

The Official MFA Reading List

One of our commitments as an MFA program in Creative Writing and Translation is to immerse ourselves in various literary traditions and to encourage students to see themselves as members of a community of writers practicing a range of different styles, techniques, and writerly strategies. In the interest of placing student work in dialogue with the work of – in particular – 20th century writers, mostly working in English, mostly in the U.S., we have compiled a list of texts which we expect our students to read in time for their Orals Examination at the end of their four semesters of course work.

The following reading list is separated into four genres, Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Non-Fiction (Translation is currently under construction). Students are expected to be familiar with all the texts in the genre of their Thesis Project, and to be familiar with ten texts in a second genre of their choosing. Moreover, we encourage our students to use these lists as a resource for discovering writers whom they might find especially useful in the process of drafting and revising their Thesis Projects.

These reading lists are meant to be an integral part of your writing process, not simply an exam list of required texts. We hope you will find, among them, a handful of texts that speak directly to your creative project. Finally, we post these lists in the interest of developing an area of common knowledge that will help generate a shared sense of intellectual and creative community in discussion in and outside the classroom.

FICTION

(In addition to the 20th century works listed below, students are expected to have a general awareness of the history of the novel, beginning with Murasaki Shikibu's Tale of Genji and ranging through the end of the 19th century. We do not require but strongly encourage students to read a range of works published prior to 1900, with perhaps special reference to British, French, American, and Russian novels – and notable short stories – of the 19th century.)

SHORT STORIES

Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*
James Baldwin, *Going to Meet the Man*
Donald Barthelme, *Forty Stories*
Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*
Raymond Carver, *Where I'm Calling From*
John Cheever, *The Stories of John Cheever*
Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Other Tales*
Lydia Davis, *Break It Down*
Mavis Gallant, *Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*
James Joyce, *Dubliners*
Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*
Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*
Haruki Murakami, *After the Quake*
Lorrie Moore, *Birds of America*
Alice Munro, *Selected Stories*
Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Short Stories of Flannery O'Connor*
Grace Paley, *Complete Stories*
Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*
Eudora Welty, *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*
John Edgar Wideman, *The Stories of John Edgar Wideman*

NOVELS

James Baldwin, *Another Country*
Willa Cather, *My Antonia*
Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
Joan Didion, *Play It As It Lays*
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*
Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
Nella Larsen, *Passing*
Micheline Aharonian Marcom, *The Daydreaming Boy*
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
Philip Roth, *Sabbath's Theater*
Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Paramo*
Salman Rushdie, *Shame*
Jean Toomer, *Cane*
John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*
V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas*
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
Richard Wright, *Native Son*

CRITICISM

Charles Baxter, *Burning Down the House*
Madison Smartt Bell, *Narrative Design*
E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*
Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice*
Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*
Nathalie Sarraute, *The Age of Suspicion: Essays on the Novel*
Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar" and "Composition as Explanation"

POETRY

Primary Texts
John Berryman, *The Dream Songs*
Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III*
Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected*
Rita Dove, *Thomas and Beulah*
T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*
Martin Espada, *The Republic of Poetry*
Allen Ginsberg, *HOWL*
Louise Gluck, *The Wild Iris*
Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses*
Linda Hogan, *The Book of Medicines*
Langston Hughes, *Selected*
Galway Kinnell, *The Book of Nightmares*
Bill Knott, [see his website: <http://billknott.typepad.com/>]
Yusef Komunyakaa, *The Pleasure Dome*
Philip Levine, *What Work Is*
Robert Lowell, *Life Studies*
Marianne Moore, *Selected*
Paul Muldoon, *Moy Sand and Gravel*
Marilyn Nelson, *Wreath for Emmett Till*
Sharon Olds, *The Father*
Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*
Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*
Alberto Rios, *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body*
Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*
Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*
Anne Sexton, *Transformations*
C.K. Williams, *Selected*
William Carlos Williams, *Selected*

Charles Wright, *Chickamauga*

(NOTE: for Selected, read at least the latter half.)

CRITICISM AND THEORY OF POETRY

T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"

Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming"

Seamus Heaney, "Feeling Into Words"

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"

Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury"

Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*

Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken"

Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*

Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar"

Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens"

CD Wright, *Cooling Time: An American Poetry Vigil*

[Also see the introductions to the anthologies below.]

