

Writing Seminar I: Artists' Lives, Artists' Works (K10.0323)
Fall 2008, T/Th 4:55 – 6:10 PM
Instructor: Yevgeniya Traps
Office: 715 Broadway, Room 616, (212) 992-7764
Office Hours: Wednesday, 5:00 – 6:00 PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Artists' Lives, Artists' Works

What is the relationship between art and life, between the luxury of creating and the necessity of surviving? In this writing seminar, we will explore the many ways artists' experiences and the circumstances of creation influence artists' work. How are artists shaped by the societies in which they live? How do family background, historical events, political movements, social disruptions, and celebrity influence our creations? How do artists, in turn, shape social attitudes and values? Focusing on how art and writing reveal the effects of race, gender, sexuality, and politics in the second half of the 20th century, we will consider a number of works in their contexts.

Using writing as a way of thinking critically, we will work, throughout the semester, on the process of crafting descriptive, analytical, narrative, and literary-critical essays.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore (18 Washington Place).

Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1990)

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Delta 2000)

Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (Harvest Books 1977)

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaghterhouse-Five* (Delta 1999)

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (Vintage 2001)

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* (Pantheon 1986)

You will, on occasion, be asked to print out some additional materials posted on BlackBoard (indicated as BB on the schedule).

COURSE POLICIES

It is essential that you attend class regularly, arrive promptly, and submit all work on time. If you suspect you will need an extension, please let me know well ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out about missed work and all assignments; I strongly advise you to exchange contact information with at least one classmate, who will be able to fill you in on anything you might have missed. **Please keep in mind that missing more than three classes will have an adverse effect on your grade; so will persistent lateness.**

All assignments must be typed and printed. I will not accept work over e-mail.

You will be responsible for weekly reading responses, commenting briefly but thoughtfully on each assigned reading. Ideally, the responses will serve to generate ideas, as an opportunity to reflect on the reading you will be doing and to prepare for more formal writing assignments.

You will also be responsible for four formal essays in the course of the semester. We will discuss the particulars of this assignment in the course of the semester. Be advised that we will be approaching writing as a process, and you will be expected to bring in drafts of work in progress for in-class workshops. **Participation in workshops will be part of your final grade.**

Participation—both in class discussion and in smaller group work—is an important part of your course grade. Please come to class prepared to ask questions, to comment, to fully engage. **You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting.**

We will typically devote some portion of our meeting time to in-class writing.

REMEMBER: Any and all work you hand in this semester must be your own. Whenever you use someone else's words or ideas, you must cite them properly. Failure to indicate your reliance on outside sources will be perceived as plagiarism, resulting in a failing grade, without a chance to make up the assignment. Be aware too that you are expected to be working with your own ideas, in your own words; over-reliance on the ideas of others will affect your grade adversely.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

SCHEDULE

The following will be our tentative reading schedule for the semester. The schedule is subject to change—with sufficient notice—depending on the pace we establish.

Tuesday, September 2:	INTRO
Thursday, September 4:	The Writing Process
Tuesday, September 9:	<i>Slouching Towards Bethlehem</i> : “On Keeping a Notebook” and “On Morality” RESPONSE
Thursday, September 11: Towards	<i>Slouching Towards Bethlehem</i> : “Slouching Bethlehem,” “Notes From a Native Daughter,” and “Goodbye to All That”
Tuesday, September 16: Existence,”	“Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Adrienne Rich (BB) RESPONSE
Thursday, September 18:	Orlan’s Carnal Art (BB)
Tuesday, September 23: (BB)	Sylvia Plath, “Daddy,” “Lesbos,” and “Edge”
the	Anne Sexton, “All My Pretty Ones,” “The Ballad of Lonely Masturbator,” and “Her Kind” (BB) RESPONSE
Thursday, September 25:	First Essay Due: WORKSHOP

Tuesday, September 30: Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" and "America" (BB)
Bob Dylan
RESPONSE

Thursday, October 2: *Notes of a Native Son*

Tuesday, October 7: Ralph Ellison, "On Becoming a Writer"
RESPONSE

Thursday, October 9: LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SESSION

Tuesday, October 14: NO CLASSES SCHEDULED

Thursday, October 16: *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*
RESPONSE

Tuesday, October 21: *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*

Thursday, October 23: Second Essay Due: WORKSHOP

Tuesday, October 28: *Slaughterhouse-Five*
RESPONSE

Thursday, October 30: *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Tuesday, November 4: *Maus*
RESPONSE

Thursday, November 6: *Maus*

Tuesday, November 11: *Maus*

Thursday, November 13: Third Essay Due: WORKSHOP

Tuesday, November 18: *White Teeth*
RESPONSE

Thursday, November 20: *White Teeth*

Tuesday, November 25: *White Teeth*
RESPONSE

Thursday, November 27: NO CLASSES SCHEDULED

Tuesday, December 2: *White Teeth*

Thursday, December 4:

Fourth Essay Due: WORKSHOP

Tuesday, December 9:

CONCLUSION

Thursday, December 11:

LAST CLASS