

FW 2023-24

AP/EN 4163 6.0A (Y)	<i>The Visionaries: Illuminations, Ecstasies, Traumas and Prophecies, from Hildegard von Bingen and Teresa of Avila through Blake, Dickinson and the Beats, to Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell</i>
Course Director:	Professor B.W. Powe Office: 642 Atkinson College Ext.: 33775 e-mail: bpowe@yorku.ca other information: office hours from 3 until 5 on Fridays
Time:	Fridays, 11:30 am until 2:30 pm
Delivery Format:	ONLINE
Description:	<p>This course explores and engages the visionary streams in selected poets, novelists, memoirists, essayists and songwriters.</p> <p><i>Our guiding principle will be to explore the ideas of breakdown and breakthrough, of breakthrough and breakdown.</i></p> <p>The visionary element in literature offers illuminations, inspirations, ecstasy, trauma, transcendental and metaphysical awareness and engagements, heretical speculation, wild invention, serene receptivity. Writers develop innovative techniques to express the apocalyptic or transcendent moment. Searching for forms of breakthrough to higher states of consciousness and ultra-sensitivity, the poets and prose writers explore alternative imaginative conditions in gnosticism, alchemy, hermetism, and kabbalah. These modes of consciousness form counter-currents of expression following what are known as the via negativa and the via positiva, pathways of negation and illumination.</p> <p><i>What do the visionaries have to say to our time of pandemics, AI, ChatGPT4, crisis, economic stratifications, spiritual conflicts and confusions?</i></p>

	<p>Artists may record a sense of transcendental pressures on their minds and sensibilities. This must affect their forms and articulations. The prophetic streak in writers can lead to proclamation and denunciation. We'll engage the nature of inspiration itself, what Hildegard von Bingen calls "greening".</p> <p>It's a centre of this course that by studying visionaries we'll discover keys to imaginative literature. We'll explore codes in the illumination and revelation streams. Prophetic legacies underscore mythic, imaginative writing and art. Some literary artists rest at ease in the spiritual expressions of their day. Others by necessity reinvent the expressions of inwardness and inspiration, exploding poetic forms and religious dogma, provoking social structures and repressive political and cultural systems, that they engage. <i>Writers driven towards finding ways of expressing the ineffable won't fit into anything other than what they invent for themselves.</i></p> <p>The visionary streams move through Hildegard, Rumi and Hallaj, and Teresa of Avila, Dante through to Blake, Emily Bronte, Whitman, and Dickinson, and exist in iconoclastic implosions of form and style in Rimbaud, and then emerge in fragmented inklings in Eliot, in HD's recollections of Hermetic codes, in occult twists in the ironic Yeats. It becomes masked, or deflected, by ironies in Kafka and Plath, in Dylan and Joni Mitchell. It resurfaces reinvented in the questing Beats, sometimes in desperate states. It appears shattered in Celan's holocaust poems. It resurfaces whole in James Baldwin's and Patti Smith's memoirs and essays. We'll discover how the visionary-prophetic stream is charged with artists experiencing highly unorthodox codes and enigmas, searching for ways to articulate a heightened sense of existence at the crossroads of your time and place, of matter and the mind.</p>
Category:	B
Historical Requirement:	N/A
Requirements:	First Term

	<p>1. First Essay—Exploring what the visionary means for author of your selection from our first readings, Hildegard von Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Dante, Hallaj, Rumi. A short essay, 5 pages. Worth: 10% (due in October)</p> <p>2. Journal—A mix of essay/analytical creative responses to authors of the first term: Emily Bronte, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman; or do these authors of the first term, Rimbaud, HD, Yeats, T.S. Eliot. Or you may mix these authors for a total of 4 (four) responses. 2.5 pages one for each author, for 10 pages (max). We will discuss this in class. You may use your imagination and your scholarly critical skills here. Worth: 25% (due in December)</p> <p>Second Term</p> <p>3. Journal—A mix of analytical creative responses to these authors of the second term, Kafka, Di Prima, Ginsberg, Kerouac, Plath; or do these authors of the second term, Celan, Baldwin, Dylan, Patti Smith Joni Mitchell. Or: you may mix these authors for a total of 5 (five) responses. Two pages, one for each author, for ten pages. We will discuss this more in class. You may use your imagination and scholarly essay skills here. Worth: 25% (due in March)</p> <p>4. Take Home Test. A review of the year’s readings and reflections. The test will consist of a set of prompts, statements, aphorisms, quotations, from our class class discussions through the year for you to unfold in response to a selection of artists and writers through both terms. (To be discussed in class.) Worth: 30% (due in April)</p> <p>5. Class Engagement. Means coming prepared to discuss the readings/material on the day designated for a specific author or authors. Worth: 10%</p>
Reading List:	<p>4163 Readings for 2023/2024 (The order in which these works will be read)</p> <p>First Term</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hildegard von Bingen, Plainsongs, selected readings and dreams; Teresa of Avila, <i>The Interior Castle*</i>, selections 2. Dante, <i>La Vita Nuova*</i> 3. Selected poems by Rumi and Hallaj (the Sufi mystical traditions)*

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. William Blake, <i>Poems</i>, chosen by Patti Smith, primarily excerpts from <i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i>, “The Lamb” and “Tyger, Tyger” 5. Emily Bronte, selected poems in <i>The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Bronte</i>, primarily “No Coward Soul is Mine” (reading recommendation: <i>Wuthering Heights</i>, the first chapters) 6. Emily Dickinson, selected poems in <i>Essential Dickinson</i>, edited by Joyce Carol Oates 7. Walt Whitman, <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855 edition), selections 8. Arthur Rimbaud, <i>A Season in Hell*</i>, with Preface by Patti Smith 9. HD (Hilda Doolittle), <i>Notes on Thought and Vision</i> 10. William Butler Yeats, three poems, “Sailing to Byzantium”, “Byzantium”, “The Second Coming” 11. T.S. Eliot, <i>Four Quartets</i> <p>Second Term</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Franz Kafka, <i>The Blue Octavo Notebooks*</i>, primarily the section <i>Reflections</i>, edited by Max Brod; also, The Gatekeeper, fragment from <i>The Trial</i> 13. Federico Garcia Lorca, <i>In Search of Duende*</i>, selections; musical excerpts on e-class dashboard 14. Diane di Prima’s <i>Loba</i> (selections) to be read in conjunction with Allen Ginsberg’s <i>The Fall of America</i> 15. Jack Kerouac, <i>Heaven and other Poems</i> 16. Sylvia Plath, “Daddy”, “Lady Lazarus”, and “Ariel” 17. Paul Celan, selected poems in <i>Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*</i>, primarily “Psalm” 18. James Baldwin, <i>The Fire Next Time</i> 19. Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone”, “Desolation Row”, “Shelter from the Storm”, “I shall be Released”; selections from <i>The Philosophy of Modern Song</i> 20. Patti Smith, <i>M Train</i> 21. Joni Mitchell, “Woodstock” (with reference to “Taming the Tiger”) 22. Susan Howe, <i>Debths</i> (excerpts) <p><i>Asterisks indicate works to be read in translation</i> <i>All Books Available at the York University Bookstore</i></p>
Open To:	YR 4 H (EN, ENPR and CRWR students only)