



# WSU HUMANITIES CENTER

## BROWN BAG SERIES WINTER 2023

### Can We Still Teach the Beats? Holism, Antagonism, Poetics and Pedagogy



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**Professor, English**

Barrett Watten is Professor of English at Wayne State University. He is the author of *The Constructivist Moment: From Material Text to Cultural Poetics* and *Questions of Poetics: Language Writing and Consequences*. His main research interests are in 20th/21st century literature; modernist and avant-garde studies; postmodern and millennial literature and culture; poetry and poetics; visual culture; digital culture.

**April 26, 2023**

**12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

**In-Person: FAB 2339**

**Zoom: Scan to RSVP**



#### **More Info**

<https://humanities.wayne.edu/>



#### **ABSTRACT**

The Beats, like the larger movement of the “New American poets” of the 50s and 60s, were committed to “Open Form” in their poetics and lives. This talk will attempt to address how the Beat poetics of “Open Form,” and its ethical, aesthetic, and political entailments, mounts a direct challenge to teaching in the contemporary university. I will look at how the poetics of “open form” can be accessed through several key terms: holism (extending from a poetics of the body to ecopoetics); antagonism (from romantic aesthetics to political agency); transgression (from countercultural publishing of work that challenges “community standards” to lived experiences of sexuality and gender); and the ways in which Beat writing communicates what I term a “proto-poetics,” in which the form of the poem encodes instructions to be unpacked in experience. Using examples such as Charles Olson, Michael McClure, Lenore Kandel, and William S. Burroughs, I will pose the necessary question: how can we combine pedagogy and “Open Form” today?