With ten core faculty working in poetry and poetics, Northwestern’s English department offer superb training in the study of poetry and the long and diverse tradition named by ‘poetics’ across a wide range of historical periods from classical antiquity to the current moment. Our distinguished faculty work closely with students who are interested in generating theoretically innovative, advanced scholarship in the poetries of the near and distant past, as well as of marginalized communities in the U.S. and abroad.

Graduate study in poetry and poetics is undergirded by two primary components: a doctoral track in Poetry and Poetics and the Poetry and the Poetics Colloquium (poetry.northwestern.edu). The doctoral track allows students in English and Comparative Literary Studies to specialize in Poetry and Poetics as a scholarly subfield. The Poetry and Poetics Colloquium is an interdisciplinary cluster of writers and scholars from across the university who share an interest in studying the genre and its various permutations. Every year, PPC hosts a lively series of workshops, reading groups, symposia, poets and critics. Recent visitors include poets Rosa Alcalá, Christian Bök, Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Harryette Mullen, Mark Nowak, Craig Santos Perez, M. NourbeSe Philip, Ed Roberson, Cecilia Vicuña, Adam Zagajewski, and Raul Zurita, as well as leading scholars such as Christopher Nealon, Marjorie Perloff, Yopie Prins, Jahan Ramazani and Avital Ronnell.

Curricular and programmatic offerings in the field are augmented by the Poetry and Poetics Graduate Cluster, The Futures of Poetics Reading Group, the Comparative Modernisms Workshop, and the initiatives of our digital platform Open Door Archive.

Chicago enjoys a lively poetry scene. The Poetry Center of Chicago, the Guild Complex, The Chicago Poetry Project, The Poetry Foundation, Danny’s and Sector 2337 are only a few of the venues that sponsor readings and events in the area.
Chris Abani (Ph.D. USC) teaches Creative Writing (Fiction and Poetry) and Literature. He is a novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter, and playwright. His fields of interest include African Poetics, World Literature, 20th-century British and American Literature, African Presences in Medieval and Renaissance Cultural Spaces, The Architecture of Cities and their Potential Symbiotic Relationship with their Populations, West African Music, Postcolonial and Transnational Theory, Robotics and Consciousness, Yoruba and Igbo Philosophy and Religion. He is the recipient of the PEN USA Freedom-to-Write Award, the Prince Claus Award, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a California Book Award, a Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a PEN Beyond the Margins Award, the PEN Hemingway Book Prize and a Guggenheim Award.


Betsy Erkkilä (Ph.D., Berkeley) specializes in Revolutionary and 19th-century American literature and modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, with a particular interest in gender, race, and political theory and transatlantic literary exchange. She is the author of Walt Whitman Among the French, Whitman the Political Poet, The Wicked Sisters, Mixed Bloods and Other American Crosses, and recent essays on Wheatley, Jefferson, Poe, Melville, Dickinson, and Lincoln. Her current projects include a book entitled Imagining the Revolution and “Before the American Novel,” the opening chapter of the Oxford History of the American Novel (2014). She received Northwestern’s Graduate School Faculty Award for Service in 2014 for her distinguished work as a graduate teacher and mentor.


Reginald Gibbons (Ph.D. Stanford) has published over thirty volumes, including poems; translations from ancient Greek and Spanish; fiction; edited volumes of contemporary fiction and poetry and of twentieth-century poetics; and editions of modern fiction. He was the editor of TriQuarterly magazine from 1981 to 1997, was a cofounder of the Humanities Institute workshop on Poetry and Poetics, is jointly appointed in Classics and in Spanish and Portuguese, and is Director of the Center for the Writing Arts and the graduate writing program in Northwestern’s School of Professional Studies. His research interests include the history of poetic practice, translation, and all aspects of the art and situation of poetry. He is a member of the Planning Team and the Advisory Council of the American Writers Museum, which is building a national museum of American literature, to open in Chicago in early 2017, and is an officer of The Guild Complex, a Chicago literary presenting organization, and in 2013 a co-founder of the annual (Gwendolyn) "BrooksDay." His critical book on poetry, How Poems Think, was published in September 2015 by University of Chicago Press, and his new book of poems, Last Lake, will be published (also by University of Chicago Press) in late 2016. He has won a Guggenheim fellowship, the Folger Shakespeare Library O. B. Hardison, Jr. Poetry Prize, and has been a Finalist for the National Book Award.

Susannah Gottlieb (Ph.D. Chicago) works in the areas of modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, continental philosophy and political theory, and Asian American literary traditions. She is the author of Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden and the editor of Hannah Arendt: Reflections on Literature and Culture. She regularly teaches courses on poetry, poetics, and literary theory. Her current projects include a book-length study entitled The Importance of Metaphysics: The Intellectual Heresies of W.H. Auden and essays on Celan’s Meridian materials, Arendt’s report on the Eichmann trial, Kafka and the idea of Bildung, and reflections on the demonic.

Natasha Tretheeway won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry for her book, Native Guard, and served two terms as Poet Laureate of the United States. She has based many poems on historical events and figures, including those of the Civil War; her poems also often explore race and gender. She has said that she considers her creative work a form of research as well as an artistic practice. Her poem-cycle Bellocq’s Ophelia fictionalizes--on the basis of early 20th-century photographs by E. J. Bellocq—the life of a prostitute in New Orleans. Beyond Katrina is a mixed-genre book that constitutes “A Meditation on the Mississippi River.” Her most recent book of poems, Thrall, which makes use of both personal and historical materials, also continues her work in ekphrastic mode. Tretheeway joins the faculty of Northwestern in fall 2017, having taught for a number of years at Emory University.

Will West (Ph.D. University of Michigan) studies, teaches, and thinks about poetry and poetics mainly through the contexts of the European Renaissance, classical antiquity, and other premodern societies. His interest in poetics extends beyond verse to include the patterns to which prose and drama are shaped, the tropes and practices of poetic making, and the role of the poet in various historical and social moments. At Northwestern, he has taught classes on the afterlives of Ovid’s book of changes; poetics and aesthetics from Aristotle to Kant; Shakespeare around the world and over time; and many other topics. Ivy Wilson (Ph.D. Yale University) teaches courses on the literatures of the black diaspora, with a particular emphasis on African-American culture. He has published editions on two 19th-century African-American poets: James Monroe Whitfield and Albery Allison Whitman. His book Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S., includes chapters on the poetry of Frances E.W. Harper and Walt Whitman. He has taught courses on African-American poetry and poetics from Phillips Wheatley to hip hop.

Specialists in Poetry & Poetics in other departments include:

**Classes:**
- Marianne Hopman
- French & Italian:
  - Christopher Bush, Christopher Davis, Cynthia Nazarian
**Slavics:**
- Clare Cavanagh
**Spanish & Portuguese, Latin American & Caribbean Studies:**
- Jorge Coronado, Emily Maguire
**German:**
- Peter Fenves, Samuel Weber