COURSE SYLLABUS

**Course Title:** “This is a Blossom of the Brain:” Emily Dickinson & the Amateur Botany Movement

**Instructor:** Molly Kugel
Molly Kugel is the author of, The Forest of the Suburbs (Five Oaks 2015). Her work has appeared most recently or is forthcoming in The Bennington Review, Calyx, and the Mid-American Review. She is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the University of Denver and is the ecology editor for Cordella magazine.

**Course Times:** Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 (October 15-November 5, 2019)

**Course Location:** Ruffatto Hall, Room 409

**Course Description:**
In many ways, plants were Emily Dickinson’s other great love. They were certainly en vogue, as she lived during “the moment” of American botanical monomania. In fact, Dickinson was born in 1830 and died in 1886, her lifespan paralleling the peak of the amateur botany movement in America (between the mid-1830s and the mid-1880s). This course will explore the history of the nineteenth-century lay botany movement and the intersection of this cultural movement with the poetry of Emily Dickinson. We will consider the way her poetic philosophy was influenced by plants and the way her gardens assisted in inspiring and sustaining her art—her winter gardens and herbarium transporting her beyond the barriers of time and space. We will also consider botanical regeneration and the way Dickinson’s spiritualism and belief in an afterlife were affected by botany. Finally, we will analyze and discuss a selection of her poems about flora, as well as tracing their inspiration.

**Session # 1:** 19th amateur botany movement/historical background

**Session # 2:** Boundary Crossing: Dickinson, Winter Gardens, and her Herbarium

**Session # 3:** Dickinson, Botanical Regeneration, and Spiritualism

**Session # 4:** The Poems and Gardens themselves: a closer look, analysis, discussion

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS:** Instructor will provide