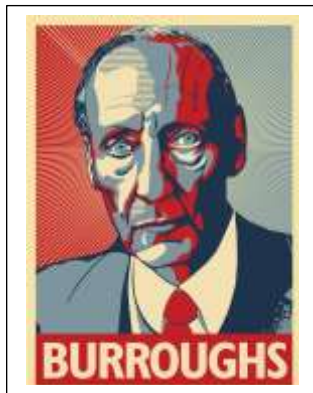


# BEATTitude // Literature of the Beat

## Generation

ENGLISH 5355.061 || SPRING 2024

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"Artists . . . are the real architects of change, and not political legislators who implement change after the fact."

- William Burroughs

"The point of Beat is that you get beat down to a certain nakedness where you actually are able to see the world in a visionary way." - Allen Ginsberg

"We are now contending technicians in what may well be a little American Renaissance of our own and perhaps a pioneer beginning for the Golden Age of American Writings."

- Jack

Kerouac

## COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Welcome! During the 1950s a group of experimental American writers living in New York City (and later San Francisco) began to publish literary works depicting an underground of alienated restless characters who celebrated freedom of expression, wanderlust, and the search for euphoria of body and mind in stream-of-consciousness narration. This Beat literary 'school' would expand into a cultural movement that was predecessor to the counter-culture hippies of the Sixties and punks of the Seventies, not to mention the developing civil and equal rights movements, among others. Largely perceived as a 'fraternity' of male voices, the Beat movement did include many women writers and participants whose involvements were not fully documented until the women's movement introduced revisionist histories.

In this course, we will read broadly as well as deeply in order to acquaint ourselves with the many Beat writers, their styles and influences. In the process we will analyze multiple literary genres: fiction, poetry, nonfiction, memoir, as well as academic criticism and film. We will examine cultural conformity and resistance; literary community formation; experimental writing strategies; sex and gender divisions; transformative modes of consciousness and alternative spiritualities; emergent environmental awareness; and challenges to mainstream publishing and censorship.

Throughout the semester, we will look for the legacies of the Beats in our own time. We will deliberate why Beat literature remains popular, as evidenced in more recent literary criticism (for example, Allen Ginsberg et al.'s *The Best Minds of My Generation: A Literary History of the Beats*, 2018; Mary Paniccia Carden's *Women Writers of the Beat Era: Autobiography and Intertextuality*, 2018; Max Orsini's *The Buddhist Beat Poetics of Diane di Prima and Lenore Kandel*, 2018; *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats*, 2017; Jimmy Fazzino's *World Beats: Beat Generation Writing and the Worlding of U.S. Literature*, 2016; Bill Morgan's *The Typewriter Is Holy: The Complete, Uncensored History of the Beat Generation*, 2011, and *Beat Atlas: A State by State Guide to the Beat Generation in America*, 2011; John Leland's *Why Kerouac Matters: The Lessons of On the Road*, 2007) as well as the current spate of film depictions (*Howl*, 2010; *On the Road*, 2012; *Big Sur*, 2013; *Kill Your Darlings*, 2013).

### Course Goals & Learning Objectives

The course has six primary goals for its students: 1) Gain familiarity with experimental American literature written during the post-1945 period through the 1960s in terms of genres, authors, styles, and concerns; 2) Understand differences and draw connections between different historical periods and cultural communities that are represented in American literature; 3) Advance skills in critical thinking based on textual analysis; 4) Improve ability to effectively communicate ideas in discussion and in writing; 5) Heighten awareness and practice of personal and learning community responsibility as borne out in meeting deadlines and working to highest academic standards; 6) Enhance ability to work collaboratively to gain and apply cross-cultural knowledge and skills for academic and professional development.

