POET AT ARSONIST: HOUSING COLLABORATION, REVISIONS, REPRODUCTIONS, COMPOSITES, SCHOLIA, AND FANTASIES

What moves your poem along? (Is it lines, breaks, breaths, magic or speed?) What is your aesthetic discourse? Can you describe it? Enact it? Inhabit it? Disrupt it? Burn it?

I’m using arsonist here (casually and playfully) in order to say that we as poets, graduate students, and thinkers are trying to perform, form, and “out-perform” our poems and aesthetic intentions/style through writing and revision, but we also might get caught up in the conundrum of what art-making and poem writing is in contemporary publishing. Do we worry about hindering our creative process, prohibiting moves that could generate more innovation or sanctity for the poem? Maybe, maybe not. I propose that we “burn” these ‘hindered’ poems (houses) down, scorch the “too-intentional,” in so doing we extinguish “too-much intention” in order to examine what are the architectures, composites and constructions that must come to light and become our unique kind of poem. Do we write it in many ways? Do we ask our peers to become our collaborators? Do we bring other genres into the mix? Do we let our unconscious play a part? And if we don’t how do we discuss this choice and bring it into the mix?

In this workshop we will explore our own mastery over form and craft in the poem and yet still engage with intention and artifice as units of the poem’s force or value; and to ask essential question: what is the nature of poem-making and art practices that may seek to evade, elucidate, and interrogate the skills that hinder our risk-taking and habitual patterns in our respective writing styles? We will create a collaborative reading list. Each student picks one poetry book for a collective reading list, one established canonical essay on poetry, theory, or literature and one contemporary essay on an aspect of poetry and poetics. I will supplement the list with several books and essays. We will write the poem in numerous ways, discovering what we like best about our emerging and defining crafts/style choices and explorations.

Books assigned:

Kevin Coval, Quraysh Ali Lansana, and Nate Marshall THE BREAKBEAT POETS: NEW AMERICAN POETRY IN THE AGE OF HIP-HOP
Karen Green BOUGH DOWN
Bhanu Kapil: BAN EN BANLIEUE
Grading policy:

35% in class participation, 20% weekly poetry/midterm assignment/responses (on time!) 20% panels and presentations and 25% final portfolio. I expect full participation and will allow for only one absence*.

Students with Disabilities.
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me after class or in my office hours. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator, so I can do my best to support you.

*Policy on absences and lateness:
The standard policy is that no more than three absences in a fourteen week term may result in a grade of “no-credit.” Please arrive on time for class and stay until dismissal. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. If there is an emergency please speak to me about it as soon as you can.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty—in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning—will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. FOR A DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM SEE http://www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm. IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO CONSULT THE STUDENT CONDUCT CODE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA’S WEB SITE.

August 31, 2015
Discuss syllabus
Overview
Read for class:
We will develop a collaborative poetry exercise from the discourse found in these essays.

http://blog.art21.org/2015/07/06/irony-sincerity-is-there-a-third-pill/#.VaHC4OCAzaq

Exercise to bring to first day of class: Start and write a poem with the line: “You must do battle with Eros” (as your first line and we will have homework of adding a collaborative poetry exercise we devise to it as part of its revision):
http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/250638

September 7, 2015
Poetic statement assignment: What flipped your poetic style from one form to another? Where does your poem start? Where do they finish? Is there a point at which you become an arsonist while writing your poem? Or do you put out the fire before it starts?

Remember to attend Montana Book Festival (9/10-12); write a reading report.

September 14, 2015
Presentation on what you are reading
Ruth Ellen Kocher Goodbye Lyric

September 21, 2015
Workshop

September 28, 2015
Workshop
Aaron Kunin Cold Genius

October 5, 2015
Workshop

October 12, 2015
Workshop
Maggie Nelson The Argonauts

October 19, 2015
Workshop

October 26, 2015
Workshop
Midterm Due

November 2, 2015
Workshop
Visit from MaryAnn Bonjorni
Karen Green Bough Down

November 9, 2015
Workshop

November 16, 2015
Workshop
Bhanu Kapil: *Ban En Banlieue*

November 23, 2015
Workshop

November 30, 2015
Workshop
Kevin Coval, Quraysh Ali Lansana, and Nate Marshall *The Breakbeat Poets: New American Poetry In The Age Of Hip-Hop*

December 7, 2015
Workshop

December 14, 2015
Portfolios and reading