

**Writing Seminar II: Writing Historical Crisis**  
**The Gallatin School of Individualized Study**  
**New York University**  
**Instructor: Joseph Rezek**  
**Email: jpr12@nyu.edu**

**MW 11-12:15 (K10.0670)**  
**715 Broadway, Room 401**

**Office Hours: M 1-2**  
**715 Broadway, Room 431**

Historical crises provoke literary expression. When the structures of society are threatened, the everyday work of writers intensifies as they try to reflect and shape a tumultuous world through language. This course examines the relationship between literature and political or social upheaval. The class is inspired, specifically, by the desire to put our own time into historical perspective through studying post-9/11 writing along side writing from other “post” eras. What does it mean to live in an era defined by a recent traumatic event? How do literary responses to “post” eras of the past compare to such responses in our own time? As points of comparison with 9/11 we will consider literature following the French Revolution and World War I, two events that defined an era. How much is the rhetoric of hyperbole, change, exceptionalism, and fear in our own time indebted to the language that framed historical convulsions of the past? How much seems truly new?

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

*The Atlantic Monthly*, November 2002 issue  
*English Romantic Poetry*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (Dover)  
Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (Scribner)  
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Harcourt)  
Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (Bedford/St. Martin’s)  
Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook* (MLA)

**Goals of Writing Seminar II:** This semester we will develop the analytical tools necessary for a research paper that engages closely both with primary material and secondary sources. All assignments during the course of the term will lead gradually up to this goal. We will hone the skills you developed in Writing I in three short essays devoted mostly to close reading texts on the syllabus. A fourth essay will be devoted to a research topic related to “Writing Historical Crisis” – it can deal directly with the texts of the class or with a topic or text of your choosing that I have approved. A large part of Writing Seminar II is devoted to gaining mastery of referring to other texts, and learning how to use secondary material effectively in developing arguments. In class we will practice the skills of close reading and cross reference that will be integral to your writing.

**Drafts, Writing Workshops, and Class Participation:** This class presumes that your peers are valuable intellectual resources. We will therefore workshop drafts of each essay in groups and discuss particular drafts, and the revising process, as a class. This requires that on Workshop Days you bring in four copies of your essays for your peers to read. Arriving with drafts of your essays is as imperative as arriving to class prepared to discuss the reading assigned for that day. A class cannot function without the active engagement of its members. For this reason, each of you will receive a Class Participation grade determined by your engagement in class discussion,

your prompt completion of essay drafts, and your participation in Writing Workshops. Absence from class will only be excused because of illness with a doctor's note, a family emergency, or a religious holiday. Also, **come to class on time**; late entrances are distracting and disrupt discussion.

**In-Class Readings:** We will foster intellectual community in the classroom by reading aloud drafts and final versions of papers. During the course of the term each of you will be required to read a paper at least once (some of you may have the chance to read more than once). When we do readings of drafts the point will be to help the student improve his or her paper by offering constructive criticism. This will be helpful and it is meant to be fun!

**Writing Handbooks:** I have required the purchase of two writing guides, the *MLA Handbook* and the *Pocket Style Manual*. Please bring the *Pocket Style Manual* to class every session as we will consult it frequently. I will let you know when the *MLA Handbook* is required.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Class Participation: 20%

Writing: 80% Essay 1 (15%), Essay 2 (15%), Essay 3 (15%), Essay 4 (35%)

**Late Paper Policy:**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the days indicated on the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized harshly. A paper is late if it is not among those I collect at the beginning of class. Late papers will be downgraded one full letter grade beginning at that moment and another full letter grade for each day late after that. Penalization can be avoided only if I have approved an extension beforehand or if there are extenuating circumstances. An extenuating circumstance includes illness with a doctor's note, a family emergency, or a religious holiday.

