

Brenda Cárdenas
Course Description for Fall 2021 Semester

English 716-001: Poetic Craft and Theory: Intertextualities

In the 1960's, literary theorist Julia Kristeva, drawing on Bakhtin's "intersection of textual surfaces," coined the term "intertextuality," writing that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another...and poetic language is read as at least double" ("Word, Dialogue and Novel"). Both before and after Kristeva, inventive poets from a host of literary movements and steeped in various poetic genres and methods (i.e. documentary, ekphrasis, OULIPO, chance operations) have literalized this concept through appropriative approaches to writing that have involved direct quotation, collage, erasure, palimpsest, diastic and "writing through" methods, combinations of text and image, etc., using source texts.

From the perspective of writers, we will study contemporary exemplars of poetics that involve collage, erasure and palimpsest (especially in documentary poetry, but also in centos and reinvented fairytales/folktales), deterministic procedures, ekphrasis, and imagetext. Our focus will be on craft--how these techniques are employed and to what effect, paying particular attention to the tensions, valences and nuances that emerge in the juxtapositions, gaps, and overlays, as well as considering the ethical dimensions of such practices. We will also write poems using these methods and bring them to class for critique, which will include suggestions for how we might best achieve the desired effect(s).