

**WS I: Writing the City**  
**T, TH 11-12:15, Fall 2008**  
**Office hours: T, Th 12:30 – 1:30**  
**& by appt.**  
**Phone: 212-998-7371**

**The Gallatin School, NYU**  
**Instructor: Jennifer Lemberg**  
**Office: #429, 715 B'way**  
**Classroom: #501, 715 B'way**  
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### Syllabus

“New York was an inexhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked, no matter how well he came to know its neighborhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well.” Describing his protagonist’s relationship to New York in his novel *City of Glass*, Paul Auster articulates the way in which the city has frequently been the location of a search for the self. From the great wave of immigration in the early twentieth century all the way through the end of the millennium, New York has beckoned as a site where people come to lose or rediscover themselves, the life unfolding within its “inexhaustible space” reflecting not only intense personal upheavals but also larger historical shifts. In this class, we will use our own writing to explore 20th and 21st century narratives about New York, and to consider how individual experiences of the city intersect with broader historical conditions. Through regular in-class writing, posts to our class blog, and a series of finished essays, we will examine stories of how New York has inspired euphoria and dejection, contentment and restlessness, exhilarating feelings of belonging or unrelenting isolation. Our work together will focus on three major themes: arrivals, dreams and desires, and life after September 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Week 1**

T 9/2 Introductions

#### **I. Arrivals**

Th 9/4 Begin work on “Where I’m From” poems  
Information on course blog and field trips distributed  
A representative from Bluestockings Bookstore brings our books to class to purchase

#### **Week 2**

T 9/9 Continue/share “Where I’m From” poems  
Th 9/11 Bernardo Vega, from *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega*, Lopate 767 – 784; Ralph Ellison, “New York, 1936,” Lopate, 995 – 1003; additional reading TBA  
Assignment for Essay #1 distributed

#### This week’s blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #1 due by Wednesday 9/10  
Responses to field trip report and/or this week’s readings due by Friday 9/12

#### **Week 3**

T 9/16 Henry James, excerpt from *The American Scene*, Lopate 369 – 381; Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That,” Lopate, 886-895; additional reading TBA  
In-class review of MLA style for in-text citations, first page format, and page numbering

Th 9/18 ***Draft of essay #1 due*** – workshop in class. See assignment sheet for details.

#### This week’s blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #2 due by Wednesday 9/17  
Responses to field trip report and/or this week’s readings due by Friday 9/19

#### **Week 4**

T 9/23 Toni Morrison, *Jazz*, beginning – 73 (be sure to read the foreward to the novel)  
Th 9/25 *Jazz*, 73 – 162. **Essay #1 due.**

#### **Week 5**

T 9/30 Class cancelled – Rosh Hoshanah  
Th 10/2 *Jazz*, 165 – 229; interview with Toni Morrison (on electronic course reserve)

## **II. Dreams and Desires**

#### **Week 6**

T 10/7 Anzia Yezierska, excerpt from *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, Lopate 703 – 712; James Baldwin, excerpt from *The Fire Next Time*, Lopate 831 – 838  
Assignment for Essay #2 distributed  
Class work on writing an introduction

This week's blog assignments (note that these are due earlier in the week than usual):

Field trip report from group #3 due by Monday 10/6

Responses to field trip report and/or this week's readings due by Wednesday 10/8

Th 10/9 Class cancelled – Yom Kippur

#### **Week 7**

T 10/14 Class cancelled – Columbus day / University holiday  
Th 10/16 Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Cafeteria," Lopate 896 – 912  
Class work on writing a conclusion

This week's blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #4 due by Wednesday 10/15

Responses to field trip report and/or this week's readings due by Friday 10/17

#### **Week 8**

T 10/21 **Draft of essay #2 due** – workshop in class. Please see assignment sheet for details.

Th 10/23 *Angels in America* (on reserve at Bobst Library Avery Fisher Center)

This week's blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #5 due by Wednesday 10/22

Responses to field trip and/or this week's readings due by Friday 10/24

#### **Week 9**

T 10/28 *Angels in America*  
Th 10/30 *Angels in America*. **Essay #2 due.**  
Assignment for Essay #3 distributed

This week's blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #6 due by Wednesday 10/29

Responses to field trip and/or this week's readings due by Friday 11/1

### III. After 9/11

#### **Week 10**

T 11/4 Art Spiegelman, "Re: Covers," in *110 Stories*; Don DeLillo, "In the Ruins of the Future" (both on reserve at Bobst Library); additional readings TBA

Th 11/6 ***Paper sketch for Essay #3 due for in-class workshop.***

#### This week's blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #7 due by Wednesday 11/5

Responses to field trip and/or this week's readings due by Friday 11/7

#### **Week 11**

T 11/11 **Library visit.** Class meets in PC2 on Lower Level 1 of Bobst Library

Th 11/13 Don DeLillo, *Falling Man*, Part I, through page 83

Go-around on paper topics, research progress, etc.

