

Kim Benston, English

Norton Anthology of African-American Poetry (Modern Period)

I'm requesting funding for an SRA to work with me for the entire summer on production of the modern (post-WWII) period segment of Norton's forthcoming Anthology of Africa-American Poetry. The project is in the final phases of research and manuscript preparation.

The Norton anthology apparatus consists of extensive notes at the levels of diction and cultural reference, as well as bio-critical head notes and a longer period of introduction. All these features require extensive research, tasks in this instance complicated by the fact that most of the poems I've selected involve social and literary transgressions that make great demands on the "ordinary" contemporary reader. In addition, several of the poets I've selected have received little sustained biographical, bibliographical, or critical attention. While surfing the net will yield some useful data, the student will necessarily learn to negotiate a variety of different archives in order to track the poems' full range of occult and enigmatic references, looking in authorial letters, period newspapers and journals, and a variety of small press anthologies.

The student will emerge at the project's end with a deep sense of modern black expressive culture. Moreover, the student should develop skills pertinent to working in "the archive," while becoming more attuned to the material and figurative dimensions of poetic production, as well as to literature's place within a complex cultural and social matrix.

10 weeks, fulltime: 400 hours