



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

Instructor: **Veronika Arutyunyan**
Title: **Elegy: A Form without Frontiers**
Course: **Seminar II (53-561)**
Time: **Wednesdays, 14–16h**
Room: **Ü35–01054**
Start: **05.04.2023**

INSTITUTE

OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES



Robert Motherwell *Elegy to the Spanish Republic, 108*
1965-67

Course description:

One of the oldest and richest genres, to this day the elegy has remained a vital space for reinvention. In the 21st century, this highly fertile form remains significant in addressing loss in a number of contexts including large-scale warfare, racial injustice, ecological degradation and most recently, the global pandemics. Traditionally a poem that performs the work of mourning, the elegy seeks to achieve consolation in language and literary form. But this characteristic movement from loss to consolation was challenged by modern elegists' skepticism about the functions of elegy "to lament, praise, and console," who resisted its generic features to reflect modern approaches to mourning. This distrust of the genre's conventions has led to an incredible diversity of elegy's adaptations raising a key question: are elegy's characteristic markers indispensable for the definition of the genre or has it become such a malleable form that can accommodate any type of poetry relating to expressions of grief and mourning?

This seminar aims to explore elegy's changing forms, tracing the range and contours of literary mourning in Anglo-American literature and culture examining poetry, prose, visual and performing arts alongside theories of loss, paying particular attention to literary devices artists use to manifest loss. Ultimately, we will inquire whether it is precisely the hybridity and adaptability of the genre that has become the main defining marker of this pervasive, albeit ill-defined form.

Course requirements:

In addition to active participation, thorough preparation of all reading material and collaboration in one of the "expert" groups, students will regularly be asked to write a short response to the text.

The syllabus will be provided during the first session. Most of the material will be made available digitally (on AGORA).