This course is a study of three contemporary poets: an American poet, Louise Glück (born in 1943), a Canadian poet, Anne Carson (born in 1950), and an English poet, Alice Oswald (born in 1966). Both Glück and Carson belong to the generation that came of age with the second-wave feminist movement of the sixties and seventies, while Oswald, a generation younger, has lived and written in the space opened by this movement. Glück’s work is confessional, spare, and speculative, Carson’s elegiac, elliptical, and at times riddling, and Oswald’s earthy, romantic, and generous-spirited. All three of these poets like to work in masks or personae, a tactic that lends itself to irony and perspectival play. Each has a distinctive sense of humor. All three are drawn to ancient literary works and mythic patterns. Carson has been a professor of Classics at various universities, Oswald has a BA in Classics, and Glück, though she did not finish college, has been a lifelong student of ancient myth and literature. All three, in different ways, are given to exploring the relationship between life and literature.

There is not an overarching aesthetic, thematic, or ideological frame for the course. We will be reading three widely praised poets who are very different from one another. Our primary task will be to understand what is disclosed in their particular adventures. Along the way we will try to trace connections among these poets and to address larger questions raised by their work.

Requirements

- Reading of all assigned texts
- Regular attendance
- Two short papers (5-7 pages)
- One long final paper (10-15 pages for undergraduate students, 15-20 pages for graduate students)

Texts

Louise Glück
- The Wild Iris
- Meadowlands
- Averno
- Faithful and Virtuous Night

Anne Carson
- Eros the Bittersweet
- Glass, Irony and God
- Autobiography of Red
- Red Doc >

Alice Oswald
- Spacecraft Voyager 1
- Memorial
- A Sleepwalk on the Severn

Course packet (poems, essays, and interviews on moodle)
Map of Course

T Jan 26  Introduction
R Jan 28  Elizabeth Bishop, “The Man-Moth,” “At the Fishhouses,” “One Art,” “The End of March”


T Feb 9  Glück, *The Wild Iris*

R Feb 11  Glück, *The Wild Iris*

T Feb 16  Glück, *Meadowlands*

R Feb 18  Glück, *Meadowlands*

T Feb 23  Glück, *Averno*

R Feb 25  Glück, *Averno*

*** Paper I Due ***

T Mar 1  Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night*

R Mar 3  Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night*

T Mar 8  Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*

R Mar 10  Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*

T Mar 15  Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*

R Mar 17  Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*

Carson, “The Anthropology of Water” (optional)
T Mar 22  Carson, *Autobiography of Red*

Bruce Beasley, “Who Can a Monster Blame for Being Red?”


Carson, “Essay on What I Think About Most”

T Mar 29  Carson, *Red Doc>*

Carson, “Ordinary Time: Virginia Woolf and Thucydides on War,” “Thucydides in Conversation with Virginia Woolf on the Set of the Peloponnesian War,” “Appendix to Ordinary Time”

R Mar 31  Carson, *Red Doc>*

Daisy Field, “Other Labyrinths”

*** Paper II Due ***

T Apr 5  Spring Break

R Apr 7  Spring Break

T Apr 12  Oswald, *Spacecraft Voyager 1*

R Apr 14  Oswald, *Spacecraft Voyager 1*

T Apr 19  Oswald, *Dart* (in *Spacecraft Voyager 1*)

R Apr 21  Oswald, *Dart* (in *Spacecraft Voyager 1*)

T Apr 26  Oswald, *Memorial*

David Farrier, “‘Like a Stone’: Ecology, *Enargeia*, and Ethical Time in Alice Oswald’s *Memorial*”

R Apr 28  Oswald, *Memorial*

T May 3  Oswald, *A Sleepwalk on the Severn*

R May 5  Review

*** Final Paper Due on Monday 9 May by 10:00 a.m. ***