

**Writing Seminar I: Narratives & the Law**  
**K10.0356**  
**Spring 2008, TTh 9:30-10:45**  
**715 B'way, Room 501**

**Catherine Siemann**  
**Office hours: T 11-12, Th 8:30-9:30**  
**& by appointment**  
**715 B'way, Room 416**  
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*Narratives & the Law.* We shape our understanding of the world by telling ourselves stories. In this class, we will examine the way our perceptions of legal issues are created through narrative, both in literature and in the courtroom. We will see how our understanding of justice is framed and interpreted in various works of fiction, and the influence this has on our thinking about notions of guilt and innocence. We will also consider storytelling in the courtroom, through literary depictions of trials, legal cases themselves, and commentary on both. In addition to our analysis of the themes and structures of the readings, we will devote significant class time to the practice and mechanics of writing, including writing in stages, workshopping, and doing research.

### ***Course Information***

**Required Texts:** All texts are available at the NYU Book Center.

Sophocles. *Antigone*. Clayton, Del.: Prestwick House, 2005.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. NY: Signet Classics, 2000.

Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*. NY:Vintage, 1995.

**Office Hours:** My office hours are Tuesday from 11-12, and on Thursday from 8:30-9:30, or by appointment. I encourage you to meet with me outside of class, and there will be at least one mandatory conference.

### **Course requirements:**

**Attendance and participation** (20%). Your active participation is an important part of the course and will be included in your final grade. This includes keeping up with the assignments and participating in class discussions and other in-class activities such as in-class writing and workshops. Regular attendance is expected, and excessive unexcused absences (more than 2 classes) or chronic lateness will adversely affect your grade. If you do need to be absent, please email me about in-class work and assignments.

**Writing assignments** (80%). There will be three short papers (3-5 pages) and a final research essay (8-10 pages). The papers will be written in stages, with in-class writing, workshops, and revisions all part of the process. There will be also be response papers and in-class writing keyed to various reading assignments.

You will frequently be asked to share your work with your peers, and to provide thoughtful responses to their essays and drafts.

Late work will be accepted only at my discretion and will be penalized by a grade reduction. Please note that plagiarism is a serious offense which will result in failure.

### **Syllabus:**

#### Week 1

9/2: Introduction

9/4: *Bleak House* excerpts (Dickens)

#### Week 2

9/9: "A Jury of Her Peers" (Glaspell)

9/11: "A Jury of Her Peers" (Glaspell)

Week 3

9/16: **Draft of first essay due.** In-class workshop.

9/18: *Antigone* (Sophocles)

Week 4

9/23: **First essay due.** *Antigone* (Sophocles)

9/25: *Antigone* (Sophocles)

Week 5

9/30: *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll)

10/2: *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll)

Week 6

10/7: **Draft of second essay due.** In-class workshop.

10/9: “Before the Law” (Kafka)

Week 7

10/14: No Class – University Holiday.

10/16: **Second essay due.** *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson)

Week 8

10/21: *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson)

10/23: *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson)

Week 9

10/28: **Draft of third essay due.** In-class workshop.

10/30: *Bradwell v. Illinois*

Week 10

11/4: **Third essay due.** *Brown v. Board of Education*

11/6: *Brown v. Board of Education*

Week 11

11/11: *In re. Baby M.*

11/13: **Annotated bibliography, argument and outline due for research paper.** In-class workshop.

Week 12

11/18: *In re. Baby M.*

11/20: *In re. Baby M.*

Week 13

11/25: **Research paper drafts due.** In-class workshop.

11/27: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14

12/2: **Response to research paper drafts due.** *Rasul v. Bush*

12/4: *Rasul v. Bush*

Week 15

12/9: Presentations.

12/11: Last Day of Class. *Final Essay Due.* Presentations.