These outcomes will be demonstrated through in-class and/or online discussions, discussion leadership, writing assignments, analytical arguments, essays, and creative writing, all aimed to elicit objective analysis and substantive discursive and written responses.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- Charters, Ann. *The Portable Beat Reader* (Penguin Classics, 2003)
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (Penguin Classics, 2008)
- Knight, Brenda, ed. *Women of the Beat Generation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Conari Press, 1998)
- Johnson, Joyce. *Minor Characters: A Beat Memoir* (Penguin Books, 1999)

**Recommended:** Eric Hayot's *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* (Columbia University Press, 2014)

### A SAMPLING OF DIGITAL ARCHIVES & RESOURCES

#### The Beat Generation Video Archive:

[http://www.poetspath.com/exhibits/video\\_exhibit.htm](http://www.poetspath.com/exhibits/video_exhibit.htm)

**Poetry Foundation:** <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/147552/an-introduction-to-the-beat-poets>

**Beat Writers in the UC Berkeley Libraries:** <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/subject-guide/english/archives>

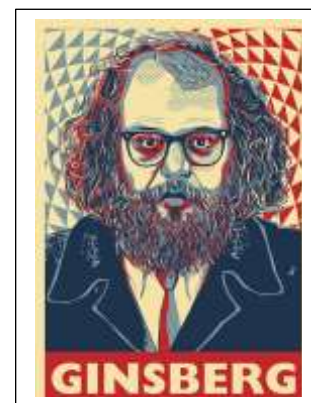
**City Lights Bookstore, San Francisco:** <https://citylights.com/our-story/a-short-history-of-city-lights/>

**PennSound Poetry Archive:** <https://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/authors.php>

#### Columbia University archive:

[https://archivesportal.library.columbia.edu/results.php?component\\_text=%22Beat%20generation%22&repository\\_code=&level=collection&sort=score+asc&rows=20&unitid\\_t=&operator=AND&advanced=on](https://archivesportal.library.columbia.edu/results.php?component_text=%22Beat%20generation%22&repository_code=&level=collection&sort=score+asc&rows=20&unitid_t=&operator=AND&advanced=on)

**Naropa University Archive:** <http://archives.naropa.edu/digital/collection/p16621coll1/id/1081/>



**Internet Archive:** [https://archive.org/details/beat\\_20221029](https://archive.org/details/beat_20221029)

### **Kanopy.com**

This streaming service has over 30,000 award-winning films and documentaries. Public library patrons, university students and faculty are able to watch free-of-charge with their institution's library card. While the UTT Robert R. Muntz Library does not have a subscription, I was able to create an account with my Tyler Public Library card. Excellent international, indie, and Great Courses archive! There are a number of educational programming related to our topic.

**GRADS:** Search the University of Pennsylvania Call-For-Papers site to see current conversations that feature conferences and panels relevant to our field of study. If you are interested in submitting a conference proposal, I am happy to work with you. <https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/category/all>

If you are interested in learning more about academic publishing, you might explore the submission guidelines for the following *Journal of Beat Studies*: <https://press.pace.edu/journal-of-beat-studies/>

## **| POLICIES & PROTOCOLS**

**COMMUNICATION POLICY:** Emails will be answered within 24 hours during the school week and occur between 9am and 8pm. Feedback on written assignments will be within 2 weeks of submission. Please note: I teach on a Monday - Wednesday on-campus schedule this term.

**DISCUSSION FORUM POLICY:** Prompts, questions, and responses on the discussion board are to enable students to brainstorm about the readings and assignments. The postings on the discussion board must be focused on the assigned topic. All technical problems associated with Canvas, the Internet, or library databases, including passwords and user IDs, should be directed to the respective departments. The course instructor cannot answer technical questions.

**COMMUNICATION & COLLEGIALLY:** We are all responsible for creating a seminar that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. We commit to doing so in a way that values diverse perspectives and experiences and encourages productive reflection and interaction. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be conscious of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom. All postings on the discussion board must meet academic and professional standards. Abuses in the forms of bullying and/or discriminatory comments on gender, sex, race, or ethnicity are not allowed and will be reported if the instructor's intervention does not see immediate changes in behavior.

