

**Dr. Sarah Blackwood, English, Dyson College of Arts and Sciences**  
**“You cannot put a fire out:’ Emily Dickinson, Audre Lorde, and Organizing  
to Empower Marginalized Voices.”**

In Fall 2020 I will offer a new 200-level (majors and non-majors) literature seminar on the lives, work, and afterlives of the significant American women poets Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Audre Lorde (1934-1992). The seminar will urge students to understand the artistic, historical, and political connections between two artists who may seem to have little in common (Dickinson: reclusive, upper-class, white American, nineteenth-century “angel of the house”; Lorde: working-class, Caribbean-American, twentieth-century artist and political activist. Both, however, were queer).

The seminar will scaffold student’s inquiry across three research-based modes of inquiry, spread equally across the semester: Archives, Expression, Service. (“Scaffolding” refers to using instructional techniques to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and independence in the learning process.)

- **Archives:** 5 weeks conducting original research on Dickinson’s and Lorde’s biographies and cultural contexts using digital archives.
- **Expression:** 5 weeks honing literary critical and creative writing skills through the close study of Dickinson’s and Lorde’s poetry, letters, and essays.
- **Service:** 5 weeks devoted to working with community arts organizers to plan and execute an event at the historic Nuyorican Poets Cafe (founded in 1973 to champion poetry and other arts as means of social empowerment for minority and underprivileged artists.)