**I do not accept papers over email.**

**Office Hours/Email:**

My office hours are on Monday between 1-2pm. I encourage you to come and see me. If you have another class at this time, please let me know and we can schedule another time to meet. It will take me at least 24 hours to respond to email, including when papers are due; please plan accordingly. Email is not an appropriate way to discuss writing; I will not comment on drafts, thesis statements, or particular sentences over the computer. I would be delighted to discuss any of these issues in office conferences. I would be glad to comment on drafts of your papers if you arrange to meet me either in office hours or at another convenient time.

**A note on Plagiarism:**

Or, more broadly, academic dishonesty. You are encouraged to bounce thoughts around, in and out of class, with anyone you can. This will refine your ideas, expose you to new ones, and give you practice providing evidence to support your assertions. You only plagiarize when you present someone else's words or ideas as your own. Don't do it. Gallatin takes plagiarism very seriously, and it is always easier to write your own paper than to deal with the consequences of plagiarism, which are severe. Remember, your instructors are by nature a crafty bunch, and we will catch you.

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**Class Schedule:**

January 21	Introductions. What is history?
January 26	John Updike, "Talk of the Town" ( <i>The New Yorker</i> , September 24, 2001) Susan Sontag, "Talk of the Town" ( <i>The New Yorker</i> , September 24, 2001)
January 28	Edmund Burke, from <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> Mary Wollstonecraft, from <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Men</i> Thomas Paine, from <i>The Rights of Man</i>
February 2	Helen Maria Williams, from <i>Letters from France, 1790-1796</i> William Wordsworth, from <i>The Prelude</i> , Book XI ( <i>ERP</i> , 47-48)
February 4	WRITING DUE: First Paragraph and Outline of Essay #1 William Wordsworth, "Mutability" ( <i>ERP</i> , 57)
February 9	WRITING DUE: First Draft Essay #1 William Wordsworth, "The World is Too Much With Us" ( <i>ERP</i> , 51)
February 11	WRITING DUE: Final Draft Essay #1 Michael Kelly, "What Now?" ( <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , 27-28) Susan Sontag, "Real Battles and Empty Metaphors" ( <i>New York Times</i> , September 10, 2002)
February 16	No Class
February 18	Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> (3-100)
February 23	Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> (100-End)
February 25	Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> James Fallows, "The Fifty-First State?" ( <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , 53-64)
March 2	Mark Bowden, "The Kabul-Ki Dance" ( <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , 65-87)
March 4	WRITING DUE: First Paragraph and Outline Essay #2 P. B. Shelley, "Ozymandias" ( <i>ERP</i> , 147)
March 9	WRITING DUE: First Draft Essay #2 P. B. Shelley, "England in 1819" ( <i>ERP</i> , 150)
March 11	WRITING DUE: Final Draft Essay #2 Preliminary discussion of research essays.
March 16	Spring Break
March 18	Spring Break
March 23	Don DeLillo, <i>Falling Man</i> (1-195)
March 25	Don DeLillo, <i>Falling Man</i> (197-End) WRITING DUE: One Page Free Write on Research Paper

March 30 John Updike, "Varieties of Religious Experience" (*Atlantic*, 93-104)  
April 1 WRITING DUE: Research Essay Proposal and Preliminary Bibliography  
Samuel T. Coleridge, "France: An Ode" (*ERP*, 102-104)

April 6 WRITING DUE: First Paragraph and Outline Essay # 3  
John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (*ERP*, 189)

April 8 WRITING DUE: First Draft Essay #3

April 13 WRITING DUE: Final Draft Essay #3  
April 15 WRITING DUE: Annotated Bibliography  
William Wordsworth, "Lines... Tintern Abbey" (*ERP*, 25-29)

April 20 WRITING DUE: Research Essay Preliminary Thesis  
John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (*ERP*, 218-219)

April 22 WRITING DUE: First Draft Research Essay

April 27 WRITING DUE: Second Draft Research Essay  
April 29 Presentations

May 4 WRITING DUE: Final Draft Research Essay  
Presentations