

FW 2025-26

AP/EN 4163 6.0A (Y)	Visionaries
Course Director:	<p>B.W. Powe Office: 632 Atkinson College Ext.: 33775 e-mail: bpowe@yorku.ca other information: office hours, web address, etc. Office Hours: 3:00 PM until 4:30 PM, Thursdays and Fridays in the fall/winter terms.</p>
Time:	Lecture day and time: Fridays, 11:30 am until 2:20 pm
Delivery Format:	ONLINE-S
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 inspirations, ecstasy, trauma, transcendental and metaphysical awareness and engagements, heretical speculation, wild invention, serene receptivity, alchemical mixes of experience and the mystical. 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 countercurrents 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 difficulty, conflicts and confusions?</i></p> <p>Artists often record a sense of transcendental pressures on their minds and sensibilities. This must</p>

	<p>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" (viriditis).</p> <p>It's a focus 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 and imploding poetic forms and religious dogma, provoking social structures and repressive political and cultural systems, that they engage. Writers driven towards finding ways of expressing the ineffable won't fit into anything other than what they invent for themselves.</p> <p>The visionary streams move through Hildegard, Rumi and Hallaj, and Teresa of Avila, Dante through to Blake, Emily Bronte, Whitman, and Emily 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's reinvented in Lorca's rhapsodic prose and poetry. It becomes masked, or deflected, by ironies in Kafka and Plath, in Dylan and Joni Mitchell. It resurfaces reinvented in the questing Beats, Diane di Prima, Ginsberg, and Kerouac, sometimes in desperate states. It appears shattered in Celan's holocaust poems. It resurfaces whole in James Baldwin's, Sonny Rollins' Notebooks, and Joni Mitchell's songs. 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, spirit, experience and the soul.</p>
Category:	B
Historical Requirement:	N/A

<p>Requirements:</p>	<p>First Term</p> <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.</p> <p>Worth: 10% (due in mid-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. We will discuss this in class. You may use your imagination and your scholarly skills and talents here.</p> <p>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, Ginsberg, Di Prima, Kerouac, Plath; or respond to these authors of the second term, Celan, Baldwin, Dylan, Patti Smith Joni Mitchell. Or: you may mix these authors for a total of 4 (four) responses. 2.5 pages, one for each author, for 10 pages. We will discuss this more in class. You may use your imagination and scholarly skills and creative talents here.</p> <p>Worth: 25% (due in mid- 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 discussions through the year for you to unfold in response to a selection of artists and writers through both terms. To be discussed at length in class during the second term.</p> <p>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. Demonstrating wit and deep engagements..</p>
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	<p>Worth: 10%</p>
<p>Reading List:</p>	<p>4163 Readings for 2025/2026</p> <p>The order in which these works will be read:</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)* 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” (recommendation: <i>Wuthering Heights</i>, the first chapters); with a reading of Christina Rossetti’s “Who Has Seen the Wind?” 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> and “Oread” (Imagist Poem) 10. William Butler Yeats, four poems, “Sailing to Byzantium”, “Byzantium”, “The Second Coming”, “A Coat” 11. T.S. Eliot, <i>Four Quartets</i> 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>The Dharma Bums</i> 16. Sylvia Plath, “Daddy”, “Lady Lazarus”, “Tulips” 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”, “I shall be Released”; selections from <i>Chronicles, Volume 1</i> 20. <i>The Notebooks of Sonny Rollins</i>, by Sonny Rollins 21. Joni Mitchell, “Woodstock” (with reference to “Taming the Tiger”), with a reprise of Christina Rossetti’s “Who has Seen the Wind?” <p>To supplement end of term overview discussion: Please find time to read <i>Notes on the Cinematograph</i> (by Robert Bresson (1986 translation), and to read sections of Rachel Cohen’s <i>A Chance Meeting: American Encounters</i> (new edition, 2024), which is a book on writers meeting writers. These two books are not formal</p>

	<p>requirements: they are background writings to help us to see visionary spheres of concern and inspiration, implications and convergences.</p> <p><i>Asterisks indicate works to be read in translation</i></p> <p><i>All Books will be Available at the York University Bookstore</i></p>
Open To:	Yr 4 Honours (EN, ENPR, CRWR students only)