

Writing Seminar I: The Experience of History (K10.0360)

Gallatin School
MW 12:30-1:45
715 Broadway, Room 601
Instructor: Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 3-4pm (715 Broadway, 417)
Friday, 11:00am-12:00pm (715 Broadway, 616)

Description:

Individuals certainly have histories, but can one experience History? What does History “feel like”? Can one see (touch, taste, smell) History? Do we even still believe in History with a capital H? Or only in the proliferation of histories, individual or otherwise? Where does memory end and history begin? How do narration and metaphor work to construct and deconstruct history? In this class, we write essays and a literary-critical paper that explore these questions and others, paying special attention to literary texts that represent social and political history through personal history.

Our goal for the seminar will be to cultivate a heightened sensitivity to language that will carry over from our analysis of the texts on the syllabus to our workshops of each other’s work. As you’ll see below, a significant portion of our class time will be dedicated to workshopping drafts (or in some cases, partial drafts) of your papers. This means that it is absolutely imperative to show up for class with your drafts on the specified dates; further, these workshops will only be effective if all of students participate robustly.

There will be 4 main writing assignments for the semester: a short analytical essay, a literary analysis (or “close-reading”), an experimental memoir, and a longer literary critical essay with a research component; each of these assignments will be explained in more detail during the course of the semester.

Course Requirements and Grades:

Writing Seminar I focuses on class discussion and analysis of assigned readings and on regularly scheduled writing workshops; therefore, your attendance and participation is of uttermost importance. If you cannot attend class, due to emergency or illness, please contact me so that I can let you know what you have missed and tell you how to prepare for the next class. Your participation and timely submission of papers is vital both to your individual progress and to the success of the class. Excessive absence (more than two unexcused absences) can jeopardize your course grade.

Grades are based on the quality of submitted work, including essays and shorter assignments, as well as your class participation.

Required Texts:

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (Available in Bookstore)

Dana Spiotta, *Eat the Document* (Available in Bookstore)

The remaining texts will be made available as photocopies; I may also occasionally hand out additional readings in class. Please note as well that we will be screening several films over the course of the semester; these screenings (details forthcoming) are absolutely required and should be treated with the same seriousness as the assigned readings.

Schedule:

September 3rd: Introduction (“What is an Experience of History?”), expectations.

September 8th: Nietzsche, “On the Use and Misuse of History for Life”.

September 10th: Nietzsche, continued.

September 15th: Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, chpt. 1.

September 17th: Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities” from *Capital, Vol. 1*.

September 22nd: Freud, “On Mourning and Melancholia”; paper assignment (3-5 pgs.) handed out.

September 24th: Outline due in class; discussion of paper topics.

September 29th: 1st paper due. Wordsworth, excerpts from *The Prelude*

October 1st: Wordsworth, continued.

October 6th: Paper workshop.

October 8th: Paper workshop continued.

October 13th: No class.

-- **October 14th**: Mandatory rewrites due in my box by 5pm.

October 15th: Selection from Sylvia Plath.

October 20th: Selection from Paul Celan. Second paper assignment (“close-reading”) handed out.

-- Screening of *Battle of Algiers*, October 20th and/or October 21st (details forthcoming).

October 22nd: *Battle of Algiers*; Franz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled”.

October 27th: Draft of papers due; workshop of papers-in-progress.

October 29th: Workshop continued.

-- Paper (“close-reading”) due in my box by 1pm on **Friday, October 31st**.

November 3rd: Joan Scott, “Experience”; hand out third paper assignment (“experimental memoir”)

November 5th: Jean Genet, excerpt from *Prisoner of Love*; Samuel R. Delany, excerpt from *The Motion of Light in Water*.

November 10th: Drafts (“experimental memoir”) due; workshop.

November 12th: Workshop continued.

-- Paper (“experimental memoir”) due in my box by 1pm on **Friday, November 13th**.

November 17th: Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”.

November 19th: Dana Spiotta, *Eat the Document*.

November 24th: *Eat the Document*, continued.

November 26th: No class.

December 1st: *Eat the Document*, conclusion. Final paper assignment handed out.

-- There will be a screening of *I'm Not There* on December 1st and/or December 2nd; details forthcoming.

December 3rd: Todd Haynes, *I'm Not There*.

December 8th: Partial drafts of final papers due (ie., at least 3 pgs of writing); workshop of final papers.

December 10th: Workshop continued.

December 12th: Final papers due in my box by 5pm.