**CONVENTIONS OF ADDRESS:** Speaking to a professor, administrator, staff member, employer, manager, or colleague is different (at least initially) from speaking/texting with a friend, family member, or other familiar relation. In a professional, intellectual context like the University, it is conventional to refer to faculty, administrators, staff, and others by their titles (Doctor, Professor, Instructor, Coach) unless explicitly instructed otherwise. You should also get into the habit of including greetings, salutations, and language appropriate to such contexts (not, for example, "Hey,"). I will respectfully refer to you according to your stated preferences and expect that you'll reciprocate in kind.

**HOMEWORK & PAPER FORMAT:** Complete all assigned readings and assignments by the due date so that you can participate in discussion and writing activities. All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, use normal margins and readable font. Paper headings should include your name, date, course title, and professor's name. Each page should include page number and your last name. Use MLA documentation to cite sources and include a Works Cited page.

**DUE DATE POLICY:** Assignments must be submitted through Canvas on or before the due date (unless

otherwise requested). Work turned in late without a compelling reason will be lowered one-third of a grade per day.

## ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS

### Readings & Online Discussions

**ASSIGNED READINGS:** Complete all literary and critical assigned weekly readings so that you can participate in discussion activities. It will be beneficial for you if you keep an annotated bibliography of the critical readings: that is, a brief description of each article's main topics and arguments. Note which arguments you find most compelling and intriguing (or conversely which you find yourself debating)—strong responses are the foundation for critical inquiry. Annotations will save you time when crafting your prospectuses and final paper.

**DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP POSTING IN CANVAS:** Across the semester, each student will be responsible for initiating multiple discussions of the assigned readings through the posting of prompts and claims. I've made initial assignments; please let me know if you have a conflict with that date.

Discussion prompts should briefly summarize the readings, noting the line of argumentation in scholarly articles and the subjects, themes, form, and style of literary works (poetry and prose). You might comment from your 21<sup>st</sup>-century vantage point on the aims of the Beat writers and the issues of their historical period. Conclude with several thoughtful discussion questions/prompts for the class. **Posts should be at least 300+ words.** Discussion leader posts should be entered into Canvas by **MONDAY (midnight) of the week** during which the readings are assigned.

Discussion leadership postings will be **letter-graded** according to the concision of the summary, the depth and thoughtfulness of the discussion prompts and questions, and the grammatical correctness and polish of the prose posting on Canvas. **You are welcome to consult with me as you draft your posting!**

**CLASS WEEKLY DISCUSSION RESPONSES:** Each class member is responsible for a response of **100+ words in length** to each discussant's posting. Once you've posted for the week, feel free to respond more briefly to colleagues' comments. **POST responses by SATURDAY (midnight) of the calendar week.**

**HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXTS MINI-REPORTS:** For this assignment, students will research and design a PowerPoint report on cultural-historical movements, events, and landmark decisions relevant to our study. This will be due for presentation to the cohort by **MONDAY (midnight) of the calendared week** on the schedule. Assignments will be made during the first week of classes.

**BEAT FILM REVIEWS:** Access and view one of the films listed on the final page of the course schedule through an online streaming service or a library. *Let me know if you have trouble finding a film.* By Week 10, POST a short description and assessment of the film you watched (500+ words). What insights did the film offer on our subject of the Beat writers and cultural movement? Thumbs Up? Thumbs Down?

### Analytic & Creative Writing

**PROSPECTUS // Research Paper Abstract:** There will be 2 "prospectus" assignments for which students will map out an abstract for a research paper, to include a working thesis argument paragraph followed by a set of supporting passages (both creative and critical-scholarly sources) and a rationale statement for how these would be used to support the thesis. You are free to choose your own topic of analysis as you explore more deeply your insights about works under review during the period of the semester leading up to the due date. Include the questions you are using to help guide your research; the specific writers/works you hope to

examine; and difficulties, questions, or problems you anticipate. You will get feedback, so ask any other questions as well.

