To a large extent, the problems of poets are the problems of painters and poets must often turn to the literature of painting for a discussion of their own problems. -- Wallace Stevens, “Adagia”

The only thing, funnily enough, that I never get tired of doing is looking at pictures. -- Gertrude Stein, Lectures in America

Overview: This course begins with the idea that a range of twentieth-century American poets took seriously the “problems of painters,” as Stevens puts it. One of the major aesthetic and philosophical “problems of painters” was the debate regarding the ontology of the work of art. That is, what counts as a poem or a work of art? Is a work of art a thing in the world or a creation of the spectator’s (or the artist’s) mind? Does a poem do more or less than capture a view of the world or a piece of the reality? How do these aesthetic or formal questions relate to social or political concerns? By examining influential American poets from the first half of the twentieth century (Eliot, Stein, Williams, Stevens), through the second half of the century (Hughes, Bishop, Olson), and onto the present (Ashbery, Cruz), we will study poets’ answers to these questions and formulate our own responses too. In addition to reading literary criticism and theoretical writing on aesthetics, we will pay close attention to the relationship between poetics and literary theory in the period. We will also examine these poets in relation to the artists (such as Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Robert Rauschenberg, etc.) who sometimes influenced them.

Requirements: In addition to two brief in-class presentations and an in-class response to a classmate’s presentation, each student will select EITHER (a) the “chapter” seminar model: a 5-page prospectus for a seminar paper due after fall break and a 20-25-page seminar paper due Dec 12; OR, (b) the “conference” seminar model: four 5-page papers handed in approximately every other week throughout the semester and one 8-10-page “conference” paper due Dec 12 (this final paper might be a substantial revision, incorporating additional research, of one of your shorter papers). Let me know soon which option you are choosing.

Required Books/Readings: Please purchase the following editions or later, new or used. They are all available at the SMU bookstore and on Amazon (see the listmania URL below). There are also a number of essays (PDFs) and images on Blackboard. You will need to download these files each week (check the syllabus for the “Bb” designation).

http://www.amazon.com/gp/richpub/listmania/fullview/R2C419DNH74ASC/ref=cm_lm_pthnk_view?ie=UTF8&lm%5Fbb=248 Dallas Hall, (214) 768-2982
lsiragan@smu.edu
Office Hours: WF, 1-2:30 and by appointment


Schedule of Meetings:


[optional: Ezra Pound’s annotations and editing of *The Waste Land* drafts on Bb]

**Sept 2 (Tuesday) -- Eliot and New Criticism**


Cleanth Brooks, “The Heresy of Paraphrase” (1350-66) on Bb

William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” (1371-1402) on Bb

Charles Altieri, “Eliot’s Impact on twentieth-century Anglo-American poetry” (189-209) on Bb


**Sept 8** – *A few other theories of the art object*

Paul de Man, “Form and Intent in the American New Criticism” (20-35) link on Bb

Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (1-153)

**Sept 15 -- Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)**

Mark Roskill, “Cubism” (476-480) on Bb

Clement Greenberg, “Collage” (70-83) on Bb

“Collage” examples – powerpoint on Bb


Stein, “Portraits and Repetition” (165-206) on Bb
Sept 22 -- Stein, cont.
Stein, *Selected Writings*: “Tender Buttons” (459-509)
Stein, “Pictures” (59-90) and “Poetry and Grammar” (209-246) on Bb
Marjorie Perloff, “Poetry as Word-System: The Art of Gertrude Stein” (67-108) link on Bb
Jennifer Ashton, “‘Rose is a Rose’: Gertrude Stein and the Critique of Indeterminacy” (581-604) on Bb

Sept 29 -- William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)
Williams, *Collected Poems*, Vol. 1: *Spring and All* (175-236) and related notes in the appendix
Williams, “Introduction to The Wedge” and “A Sort of Song” (53-5) on Bb
“Williams and the artists” – powerpoint on Bb
Marcel Duchamp, from *Selected Writings* (32-3, 140-3) on Bb
Ezra Pound, “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” (356-9) on Bb
Dickran Tashjian, “William Carlos Williams” (90-115) on Bb

Oct 6 -- Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)
Stevens, “The Old Woman and the Statue” and “Mr Burnshaw and the Statue” from *Owl’s Clover* (152-8) on Bb
Albert Gelpi, “Stevens and Williams: The Epistemology of Modernism” (3-23) on Bb
Michael Szalay, “Wallace Stevens and the Invention of Social Security” (49-74) on Bb

Oct 13 – Fall Break

Oct 20 -- Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)
Bishop, “In Prison” (582-90) on Bb
Andre Bréton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism" (432-9) on Bb
James Longenbach, “Elizabeth Bishop and the Story of Postmodernism” (469-84) on Bb
Guy Rotella, “Elizabeth Bishop, ‘The Monument’” (17-40), on Bb
[Optional: paintings by Bishop, on Bb]
**Oct 27 -- Langston Hughes (1902-1967)**
George Schuyler, “Negro Art Hokum” and Hughes’s response to Schuyler, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (13-6, 31-6) on Bb
David Chinitz, “Rejuvenation through Joy: Langston Hughes, Primitivism, and Jazz” (60-78) on Bb
John Lowney, "Langston Hughes and the 'Nonsense' of Bebop” (357-85) on Bb

**Nov 3 -- Charles Olson (1910-1970)**
Olson, “Projective Verse”, “Canto One Hundred and One” on Bb
Martin Duberman, “A New Black Mountain” from *Black Mountain: Explorations in Community* (368-79) on Bb
Art: work by Robert Rauschenberg on Bb
Excerpts from George Butterick, *Guide to the Maximus poems* (82-3, 124-32, 199-203, 262-4, 524, 620-6) on Bb

**Nov 10 -- John Ashbery (1927--)**
Stephen Paul Miller, “‘Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,’ the Watergate Affair, and Johns’s Crosshatch Paintings: Surveillance and Reality-Testing in the Mid-Seventies” (84-115) on Bb
Nov 17 -- Víctor Hernández Cruz (1949--)

Nov 24 – Individual meetings reporting on paper and presentation progress in lieu of seminar. Each student will arrange to meet with me sometime between Nov. 17 and Nov. 24.

Dec 1 -- Presentations and conclusions

**Friday, December 12** – final papers due by noon