

Cairo Poetics: The City as a Poem

by Asmaa Abdellatif

Tentative Flow

Note: The selection of poems to be analyzed will be flexible according to the discussions in every class.

Week One:

- Reading The first letter from Letters to a Young Poet by Rilke
- Course overview
- Open discussion
- Group Activity
- Writing exercise

Week Two:

Let's Talk about Form

- A General intro into poetry as a literary genre
 - In 2023, what is poetry? And where to find it?
 - How to read a poem?
 - Introduction to urban poetry
 - Writing exercise

Readings:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/oct/06/cities-poetry-urban-language-national-poetry-day>
- (How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry Book by Edward Hirsch)
- The CITY by Ghayath Almadhoun:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDn_dKLtE_n

Week Three:

- Reflection and digestion
- Participant presentations
- Writing exercise

Week Four:

- Field Visit (To be determined with participants) - Looking into history

Week Five:

- Participants Presentations
- Deconstructing the city: how do we read space?
- Digesting history

Readings:

- The Poet and the City by WH Auden
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25086852>
- The Production of Space (Introduction)
Book by Henri Lefebvre
- <https://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=22012021&id=de4e8e5a-e9a8-41d5-816a-05b9b54abcc2>

Week Six:

Urban poetry and social justice

- Discussion of the ways in which urban poetry can engage with social and political issues.
 - Who lives in Cairo?
- Analysis of examples of urban poetry that address issues of inequality, injustice, and resistance
- Writing exercise: creating urban poetry that addresses a specific social or political issues

Media:

- Harlem by Langston Hughes <https://poets.org/poem/harlem>
- Hona Alqahera film

Week Seven:

- Discussion on Gentrification
- Examples of how gentrification is dealt with in poetry
- Writing exercise

Readings:

- "Cleaning out the Ghettos" <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33102>
- "Better than Berlin" <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/42216>
- "In the inner city" by Lucille Clifton
<https://www.everseradio.com/in-the-inner-city-by-lucille-clifton/>

Week eight:

Field Visit (TBD with participants) - A look into the present and the future of Cairo
Optional reading. Cairo: Memoirs of a City Transformed. A book by Ahdaf Soueif

Week 9:

- Reading and analyzing poetry from other cities (Primary focus is on cosmopolitan, war-torn, and postcolonial cities)

Week 10:

- A look into digital media and urban poetry after the internet revolution

Week 11:

- Final presentations and exhibitions
 - Individual Poetry readings
 - Course reflections and open discussions
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Course work:

Throughout the course, participants will be expected to start working on their own individual works of art (poems, digital art, paintings, photography..etc) in order to be collected and compiled in a digital anthology by the end of the course.