Blogging optional this week.

#### **Week 12**

T 11/18 *Falling Man*, Part II, 87 – 178

Review use of secondary sources and MLA style for list of Works Cited

Th 11/20 *Falling Man*, Part III, 181 – 246

#### Final blog assignments:

Field trip report from group #8 due by Wednesday 11/19

Responses to field trip and/or this week's readings due by Friday 11/21.

#### **Week 13**

T 11/25 ***Annotated bibliography and rough outline for Essay #3 due for in-class workshop.***

Th 11/27 Class cancelled – Thanksgiving

#### **Week 14**

T 12/2 Selections from *Poetry After 9/11* and *Poems of New York* (on reserve)

Th 12/4 Nancy K. Miller, "Reporting the Disaster," 39-47, and James Young, "Remember Life with Life: The New World Trade Center," 216 – 222, in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11* (on reserve)

***Draft of paper #3 due for exchange with group members.*** Please see assignment sheet for details.

T 12/9 **In-class workshop of responses to paper #3**

Th 12/11 Last day of class – wrap-up. ***Essay #3 due.***

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### **Course Information**

**Required Texts:** All texts are available at Bluestockings bookstore. If you have difficulty obtaining them for any reason, please let me know.

*Writing New York: A Literary Anthology*, expanded edition. Ed. Phillip Lopate.  
Toni Morrison, *Jazz*. Vintage International edition.  
Don DeLillo, *Falling Man*.

I also recommend that you acquire a style manual for help with your writing; one I like is Ann Raimés's *Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook*, Houghton Mifflin 2002.

**Required Materials:** A folder large enough to keep handouts and your written work, and a notebook for class work, at-home writing, etc.

**Office hours/Conferences:** I encourage you to meet with me outside of class, to talk about any of the reading or writing assignments. My office hours are on Thursdays from 12:30-1:30, and my office is in room 429, at 715 B'way. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please let me know and I will do my best to accommodate your schedule.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Attendance and participation (10%):** Your participation is integral to the success of the class, and with this in mind, it will be part of your grade. This includes keeping up with assignments and contributing to discussions and other class activities such as in-class writing, workshops, etc.

Because your participation in discussion and workshops is integral to the course, regular attendance is expected, and excessive absence (more than 2 classes) or chronic lateness will adversely affect your grade. If you need to be absent, please be sure to email me or call me during my office hours so that you can find out about any missed assignments.

**Reading assignments:** Reading assignments will primarily consist of the texts listed above, and you may also be asked to read additional handouts, articles, etc., as we progress.

## **Course Requirements (continued):**

**Writing assignments (90%):** You will be asked to do the following written work:

**In-class writing** (10%) We will often spend time writing together in class. These informal assignments will serve as a basis for class discussion and offer opportunities for thinking and writing practice. You may be asked to share what you have written with the class or in small groups, but I will always let you know in advance if this is going to be the case.

**Course blog** (15%) As part of the course, you will be asked to make one field trip to an assigned neighborhood of the city and write about it for the blog. You will also be asked to post to the blog almost every week, and to keep up with reading your classmates' posts.

**Drafts and Formal Papers** (65%): We will write three finished papers, including two short essays of 3-5 pages each, and a 5-6 page literary-critical paper that will draw from at least three secondary sources. I will provide suggestions for paper topics, but I encourage you to choose your own as long as you see me first. The papers will be written in a series of stages, from in-class writings through drafts we will workshop in class (workshop dates are indicated on the syllabus). In addition, you may revise your short essays within one week from the date on which they are returned. If you choose to revise, I strongly advise that you meet with me first. For each of the formal papers, we will spend time reviewing the format, and I will provide a handout detailing the requirements.

**Grading:** Grades for the course will break down as follows:

Attendance and participation (including reading, discussion, and participation in workshops): 10%

Writing assignments: (90%):

    Successful completion of drafts, sketches, bibliography, and peer responses: 10%

    Field trip assignment and successful completion of weekly blog entries: 15%

    Essay 1: 15%

    Essay 2: 20%

    Literary-critical essay: 30%