

**First Year Writing Seminar: Writing New York City  
Gallatin -- Fall 2009  
T/TH 8:00 – 9:15**

Professor: Robert Huddleston

Office Hours: Thurs. 10:00 – 11:00 am, 715 B'way, Room 416; or Tues. by appt.

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**Course Description:**

From the great waves of immigration in the nineteenth 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 what Paul Auster has called 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 narratives about New York and to consider how individual experiences of the city intersect with broader historical conditions. Through regular informal writing as well as a series of finished essays, including a literary critical essay, we will examine stories of how New York has inspired euphoria and dejection, contentment and restlessness, exhilarating feelings of belonging or unrelenting isolation. We will consider texts from a variety of authors alongside works by photographers and filmmakers.

This course will focus on writing as a process, helping you to discover yourself as a writer and encouraging you to envision writing as a skill to learn and a craft to be improved upon. We will explore various stages of the writing process, including free writing, multiple drafting, revising, editing, and polishing. This course will also include an introduction to the library and to research skills and techniques. Finally, there will be a workshop component to this course as well, in which we will discuss, critique, and edit each other's written work.

**Course Requirements and Grades:**

**PARTICIPATION**

It is crucial that you attend all class sessions, and that you come prepared with the written responses, drafts, readings, and other materials that will be discussed each day. **NOTE: You must purchase the required texts and bring printed copies of all Blackboard readings.** If you must be absent, please inform me *ahead of time* and please submit all written work that is due *before* the class begins if you are not able to attend. In addition, you are *required* to participate in class discussions! The participation of each student is vital to the success of the class as a whole, and excessive absences (more than 2) will jeopardize your grade.

**READING RESPONSES**

You will have a response to your reading due almost every class. Sometimes I will distribute a topic for you to focus on in these responses, and other times you will be free

to write on any topic of your choosing. You should bring a hard copy to class for discussion, and the responses should be at least ½ page, typed (and it will often be longer). Remember that these early responses will help you both to participate in our discussions and to write your paper later, so they are an important part of your writing and thinking process. You should keep them all together, as an ongoing discourse with yourself about the themes of the course. Late responses will not be accepted.

### PAPERS

There will be four longer written assignments in this course. You will be required to bring your writing to class at various stages of completion, so please pay close attention to due dates written on the syllabus and to future due dates that will be posted on Blackboard! The last two of these papers will have a research component. You will be able to revise the first three papers, but you must turn in your revisions no more than 1 week after receiving your graded paper.

### PRESENTATION

Each student will be required to give a 10-minute mini-presentation (with a partner if you wish) on the background and importance of one of the authors we study in this course.

### FIELD TRIPS

Each student must take and write a response to one individual field trip. We will also take one class field trip—probably to Harlem.

### GRADE

Your grade will be based on both the quality of your written work and on the quality of your participation in class discussion and writing workshops activities.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a grave offense, and will be treated as such in this course. Any case of plagiarism will result in an F in this course, and further disciplinary action in accordance with Gallatin policies. If you have any doubts about how or when to cite the work of another scholar, ASK!

### Required Texts:

1. E. B. White, *Here Is New York*
2. Phillip Lopate, ed., *Writing New York: A Literary Anthology*
3. Joseph O’Neill, *Netherland*

In addition, we will be watching several films. They will be placed on reserve during the entire week before our class discussion, and you will be responsible for watching the film on your own.

Sept 8	Introduction	
Sept 10	Discussion of White, <i>Here Is New York</i>	<b>Read:</b> White, <i>Here Is New York</i> <b>Write:</b> Free write: “My New York City”

