Research Methods for Creative Writers: The Ethos and Eros of Organized Curiosity
Instructor: Christopher Cokinos

This craft seminar will introduce students across genres to a variety of research approaches and craft applications—including archival work (textual and visual), museum visits, "quirky research moves," site visit note-taking, research attributions/citations in creative work, varieties of interviewing (including shadowing sources in the field), and seamless multi-source historical scene reconstruction—and provide a reboot on foundational techniques such as compiling an annotated bibliography, summarizing/paraphrasing, sophisticated online searching and balancing scholarly sources with popular ones. But this isn’t a how-to course (well, it is)...it’s a class meant to instill a respect and passion for a research ethos, an ethos that can lift your writing into wider scales of engagement. The point is: Your life is not your own. It belongs to many stories, and this is a class that will help you discover those stories via research. Research like this is a skill, but it is also an attitude. We'll cultivate both. Practically speaking, the course will strike a balance between research assignments that partake in this year’s Convergences theme of "The Body," before opening up to directed work that will focus on your own research subjects. There will be a lot of one-on-one conferencing as we shape research strategies for your writing, and the course will be demanding. We will read examples of research-saturated work and we will absolutely take as a given that respect for verifiable accuracy is foundational.

Poetry
Instructor: Farid Matuk

Robert Duncan, in his correspondence with Denise Levertov, responded to the declamatory strain of her anti-war poetry by stating, “the poet’s role is not to oppose evil, but to imagine it,” and he asked, “Is it a disease of our generation that we offer symptoms and diagnoses of what we are in the place of imaginations and creations of what we are?” Duncan and Levertov carried on their correspondence during the Vietnam War era. How does the contemporary American poet, situated as she is at a node of global power and writing well after various stages of our culture wars, imagine the intersection of the personal and the
public? How does she, writing after a complex poetic tradition that interrogates the viability of the lyric subject, imagine the contours of her subjectivity and of the public as such, let alone imagine the terms of public discourse and of poetry’s interventions in that discourse? We will examine contemporary critical studies of the Levertov/Duncan polemic. We will also extend the two poets’ debate by reading pairs of contemporary poets and contemporary poetry anthologies that approach the challenges of public address and political poetry through divergent means.

Reading list:

Juliana Spahr & David Buuck—An Army of Lovers, City Lights, 2013
Denise Levertov—The Freeing of the Dust, New Directions Press, 1975
Kent Johnson—Homage to the Last Avant-Garde, Shearsman, 2008,
Carolyn Forche—The Country Between Us, Perennial Library, Harper & Row, 1982
Timothy Liu—Of Thee I Sing, Univ. of Georgia Press, 2004
Ronaldo Wilson—Poems Of the Black Object, Futurepoem Books, 2009
CA Conrad & Frank Sherlock—The City Real and Imagined, Factory School, 2010,
Rosa Alcalá—Undocumentaries, Shearsman, 2010,
CD Wright—One Big Self, Copper Canyon Press, 2007
Susan Sontag—Regarding The Pain of Others, Picador, reprint edition, 2004
Claudia Rankine—Don’t Let Me Be Lonely, Graywolf, 2004
Dale Smith—“Rhetorics of ‘Advantage’ and ‘Pure Persuasion’” from Poets Beyond the Barricade: Rhetoric, Citizenship, and Dissent after 1960
Dale Smith—“Poets Against War” from Poets Beyond the Barricade: Rhetoric, Citizenship, and Dissent after 1960
Ange Mlinko—“Craft Vs. Conscience”
Bertholf & Gelp—selections from The Letters of Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov
Robert Duncan—selections from Bending the Bow and Groundwork: Before the War/In the Dark in Selected
Poems
Searles—selections from MA thesis “Hype and Hypersexuality: Kara Walker”
Martin Espada—selections from Alabanza
Nancy Eimers—“Poetry and the Difficulty of Documentation”
Maggie Nelson—“All That Is the Case: Some Thoughts on Fact in Nonfiction and Documentary Poetry”
Susie Linfield—selections from Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence
Ed Dorn—selections from Way More West
Daniel Joseph Martinez—selections from The Things You See When You’re Not Holding a Grenade and
Daniel Joseph Martinez: A Life of Disobedience
Muriel Rukeyser—“The Book of the Dead” (first half of her book, U.S. i) is available free online at http://murielrukeyser.emuenglish.org/writing/the--book--of--the--dead/

Poetry Writing and Printmaking
Instructor: Joshua Marie Wilkinson

This course is cross-listed with the Visual Art department and will be co-taught by Professor Karen Zimmerman. At its core this is will be an experimental, hands-on course fusing the art of poetry writing and printmaking. MFA students in poetry and the visual arts will develop both writing and printing projects, and discover new approaches to composition, typography, and the materials of writing, making, and printing. We will meet Mondays at the Book Art & Letter Press Lab (Mabel & Fremont).

The Secret Life of Puppets
Instructor: Kate Bernheimer

Dolls and puppets have such weird power - they can be comforting, childlike, malevolent, blank. Appearing in ritual and art across cultures and ages, they call upon us to participate in a world where carbon-based “life forms” may not be the highest. Put a doll or a puppet at the center of your new story or poem and see just what happens. Borrowing this course title from Victoria Nelson’s book The Secret Life of Puppets (excerpts of which we will read), this class will consider narratives featuring dolls and puppets. Selected examples include Carlo Collodi’s Pinocchio, Kathryn Davis’s Duplex, Rilke’s puppet-angels, and the film Pan’s Labyrinth, along with critical readings by Marina Warner, Gilles Deleuze, Kenneth Gross, and others. Your writing will be based on dolls and puppets you and your classmates acquire in Tucson’s thrift shops, and we will be selling the dolls and puppets on Etsy (with copies of your poems, stories, and essays as gifts to the buyers) to raise money for a local literacy group.