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English 7/8327, African American Lit/Form/Genre  
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### **Poetry, Politics, Performance: African American Poetics**

This seminar will provide students with sustained engagement with the intellectual and artistic legacies of African American poets. We will consider “movements” such as the New Negro Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement, while also reading against received histories of African American poetry to see what ruptures in common timelines have to teach us. Some of our guiding questions during the semester will be: How is a “modern” African American subject conceived of and represented by black poets? Does this differ amongst male and female poets? How do you define African American modernism? How are debates among black poets and intellectuals concerning use of dialect and vernacular poetics modulated throughout the centuries and what can we learn from them? What is considered the “canonical” in African American poetry, and what can learn from the “non-canonical”?

Students will record critical/creative responses to each week’s readings in a journal and post selections to a class listserv in which students are encouraged to respond to one another’s work in open dialogue. Students will also conduct original research in which they are encouraged to consider the socio-historical context of the poems as well as their critical histories. Each student will present the results of their research to the class, along with a bibliography. (Students may present proposals for team research projects to the instructor.) A seminar paper following MLA format will be handed in on the last day of class.

Authors may include: Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Sterling Brown, Helene Johnson, Mae Cowdery, Langston Hughes, Melvin Tolson, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Harryette Mullen, M. NourbeSe Philips, and Claudia Rankine. We will also study a selection of Old School and contemporary Hip Hop, including such artists as Public Enemy, Jay-Z, and Lauren Hill.