

Writing Seminar II: Coming Home: Journeys of Return
The Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NYU
Instructor: Jennifer Lemberg
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T, Th 11-12:15, Spring 2009
Room: Silver 706
Office hours: TH 12:30 – 1:30
& by appt.
Office: 429, 715 B'way

Syllabus

The enormous and often violent upheavals of the twentieth century have led to massive shifts in human populations, and the efforts of families and ethnic groups to return to sites from which they were displaced forms an important topic in much recent literature. In this writing seminar, we will read and write about how contemporary authors treat the theme of “coming home.” Depictions of going home in the aftermath of major historical events will serve as the impetus for regular exploratory writing, three formal essays, and a final research paper. Through writing and class discussion, we will interrogate the concept of returning home, which can encompass spaces known briefly or well, deeply familiar or merely imagined.

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

Please keep in mind that in order to fully participate in the class, you will need to have completed the required reading and writing assignments on time, and to bring them with you to our class meetings. On the days that we do in-class workshops, please remember to bring the necessary number of copies for your group members and for me. Also, when you hand in a finished version of a paper, please make sure to attach previous drafts with my comments.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tue 1/20 Introductions; handouts for Thursday distributed.

Th 1/22 Selected readings.

A representative from Bluestockings Bookstore will bring copies of our books to purchase; this is intended as a convenience for you, but you are not required to buy them in class.

I. Soldiers' Stories of Return

Week 2

Tue 1/27 Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*: “The Things They Carried;” “Love;” “Spin;”
“On Rainy River” *Guidelines for Essay #1 distributed today.*

Th 1/29 *The Things They Carried*: “How to Tell a True War Story;” “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong;” “Stockings;” “The Man I Killed”
We work on strategies for developing a thesis and organizing a paper.

Week 3

Tue 2/3 *The Things They Carried*, “Speaking of Courage;” “Notes;” “Good Form;” “Field Trip;”
“The Lives of the Dead.”

Jonathan Shay, “Pirate-Raid: Staying in Combat Mode” (course pack)

In-class review of MLA style for in-text citations, first page format, and page numbering.

Th 2/5 *Draft of Essay #1 due* – workshop in class. Please bring *four* copies of your essay to class.

Week 4

Tue 2/10 Excerpts from *Operation Homecoming* (course pack)

II. American Indian Narratives of Return

Th 2/12 Watch “The Business of Fancydancing” (on reserve in the Avery Fisher Center, 2nd Fl. of Bobst Library) for today; read “Population, Reservations, and Federal Indian Policy” and “Spokan” (course pack). **Essay #1 due.**

Week 5

Tue 2/17 James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney*, 1-73; “Gros Ventre” (course pack)
Guidelines for Essay #2 distributed today.

Th 2/19 *Jim Loney* 73 – 130
Class work on writing an introduction.

Week 6

Tue 2/24 *Jim Loney* 130-179
In-class work on writing a conclusion.

Th 2/26 **Draft of Essay #2 due** – workshop in class. Please bring *four* copies of your essay to class.

Week 7

Tue 3/3 Reading assignment TBA.
In-class work on revising and editing
Guidelines for Essay #3 distributed in class today.

III. Post-Holocaust Returns

Th 3/5 Jonathan Safran Foer, “The Very Rigid Search” (course pack).
Essay #2 due.

Week 8

Tue 3/10 Watch “Hiding and Seeking” (on reserve at library) for class today. Read Henri Raczymow, “Memory Shot Through with Holes” (available through course e-reserve)
In-class discussion of research paper topics; *guidelines for research paper distributed today.*

Th 3/12 **Draft of Essay #3 due** – workshop in class. Please make sure to bring four copies of your draft to class; you will also need to email your draft to me.

March 16 – 21 Spring Recess

Week 9

Tue 3/24 Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*, “Paradise” 3-95.
Continue discussion of research paper topics.
Optional due date – Essay #3

Blackboard assignment on Hoffman due by 7pm Wednesday, 3/25

Th 3/26 *Lost in Translation*, “Exile,” 99-164, and “The New World,” 167 – 186
In-class work on research paper topics

Week 10

Tue 3/31 *Lost in Translation*, “The New World” 187 – 221.
Essay #3 due.

Blackboard assignment on Hoffman #2 due by 7pm Wednesday, 4/1

Th 4/2 **Sketch for research paper due** – workshop in class

Week 11

Tue 4/7 Class activity TBA

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

Th 4/9 Tentative date for library visit. More information to come.

Week 12

Tue 4/14 **Annotated bibliography and outline for research paper due** – workshop in class.

Th 4/16 Class activity TBA

Week 13

Tue 4/21 Class activity TBA

Th 4/23 Class activity TBA

Research paper draft due – exchange with group members.

Week 14

Tue 4/28 **Responses to research paper drafts due** – workshop in class.

Th 4/30 Last day of class – wrap-up and party.

Research Paper due.

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Course Information

Required Texts: All texts are available at Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen Street (one block south of the F train's 2nd avenue stop). If you have difficulty obtaining them for any reason, please let me know. **Note:** A representative from Bluestockings will bring the course books to our class on Thursday, 1/22. If you choose to do so, you may buy the books at that time (credit cards may be used to purchase books in class).

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, Broadway Books/Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney*, Penguin Books, 1979.
Eva Hofman, *Lost in Translation*, Penguin Books, 1989.
Course pack from the NYU Bookstore, 18 Washington Place.

I 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*, published by Houghton Mifflin.

Additionally, you will be asked to watch two films, "The Business of Fancydancing," by our class session on Thursday, February 12, and "Hiding and Seeking" by Tuesday, March 10. Please plan accordingly. The films will be on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center, on the second floor of Bobst Library.

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 Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and my office is in room 429, 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, and Blackboard assignments.

Because your participation in discussion and workshops is integral to the course, regular attendance is also 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. You may also be asked to read additional handouts, articles, etc.

Course Requirements (cont'd):

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

In-class writing/Blackboard assignments: 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. Toward the end of March, you will also be asked to complete several informal writing assignments on our Blackboard site.

Drafts and Formal Papers (90%): We will write four finished papers, including three short essays of 3-5 pages each, and a final research paper of 8-10 pages. 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 choose to revise your short essays within one week from the date on which the papers are returned. If you wish 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, Blackboard assignments, and peer responses:	10%
Essay 1:	15%
Essay 2:	15%
Essay 3:	20%
Research Paper:	30%