FYS 21st Century Poetry  Fall 2014
Howard 308 MW 12:30 - 1:45 p.m.
Professor Brian Spears
Office: Howard 307
Office Hours:  9:00 - 10:30 am and by appointment
Email: brian.spears@drake.edu

Required Texts:
* Becoming the Villainess* by Jeannine Hall Gailey
* The Black Automaton* by Douglas Kearney
* The New Black* by Evie Shockley
An essay packet supplied by the professor
A journal for in class writing assignments, to be collected periodically
A computer with internet access

Course Goals and Objectives:
We’re thirteen years into the new century (nerd warning--the century began in 2001, not 2000), and the poetry world has undergone some pretty amazing changes during that period. To be clear, it’s not like something magical happened on January 1, 2001 that changed poetry forever, but there have been some pretty amazing technological advances in that general time frame that have affected the ways poets create and access works of art. Our focus, then, will be on the last twelve years, on how the rise of the internet as a communications network has changed the nature of poetry for some artists, and a little on how publishing poetry has changed over that time frame as well. One major group project this semester will include the creation of an e-chapbook of your original work, a project that would have been difficult ten years ago and impossible fifty years ago.

To that end, we will explore work by some contemporary poets--the three required books for this course have all been published within the last ten years--and you will investigate some ways in which contemporary poets are making their work accessible to a wider audience and in different ways than their predecessors may have ever dreamed possible. We’ll look at animated and video poems, and listen to recordings made by poets of their own and other poets’ work. We’ll look at how poets are using tools like InDesign to add visual elements to their work that were near impossible in the past. And we’ll also look at how the economics of traditional publishing are causing some presses to go back to older, mostly abandoned technology such as letter presses in an attempt to create collections that are as much pieces of art as the works contained within them.

Absences:
More than two absences will result in the loss of a letter grade for the attendance portion of this course. Two tardies (defined as coming in to class after I have taken the roll) will count for a single absence.
Classroom Policies:
Oral classroom participation is required in a course of this type. You will often be participating in small group work as well as discussions involving the entire class. You never know when a comment you make will spark fellow classmates to think of a subject in a new way or provide them with a creative spark.

However, a modicum of good manners is absolutely necessary for quality discussion. Failure to behave in a mannerly fashion may result in a lower grade or, in extreme cases, a request that you withdraw from the course. Students deficient in this area will be given one warning from the instructor before being penalized or asked to withdraw from the course.

Electronic devices may be used in class if they are being used for classroom activities only. Understand that if you are using an electronic device in class, you are giving everyone in the class permission to see what you are using it for.

We will often take part in writing exercises during class. Everyone is expected to participate in these exercises no matter how silly they may seem at the time.

Assignments are not accepted late without prior approval of the professor. In case of technical difficulties, take extraordinary measures to show that you have completed the work on time, then submit the work properly at the first possible opportunity.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:
Neither academic dishonesty nor plagiarism will be tolerated in this course. Students who are found to have violated Drake University’s policies on academic dishonesty and plagiarism (available here: http://www.drake.edu/dos/handbook/academic.php) will be dealt with according to the guidelines noted under the College of Arts and Sciences at the above link.

Students with Disabilities
Students with documented disabilities should meet with me individually to discuss what accommodations will be necessary. Students should provide accommodation request forms as early in the semester as possible. Guidelines can be found online at http://www.drake.edu/acadassist/disability/currstud.php

Grading:
Formal Writing Assignment: 30%
Book Review 25%
Participation/Journal Writing: 15%
Group Work: 15%
E-Chapbook Project: 10%

Grading scale: A 90-100 B 80-89 C 70-79 D 60-69 F 0-59

Schedule of Classes (subject to change)
8/25-27    Introductions, syllabus, discussion of poems on handout. Writing exercises. 
Reading assignment for the weekend: Reread “Ways of Seeing” by John Berger.

9/3    Writing exercises. Class discussion of “Ways of Seeing.” Reading assignment for 
the weekend: Becoming the Villainness by Jeannine Hall Gailey

9/8-10    Writing exercises. Class discussion of Becoming the Villainness. Draft one due 
book review. Bring books for students to examine, borrow.

9/15-17    Writing exercises. Class discussion on “The Loss of the Creature.” Group work: 
motion/video poems. Reading assignment for the weekend: Reread “The Loss of the Creature.”

assignment for the weekend: The New Black by Evie Shockley

9/29-10/1    Writing exercises. Video poems due and screened.

10/6-8    Writing exercises. Group work: uncreative writing.

10/15    Fall break. No class on Monday. Writing exercises. Book review due. Group 
work: more on uncreative writing.

10/20-22    Writing exercises. Discuss Poem 1 assignment. Reading assignment for the 
weekend: Reading assignment for the weekend: The Black Automaton by Douglas Kearney

10/27-29    Writing exercises. Discussion of workshop policies. Poem due by noon on Friday 
November 1.

11/3-5    Workshop poems. Discuss e-book assignment and assign groups.

11/6    Douglas Kearney reading, 5:30 pm in the Cowles Library Reading Room.

11/10-12    Workshop poems. Collect journals

11/17    Complete any unfinished business. Return journals.

From November 19 until December 3, I will be in Boulder, CO at an artist’s residency. I will be 
available to discuss your final projects via email, but the class will not meet again until the final 
exam period.

12/10 12:00 - 1:50 pm Final exam period. E-books due. Class reading/presentation of 
completed work.