Phillis Wheatley in the #BlackLivesMatter Era
February 1, 8, & 15, 2023  ●  5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

In 1773, a young enslaved woman in Boston accomplished an extraordinary feat despite her circumstances: publishing the first book of poetry by a person of African descent in the colonies. She became an instant celebrity and has since been by turns reviled, venerated, and/or misunderstood. How, when, and why have African-American poets written to, about, and inspired by Wheatley? How and why does her work resonate in our period that some call “post-racial” but that has also seen unfold extremely visible state-sanctioned violence against people of color? Through reading select late eighteenth-century poems by Phillis Wheatley, the recent 2020 collection *The Age of Phillis* by Honorée Fannone Jeffers, and a handful of other 21st-century poems on Wheatley, we will explore these and other questions to consider how the tradition of Black poetry and American culture has taken shape in the shadow of and response to Wheatley’s important heritage as a thinker.

This seminar will be presented by 2022-2023 Fox Center N.E.H. Postdoctoral Fellow in Poetics, Dr. Laura Vrana. This seminar will meet in-person from 5:00-6:30 p.m. on the following Wednesday evenings during the 2023 spring semester: February 1, 8, 15, & 22, 2023. For further information and to reserve a spot on a “first come basis,” email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu. Everyone from the Atlanta community is welcome and invited to join us for this free seminar.

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