ANTHOLOGIES

Anonymous/ Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, Judy Yung, eds., *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*

Agha Shahid Ali, *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals*

Kurt Brown and Harold Schechter, eds., *Conversation Pieces*

Eavan Boland and Mark Strand, eds., *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*

David Lehman, ed., *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*

Phillis Levin, ed., *The Penguin Book of the Sonnet*

Donald Allen and George F. Butterick, eds., *The Postmoderns: The New American Poetry Revised*

Camille Paglia, ed., *Break Blow Burn*

DRAMA

Plays

Aeschylus, *The Agamemnon*

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Krapp's Last Tape*

Bertolt Brecht, *Baal, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagony, Mother Courage, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Anton Chekhov, *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, The Cherry Orchard, and The Three Sisters*

Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls and Cloud Nine*

Euripides, *Hippolytus, and The Bacchae*

William Finn, *Falsettos*

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House, Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder, and The Wild Duck*

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America and Caroline, or Change*

Neal Labute, *The Distance from Here*

Tracy Letts, *August: Osage County*

David Mamet, *American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross, Oleana, and Speed the Plow*

Arthur Miller, *All My Sons and Death of a Salesman*

Moliere, *The Miser and The Misanthrope*

Marsha Norman, *'Night Mother*

Suzan-Lori Parks, *Tog Dog/Underdog*

Eugene O'Neill, *A Long Day's Journey into Night*

Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party, The Homecoming, and Betrayal*

Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Jean Racine, *Phaedre*

Sam Shepard, *Red Cross, La Turista, Buried Child, Curse of the Starving Class, and True West*

William Shakespeare, *The Complete Plays*

George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara and Heartbreak House*

Stephen Sondheim, *Company, Follies, and Sweeney Todd*

Sophocles, *The Oedipus Trilogy (Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, and Antigone)*

Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and *Rock 'n' Roll*
August Strindberg, *Miss Julie*, *The Father*, and *The Dream Play*
Paula Vogel, *How I Leaned to Drive*
Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*
August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *Fences*

CRITICISM

Aristotle, *The Poetics*
Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty" and "The Theatre and the Plague"
Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* and *The Playwright as Thinker*
Henri Bergson, "On Laughter"
Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre* (trans. John Willett)
Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*
Joseph Chaikin, "The Presence of the Actor"
Horace, "The Art of Poetry"
Hekrik Ibsen, *Letters on the Theatre*
Gotthold Lessing, "Hamburg Dramaturgy"
David Mamet, *Writing in Restaurants* and *Three Uses of the Knife*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*
Jean Racine, "Prefaces" to *Andromache* and *Phaedra*
George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*
Stendahl, "Racine" and "Shakespeare"
Maurice Valency, *The Flower and the Castle* and *The Breaking String*
Emile Zola, "Naturalism in the Theatre"

NON-FICTION

Memoir
Kathleen Alcalá, *The Desert Remembers My Name*
Tom Bissell, *The Father of All Things*
Jenny Bouilly, *The Book of Beginnings and Endings*
Truman Capote, *Music for Chameleons*
Mark Doty, *Heaven's Coast*
Francisco Goldman, *The Art of Political Murder*
Lucy Grealy, *Autobiography of a Face*
Mary Karr, *Cherry*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*
Gregory Orr, *The Blessing*
Chuck Palahniuk, *Stranger Than Fiction*
Ann Patchett, *Truth and Beauty*
Samuel Pepys, *The Unqualified Self*
Andrew Pham, *Catfish and Mandala*
John Rechy, *About My Life and the Kept Woman*
Paisley Rekdal, *The Day My Mother Met Bruce Lee*
Sharman Apt Russell, *An Obsession with Butterflies*
Esmeralda Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican*
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*
Jeannette Walls, *The Glass Castle*

CRITICAL/PERSONAL ESSAYS & REPORTAGE

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*
James Baldwin, *Notes on a Native Son* and *Nobody Knows My Name*
Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia*
Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*
Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* and *The White Album*
Andrew Holleran, *Ground Zero*
Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal*
Norman Mailer, *Armies of the Night* and *The Executioner's Song*

Janet Malcolm, *In the Freud Archives*
Mary McCarthy, *A Bolt from the Blue and Other Essays*
George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London, Homage to Catalonia, and A Collection of Essays*
Ishmael Reed, *Airing Dirty Laundry*
Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation, Styles of Radical Will, and On Photography*
Gore Vidal, *United States*
Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*
Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle*
Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*

TRANSLATION

William Arrowsmith & Roger Shattuck, *The Craft, and Context of Translation*
Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Course Book on Translation*
John Felstiner, *Translating Neruda: The Way to Macchu Picchu*
David Halpern, *Dante's Inferno: translations by twenty contemporary poets*
Edwin Honig, *The Poet's Other Voice: Conversations on Literary Translation*
Donald Keene, *Japanese Literature: an introduction for Western readers*
Clifford E. Landers, *Literary Translation, A Practical Guide*
Peter H. Lee, *The Silence of Love: twentieth-century Korean poetry*
Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett. *Translation, History, and Culture*
James J.U. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*
Earl Miner, *Japanese Poetic Diaries*
Ivan Morris, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon,*
Manuela Perteghella and Eugenia Loffredo, *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies*
Gregory Rabassa, *The World of Translation, PEN American Center*
--- *If this be treason: translation and its discontents (a memoir).*
Douglas Robinson, *Becoming a Translator: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation*
Hiroaki Sato, *String of Beads: complete poems of Princess Shikishi*
Rainer Schulte and Biguenet, *The Craft of Translation*
Rainer Schulte and Biguenet, *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*
Edward G. Seidensticker, *Genji Days*
George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*
Issues of *Translation Review* and *Circumference: a bi-annual journal of poetry translation*