**Word count should be a minimum of 500+ words and no more than 1200, including the bibliography.** More information is posted in Canvas.

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER:** For the end-of-term project, expand upon and/or revise one of the prospectus assignments already submitted OR design a new paper topic that explores a set of propositions that constellate creative and critical texts into significant conversations. *If a final paper is not submitted, the student will fail the course.*

**In a minimum of 2750 words, including Works Cited,** engage the creative and critical works we've discussed and deploy arguments highlighted throughout the semester in order to offer a literary-critical examination and focused reading. The paper should include a minimum of three outside scholarly sources. Feel free to draw from the criticism we've read over the semester. Your essay must be typed and formatted according to the "Homework & Paper Format" description above. Use MLA documentation to cite sources. Submit the final paper through Canvas in a Word document.

**Success Tip!** *As you are conceptualizing your prospectuses and final papers, I recommend that students meet with me over zoom or through email exchanges, as well as consult your humanities librarian, Vandy Dubre. Visit the Writing Center for support in drafting and revising the paper.*

**E-SYMPOSIUM:** Seminar paper abstracts will be posted on Canvas during the final week of the semester in a mini-conference format. Feel free to use this forum for brainstorming and requesting suggestions and feedback from your colleagues to help you during your final paper drafting process.

**CREATIVE VARIATION & EXPLICATION:** To test your engagement with this literary movement, you will write an original **creative work** inspired by Beat authors. ***This effort will not be letter-graded.***

In an attached **explication (600+ words)**, explain the premises for your creative work and discuss the ways in which you engage the elements of Beat poetry or prose. Briefly explain what attracted you to your author or work and what insights you might have gained in the process of writing your creative piece. ***This explication will be graded.*** *More information will be shared in class and on Canvas.*

**ALTERNATIVE SYLLABUS:** This assignment offers graduate students the opportunity to design a syllabus for a different configuration (thematic, topical, generic) of creative and theoretical readings and emphases for a Beat Generation literary studies course to be offered at a high school, community college, or university. *More information will be handed out in class and posted under Assignments in Canvas.*

## **| GRADES & FINAL EVALUATION**

Final course grades will be based on the weighted average grades based on the following percentages. The final grade will include my assessment of your overall contribution and progress in the class. Feel free to communicate with me at any time about your grades.

### **GRADUATES:**

Online Participation in Discussion Boards	5%
Film Review	5%
Discussion Leadership	20%
Historical Cultural Context Report	10%
Prospecti (2)	20%
Creative Variation	5%
Alternative Syllabus	5%

**PAPER GRADING STANDARDS:**

**Excellent (A)** papers have clear theses and soundly organized arguments that reflect detailed, nuanced understanding of the text. They are precisely and concisely written and have few if any mechanical problems—even minor ones. They weave quotations into their arguments smoothly and forcefully. A vital, graceful voice animates such essays; they say something compelling in a compelling way.

**Good (B)** papers have clear theses and are thoughtfully and reasonably organized. They may be marred by a few infelicities (inappropriateness) of style, but they will have no major mechanical problems—and not many minor ones either. These are solid, disciplined papers that make a definite point in a logical, coherent manner to a definite audience.

**Satisfactory (C)** papers have a thesis supported by evidence. The writing is clean and properly proofed, but not always compelling; it may be marred by some minor mechanical problems and one or two major ones (like fragments or run-ons). While their arguments may not be particularly cogent, these papers do say something interesting, and they say it in a comprehensible and responsible way.

**Poor (D)** papers, while giving evidence of effort on the part of the writer, lack a thesis, have major mechanical problems, poor organization, betray serious misreadings of the text, and show little sense of subject or audience.

**Failing (F)** papers have weaknesses even graver than those indicated for poor papers. They usually betray a lack of effort on the part of the writer. Any evidence of plagiarism (intentional or otherwise) will result in a failing grade—and referral to the Academic Conduct Committee.



