

“Documentary Poetry, Popular Protest and Activism: An International Poetry and Poetics Seminar”

The American University of Paris.

Co-Directors: Geoff Gilbert and William Dow.

June 11-13, 2020.

The American University of Paris announces a call for papers for a documentary poetry conference to be held 11-13 June 2020 at the American University of Paris.

How do contemporary poets in the US and France position themselves in relation to popular political protest and activism? What use are they making of experimental documentary traditions (whose practices can be placed along a continuum from “subjective” auto-ethnographies to “objective” documentary tendencies)? How does writing outside France and the US relate to these two centers for poetry and poetics? What challenges does this offer to conceptions of the relation between poetry as an art form and other social and political utterances and actions? The conference will also look at the history of documentary poetry traditions in France and the United States, locating this history in an international, transnational, and pluri-disciplinary context.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- The documentary traditions of innovation and experiment in French and American poetry and how such traditions are articulated with political, economic, and social struggles; periodization and the documentary traditions
- Contradictory tensions: documentary poetry as resistance to and a haven for the personal.
- Documentary poetry takes as its primary subject historical events and the people who are the perpetrators and victims of such events. How might this poetry help readers to become “virtual witnesses”? What alternatives to the model of ‘temoignage’ and ‘witness’ can be proposed?
- How poetry works with pre-existing cultural documents to uncover hidden historical claims and voices.
- Documentary poetics and the question of appropriation.
- The relationship between documentary modalities and social resistance poetry.
- French and American documentary epistemologies and documentary poetry as alternatives to the viewpoints and subjects of mass media journalism.
- Documentary poetry as an “investigative poetics”; and as an “investigative poetry” (P. Metres).
- Documentary poetry as an international phenomenon.
- Documentary poetry and the forms through which collective life is imagined – class, gender, race, sexuality, and debates within the left about these formations

- Documentary poetry as forms of empowerment and rethinking reading practices.
- How French and American documentary poetry implicitly questions the status of both poetry and documentary materials; questions of the canon and the archive.
- Documentary poetry, the polyvocal, intertextual, and multimedia.
- Documentary poetry: articulations of collectivity and social justice.

Plenary speakers: Juliana Spahr, Mark Nowak, Franck Leibovici. Additional plenary speakers will be confirmed shortly.

Conference Fee: (includes coffee breaks and opening and closing receptions): 40 euros.

Dinner Fee: 60 euros.

Proposal for papers should include

1. A brief (250-300 word) abstract

2. A one to two page vita.

Submissions to ggilbert@aup.edu and wdow@aup.edu

Deadline for Submissions: January 15, 2020.