

Narrative Investigations II: Realism to Postmodernism
The Gallatin School, NYU
K20.1289, Fall 2008
Professor Stacy Pies
Monday and Wednesday, 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
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In this class we will continue to explore the concept of narrative and the way writers interrogate literary and social conventions. As we consider how stories shape our notions of history, love, social class, and sexual identity, we will examine how the thinking of readers, and stories, changed from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. We will follow the emergence of a new form of narration, whose protagonists include not only characters, but also time, place, the city, the reader, and language itself. We will read Flaubert's Madame Bovary, James Joyce's Ulysses, and, as a finale, a third text we agree on, by an author who plays with language, genre, form and feeling, perhaps Italo Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveler or Nicole Krauss's The History of Love or Junot Diaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao. I hope to focus some of our discussion on fields that reflect the interests of members of the class, and in that sense, our course will be formed by collaboration. By familiarizing you with some fundamental works in the history of narrative, this course aims to deepen your ideas about the role of narrative in your lives and your work.

Course Requirements:

The work for the class combines class participation, intensive reading, and various types of writing. Class discussion will enable us to make connections between the material we are studying and your areas of interest. As your explorations of narrative progress, please feel free to propose readings and activities and to bring any additional material to the class that you feel might make it more meaningful.

Ground rules: Attendance is required, and more than three unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade in the course. You are expected to have completed the readings before the class for which they are assigned. Papers are due on deadline.

Texts (required editions; no substitutions please):

Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. 1857. New York: Norton, 2005.

Joyce, James. Ulysses. 1934. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Another TBD and ordered.

Various handouts.

Paper Requirements: Writing includes 6 responses and 3 essays. Work must be handed in on time. Responses are important for my understanding of what you're thinking about as you read, so it's vital that you hand them in on deadline. They are also sources for your essays.

Required Format for Papers: Essays must have a title. When you quote from and cite your sources, I expect you to use the MLA citation format, either parenthetical documentation or footnotes. All essays must include a list of Works Cited following the MLA format. (I'm serious about this, so pay attention!). Every essay should be typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread, with pages numbered. You should follow MLA guidelines; see chapter 3 of MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers for instructions. **PLEASE NOTE THESE REQUIREMENTS! Paper format counts as part of the essay grade.**

For this class, what is a "response essay"?

A response is a 2-3 page essay in which you explore a passage or idea in the text; depending on how your mind works and how you connect with texts, you might start conceptually and look closely at the reading to articulate and find evidence for this intuition or idea, or, you might do the opposite and start close to the text and move outward to arrive at your conclusions or ideas. Or you might develop an observation or intuition you have about the design--formal, emotional, visual--of the book. If you are a reader who starts with your feelings and intuitions about a text (I often do!), your job is not to write about what you feel, but to go back to the book and try to trace and articulate how this text produced those feelings. Try to read as a writer as well as a reader. I want to see you thinking aloud on the page, testing and pushing your ideas. Responses are for figuring out what you think and for taking intellectual risks. The tone should be "business casual," not full dress academic formality, but not complete informality either. A response is an essay, not a blog. I am also open to your undertaking experiments in your own prose that respond formally or stylistically to the form and styles we are reading. You can write as a writer, too.

Due Dates

Responses (1-3 pages): 9/8, 9/17, 9/22, 10/15, 10/27, 12/1. Please number your responses so that I can keep track of them!

Essays

Essay #1	9/29	(5 pages)
Essay #2	11/5	(4-5 pages)
Essay #3	12/10	(5-7 pages, depending on topic; we'll discuss)

Grading

Participation 15%, Responses 30%, Essays 55% (approximate breakdown: #1 15-20%, #2 15-20%, #3 20-25%)

Schedule

9/3 Introductions
In-class writing

9/8 Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 1, chapters 1-9 (all of Part 1)
Writing due: Response #1--Identify and discuss a moment that indicates Emma's perception and inner life. Also, think about how the novel works with time, which is sometimes compressed. Look at the January 16, 1852 letter and think about how Flaubert structures this novel.

Bring in to discuss: observations about Charles, Emma, his proposal, the wedding, the ball at Vaubyessard, the bourgeoisie, the role of literature, sensuality

9/10 Continued discussion of Part 1.

Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 1. Essay by Mario Vargas Llosa and Letters about Madame Bovary (in the Critical Section); handouts.

9/15 Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 2, chapters 1-10.

Bring in a question and/or observation about the novel. Think about Homais, Léon, Rodolphe, the agricultural fair and the speeches (chapter 8), the role of language for Emma and in the text, and the importance of silence. Think also about the presentation of the story, the vantage point of point of view and the cross-cutting in chapter 8.

9/17 Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 2, chapter 11-15 (end of Part 2).

Also read handout (Cohn).

Writing due: Response #2--Find a paragraph and analyze point of view, wording, etc. Or write on a particular idea that interests you. Use textual analysis to help you test your insights and develop your views. Remember that I am an eavesdropper on your dialogue with the text, and I need to see both sides of the conversation.

9/22 Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 3, chapters 1-7.

Also read handout (Banfield).

Recommended: Begin reading some of the critical essays at the back of the book. Read around and see who interests you, then read those essays.

Writing due: Response #3--Continue developing ideas that you have been pursuing. Think about religion, illusion, Homais, imagery. For those of you who have read Don Quijote, have you noticed a relationship to this novel, and if so, what?

9/24 Reading due: Madame Bovary, Part 3, chapter 8-11 (end)

Recommended: Continue reading some of the critical essays at the back of the book. Read around and see who interests you, then read those essays.

Writing due: Bring in ideas for your essay, along with references to evidence that you may use. The essay is five pages.

9/29 Introduction to Joyce

Reading due: Ulysses, pages 2-23 (Telemachus); handout (Virginia Woolf)

Writing due: Essay #1 (Please see format requirements above)

What do you notice about Stephen? about his relationship w/ Buck Mulligan? about the text's language?

10/1 Reading due: Ulysses, pages 24-51 (Nestor and Proteus)

Bring in passages to discuss.

10/6 Reading due: Ulysses, pages 54-86 (Calypso and Lotus-Eaters)

Bloom! What do you observe about Bloom? What images do you notice?

10/8 Reading due: Ulysses, pages 87-115 (Hades)

What are you observing about Stephen? Bloom? How are you finding your way around this book? What are you noticing? What's important? What do you notice about the time sequence of the first six chapters? When are they happening in relation to each other?

- 12/1 More concluding remarks on Ulysses and beginning discussion of final text.
Reading due: TBD
Writing due: Response #6
- 12/3 Reading due: TBD
- 12/8 Reading due: TBD
- 12/10 Last class—Conclusion and Student Readings
Writing due: Essay #3