

OLLI Spring 2020 Syllabus

Poetry in Motion: The Beat Generation

Date & Time: Merrill Gardens: Wednesdays from 10:00am – 12:00pm

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***Weekly Discussion Topics**

Class 1 - 2 / 5 / 20 Going “On the Road” with the Beat Generation!

Let's discover poetry in motion and go “on the road” with the Beat Generation and an introduction to one of the most artistic and culturally impactful, creative periods in recent American history. The first session will be spent reviewing the syllabus topics, discussing the salon format and introducing the places, the art, the beat philosophy, the key players and getting to know one another.

Class 2 - 2 / 12 / 20 Beat Influences: The Writing, Music & Art Behind the Beats

Examine the influences and influencer's behind the Beat Generation. Experience the art and artists that shaped the Beats and how these cultural and artistic predecessors paved the way for the new Bohemian era of free verse, free thought, and free love.

Class 3 - 2 / 19 / 20 East Coast Beats – Part 1: “The Best Minds of a Generation”

Meet the East Coast Beats through rare film footage, interviews, television appearances, and of course, their iconic work. Read and discuss the eloquent and irreverent writings and creative endeavors of the fathers of the Beat Generation - Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Gary Corso and more, against the backdrop of the Cold War era.

Class 4 - 2 / 26 / 20 East Coast Beats – Part 2: “HEART BEAT” & the New York Beats

Enter Neil Cassady, Kerouac's Dean Moriarty and Cody Pomeroy, and a constant inspiration for Allen Ginsberg. As we continue to explore the East Coast Beat contingent, McCarthyism is still raging, and we begin to see both the rise of the psychedelic and counterculture movements and the death of provincialism. “Beat-itude” is in full swing, Baby, feel free to break out your turtlenecks and sunglasses!

Class 5 - 3 / 4 / 20 West Coast Beats – Part 1: The San Francisco Renaissance

Meet a new group of less-ruminating intellectuals and discover the verse of San Francisco's Renaissance Poets – including Gary Snyder, Phillip Whalen, Michael McClure, and Alan Watts. These academics weren't communists or political activists, they were philosophers of Zen thought. They wrote of nature and free love and introduced an entire generation to Zen thought and the mysteries of the Far East in the aftermath of World War II, the shadow of Sputnik 1 and the International Space Race and to the new beat of 1950's jazz, and rock-n-roll.

Class 6 - 3 /11 / 20 West Coast Beats – Part 2: Epic Howls & City Lights

Find out how East meets West with the onset of City Lights Publishing. Founded in 1953 by poet I already fell in love Lawrence Ferlinghetti, City Lights Bookstore became widely known during the obscenity trial of Ferlinghetti for publishing Allen Ginsberg's influential collection "Howl and Other Poems" in 1956. Nancy Peters started working there in 1971 and retired as executive director in 2007. In 2001, City Lights was made an official historic landmark.

Class 7 - 3 / 25 / 20 Beat Women: Precursors & Muses

What about the women of the Beat Generation? Their presence is largely unknown to most casual readers. The 1940s and 50s were times when women belonged to their parents first and their husbands second, their independence was either limited or non-existent. So, who were these Beatnik muses and talented artists in their own right standing in the shadows of the brilliant poets and novelists that were their male counterparts? To seek truth, we must explore the women of the Beat Generation- their lives and work.

Class 8 – 4 / 1 / 20 Other Fellow Travelers

Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System was in full use, the Beats had been "on the road" and back again, and then some. A new more diverse and more politically conscious generation of artists began to emerge. Yippies and hippies were now at the center of the counterculture and the anti-war movement was at the forefront. Fresh voices, sounds, and ideas filled the minds of America's youth and college campuses and city streets erupted with activism. "Revolution was in the air."

Class 9 – 4 / 8 / 20 Looking Back & Forward: Ending One Road & Beginning the Next...

Now that the Beats have come to "the end of the road," who and what came next? Discuss, compare and contrast the cultural and political impact of the Bohemian era and the art and artists influenced by the Beat Generation. In the words of John Lennon, "regulation, integration, meditation, evolution, revolution, bagism, shagism, dragism, madism, ragism, tagism, this-ism, that-ism", where and who were we then and where and who are we now?"

Class 10 - 4/15/2020 Coffee House Revisited

In the tradition of the Greenwich Village coffee houses and the literary gatherings at City Light Bookstore, we will read own interpretations of favorite poems and prose and perhaps, the very brave, will consider presenting some original pieces in a day of celebration of the written word. Put on your berets, turtlenecks and sunglasses, bring your creative spirit and "beat-itude," it's time to jive!

*Content/Order/Classes subject to change.

*This class is designed as an exploration for those interested in learning more about the history, cultural relevance and controversy surrounding the Beat Generation and the psychedelic and counterculture era. This class does not and is not designed to endorse any political positions or practices.