuned to the connections between music and poetry.

Wed | What does it mean to be British today?

- Zaffar Kunial, "Poppy" from *Us*

Kunial was born to a white, English mother and a Pakistani father. His verse engages with questions of finding one's own identity when it draws from multiple cultures and traditions.

Week 4 (July 22-24)

Mon | What does it mean to be British today? (continued)

- Zaffar Kunial, selected poems from *Us* and *England's Green*

Tues | Thinking in Two Languages: English & Shaetlan

- Roseanne Watt, selected poems from *Moder Dy*

Watt was raised in the Shetland Islands north of mainland Scotland. Her poetry moves between English and the local Scots dialect, Shaetlan. She includes what she calls her own "uneasy translations" of her Shaetlan poems.

Draft Syllabus (September 2023)

Wed | The Sovereignty of Quiet

- Victoria Adukwei Bulley, selected poems from *Quiet*

Bulley was born in Essex and maintains strong connections with her Ghanaian heritage. Quiet shows what, to quote the epigraph from Kevin Quashie, “an aesthetic of quiet makes possible...a black subject in the undisputed dignity of its humanity.”

Week 5 (July 29-31)

Mon | All the Names Given 1

- Raymond Antrobus, selected poems from *Perseverance* and *All the Names Given*

Antrobus is closely connected with the spoken word community in London. He is of Jamaican and English heritage and is Deaf. His debut collection Perseverance explores his intersectional challenges to identity formation.

Tues | All the Names Given 2

- Raymond Antrobus, “Dear Hearing World” from *Perseverance*

Wed | Final Conversation: On Contemporary British Poetry

Additional Course Information

Academic Integrity. You are expected to observe the [UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship](#) in this course. The definition of plagiarism I use in this course is attributing to yourself something that you did not do. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to the following: cheating on an exam; plagiarism (using words or ideas without proper attribution); using machine-generated language; collaborating on an assignment, essay, or project when the instructor has specifically stated students should not do so; submitting the same essay for more than one assignment or class; or allowing another individual to assume one’s identity for the purpose of enhancing one’s grade. Academic dishonesty of any type by a student provides grounds for disciplinary action. In the Humanities Program, you are to write essays based only on your own study of the assigned materials, not on secondary sources.

For more information, visit the Academic Integrity Office's [website](#). AIO and Geisel Library offer several tutorials that students may take to understand what constitutes plagiarism.

Draft Syllabus (September 2023)

Students agree that by taking this course all required work will be subject to text-similarity review through Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.

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Inclusion. I value an inclusive and equitable classroom environment in which everyone shows respect to each other as persons and scholars. If you need accommodation for religious reasons, please contact me as soon as possible so that the appropriate arrangements can be made.

OSD Accommodations will be provided with a written request. Please provide me with your AFA letter prior to departure. Work through the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#).