Sept 15	<p><b>Walking the City</b></p> <p>-- A city walk from Washington Square (weather permitting)</p> <p>-- Discussion of narrative essay</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Pablo Neruda, "Walking Around" (Blackboard) Lopate: Stephen Graham, 487; Alfred Kazin, 731; Frank O'Hara, 785; Allen Ginsberg, 926; Vivian Gornick, 1014</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings.</p>
Sept 17	<p>Walking the City, cont'd.</p> <p>-- Discussion of Lopate and Thoreau</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> "The Pen on Foot: The Literature of Walking Around" (Blackboard) Lopate: Thoreau, 65</p>
Sept 22	<p><b>Transit</b></p>	<p><b>***First Essay Due***</b></p> <p><b>**Watch:</b> "Manhatta"</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Walt Whitman, 138, 145</p> <p><b>***Subway Field Trip***</b></p>
Sept 24	<p>-- Discussion of Evans, McNulty and Schubert; --Field trip responses</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Walker Evans, <i>Many Are Called</i> (on reserve) Lopate: John McNulty, 644; David Schubert, 690</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to Subway field trip.</p>
Sept 29	<p><b>Manhattan Neighborhoods</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Elizabeth Hardwick, 931; L.-F. Céline, 554; William Carlos Williams, 713; Issac Bashevis Singer, 896</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings</p>
Oct 1	<p>--Discussion of "Taxi Driver"</p>	<p><b>**Watch:</b> "Taxi Driver"</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to Film</p>
Oct 6	<p>Writing Workshop, Essay 2</p>	<p><b>Write: Draft of Essay 2</b> (bring to class)</p>
Oct 8	<p><b>Boroughs</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> José Martí, "Coney Island"; V. Mayakovsky, "New York" (Blackboard) Lopate: Hart Crane, 485; V. Mayakovsky, 479</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings</p>

Oct 15	<b>Visit to library</b>	<p><b>***Essay 2 Due***</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b> Edith Wharton, 580; Thomas Wolfe, 598</p>
Oct 20	<p><b>Amusements</b></p> <p>-- Discussion of Essay 3: Finding a topic</p>	<p><b>***Bring a potential research topic***</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Stephen Crane, 308; Maxim Gorky, 355; Edmund Wilson, 473; Kate Simon, 948; E. L. Doctorow, 988</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Free Write: New York Pastimes</p>
Oct 22	-- Amusements, cont'd.	<p><b>Assignment:</b> Bring in one piece of writing (can be fiction) from current NYC media about art, nature, or sports.</p>
Oct 27	<b>The Other Half</b>	<p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Jacob Riis, 294; Lincoln Steffens, 518; Jane Jacobs 811</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings</p>
Oct 29		<p><b>Assignment:</b> Bring in one piece of writing from current NYC media that deals with crime, corruption or local activism.</p> <p><b>***Due: Drafts Essay 3 (bring to class)***</b></p>
Nov 3	Writing Workshop, Essay 3	<p><b>Assignment:</b> Read and come prepared with comments on your classmates' work.</p>
Nov 5	<b>Harlem</b>	<p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Bernardo Vega, 767; Amiri Baraka, 825; Ralph Ellison, 995; Oscar Hijuelos, 1004</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings</p>
Nov 10	<p><b>Field Trip:</b> <b>Harlem Studio Museum –</b> <b>Details TBA</b></p>	<p><b>***Essay 3 Due***</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b> Lopate: Langston Hughes, 632; Zora Neale Hurston, 680</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to Harlem Field Trip</p>
Nov 12	-- Discussion of "Our City Dreams"	<p><b>**Watch:</b> "Our City Dreams"</p> <p><b>Write:</b> Response to film</p>

Nov 17	<b>New York Writing...</b> -- Discussion of Fitzgerald, Cheever and Didion	<b>Read:</b> Lopate: F. Scott Fitzgerald, 569; John Cheever, 802; Joan Didion, 886  <b>Write:</b> Response to one of the readings
Nov 19	-- Discussion of research techniques	<b>Read:</b> Paul Auster, <i>City of Glass</i> , chap. 1 (Blackboard) Lopate: Don DeLillo, 1033  <b>Write:</b> Findings of mini-research assignment on a New York writer
Nov 24	Discussion of "Arguing the World" and New York Intellectuals	<b>**Watch:</b> "Arguing the World"  <b>Read:</b> Lopate: Mary McCarthy, 661; Lionel Abel, 977  <b>Write:</b> Response to film
Nov 26	<b>Thanksgiving Recess – No Class</b>	
Dec 1	Discussion of O'Neill	<b>Read:</b> O'Neill, <i>Netherland</i> , pp. 1–94
Dec 3	Discussion of O'Neill, cont'd.	<b>Read:</b> O'Neill, <i>Netherland</i> , pp. 95–176  <b>Write:</b> Response to <i>Netherland</i>
Dec 8	Discussion of O'Neill, cont'd.	<b>***Write: Drafts of Final Paper (bring to class)***</b>  <b>Read:</b> O'Neill, <i>Netherland</i> , pp. 177–end.
Dec 10	Final Essay Workshop	<b>Assignment:</b> Read and come prepared with comments on your classmates' work.
Dec 15	Wrap ups, evals	<b>***Final Essay Due***</b>