

This syllabus was created as a companion to *Speech / Acts*, a group exhibition launching September 13, 2017, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. *Speech / Acts* brings together the work of a new generation of artists exploring how the social and cultural constructs of language have shaped black American experiences. Drawing from black experimental poetry, as well as popular texts produced for films, magazines, TV, and books, the works on view in *Speech / Acts* deconstruct the structural elements of language to rupture its intended purpose through collage, drawing, text-based installation, and video. This syllabus highlights a number of works in poetry and poetics that speak alongside the works in *Speech / Acts*. In addition, a number of the works on the syllabus were chosen to coincide with author readings and talks taking place at the University of Pennsylvania during the run of *Speech / Acts*. Event details are listed below.

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A *Speech / Acts* reading group will meet over six Saturday afternoons in the fall; we will discuss syllabus texts and explore what they illuminate and provoke. The group will meet in a satellite outpost for the Racial Imaginary Institute (TRII), founded by Claudia Rankine, which will be installed in the first-floor galleries at ICA. All are welcome to join the reading group; the meeting schedule is below. You are also welcome to use and adapt this syllabus as a tool for encountering *Speech / Acts* in your own classroom or study group, or to use it on your own. Noncirculating copies of syllabus texts are available in two common reading spaces: one at ICA and a second at the Kelly Writers House.

The reading group meets over six Saturdays, 1–4pm, at the Institute of Contemporary Art, 118 S. 36th Street, Philadelphia, to discuss the central readings listed for each session; see below for additional recommended texts.

All are welcome to join the discussion.

Sep 23 Introduction to Speech/Acts and Claudia Rankine

CENTRAL READINGS

- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014)
- Claudia Rankine, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2004)
- Claudia Rankine, ed., *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind* (Fence, 2015)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (UC Press, 2005)
- Maurice Berger et al., eds., *White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art* (Center for Art and Visual Culture, 2004)
- Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (Norton, 2011)

Oct 7 Race and Space

CENTRAL READINGS

- Susan Landers, *Franklinstein* (Roof, 2016)
- Rachel Zolf, *Janey's Arcadia* (Coach House, 2014), and related performances

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Elijah Anderson, "Down Germantown Avenue," introduction to *Code of the Street* (Norton, 2000)

Oct 21 Race and Form

CENTRAL READINGS

- Anthony Reed, introduction to *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2016)
- Dorothy Wang, introduction to *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford UP, 2015)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- John Keene, *Counternarratives* (New Directions, 2015)
- Evie Shockley, introduction to *Renegade Poetics* (U of Iowa Press, 2011)

Nov 4

Simone White
and Christina Sharpe

CENTRAL READING

- Christina Sharpe, introduction to *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke UP, 2016)
- Simone White, *Of Being Dispersed* (Futurepoem, 2016)

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- Judith Butler, “On Linguistic Vulnerability,” from *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997)
- Kevin Quashie, introduction to *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (Rutgers UP, 2012)

Nov 18

Harryette Mullen

CENTRAL READINGS

- Harryette Mullen, *The Cracks Between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be: Essays and Interviews* (U Alabama Press, 2012)
- Harryette Mullen, *Sleeping with the Dictionary* (UC Press, 2002)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Fred Moten, “Blackness and Poetry” (The Volta, July 2015)

Dec 2

M. NourbeSe Philip

CENTRAL READINGS

- M. NourbeSe Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (Wesleyan UP, 2015)
- M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Wesleyan UP, 2011)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Anne Anlin Cheng, introduction to *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford UP, 2011)

Institute of
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