

New York University
Gallatin School
Writing Seminar II: Abroad in America (K10.0673)
Spring 2009

Monday/Wednesday 4:55 – 6:10PM
715 B'way, Room 501

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Course description

WSII: A Writing Intensive Research Seminar

The second-semester writing-intensive research seminar challenges the assumption that critical writing is necessarily impersonal and dry, and offers students the opportunity to hone the writing skills and develop the research skills learned in the first semester. The course is still process-oriented: Students to continue to freewrite as a means of invention, write a number of drafts, and revise their work. Workshops remain an important feature of the course.

In the second semester, students enter into critical conversation with the various readings in the course. They practice developing and supporting their own theses and arguments through the close examination of texts, and write a longer research paper with at least five works cited. Readings not only inspire student writing; rather, through the close analysis of texts, students deepen their knowledge of the course theme.

Abroad in America

Throughout the past two centuries, the myth and the lure of America have led many traveling writers to our shores. Some come with preconceptions, prejudice, and skepticism, and others arrive with admiration, enthusiasm, and envy. More often than not, these writers find themselves revising their visions of America and better defining their own values and national identities in the process. Their writings—letters, essays, fiction, poetry, and travelogues—contribute to the American identity as well, creating lasting images of the America they travel, examine, and observe. Students will write responses and several critical essays, all of which will culminate in a final research paper. Readings may include writing by Federico Garcia Lorca, Margherita Sarfatti, Alexis de Toqueville, José Martí, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Italo Calvino, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Jean Baudrillard, and Haruki Murakami.

Course requirements

1. Class discussion and responses to readings: As you know, writing seminars are based on class discussion and on in-class writing workshops. Your attendance and

participation in class are therefore essential to the success of this course. Please notify me in advance if you are not going to be in class, and if you do have to miss a class then be sure to find out what handouts and announcements you may have missed!

You will respond to most of our readings before class through “Discussion Boards” that will be set up on Blackboard. These are informal writing assignments that will often be guided by a question or a concern that I will provide. You will have the choice of simply writing your 50 – 100 word response on Blackboard, responding to the postings of your classmates, or turning in a hard copy of your response in class. *As these responses are a tool for class discussion, late responses will not be accepted.*

2. Presentation: Students or groups of students will give one 10 – 15 minute presentation on a secondary or primary work of their choice that is related to either the themes or the authors studied this semester.

3. Essays: You will write three 5 – 6 page essays during the semester, and you will be required to bring in your drafts for writing workshops throughout the semester. Final due dates are indicated on the syllabus.

4. Final Research Paper: This will be an 8 – 10 page research paper that may expand upon and revise ideas raised in your earlier essays. You will develop a thesis in conjunction with one or more of our readings this semester, conducting research on the works, the author, and/or the theme and questions raised by the work. Your final paper should include references to at least five secondary sources.

Required Texts:

1. *If and Petrov’s American Road Trip*
2. Jean Baudrillard, *America*
3. Readings to be posted on Blackboard and available on line

(I have not required you to purchase other books that we are using this semester, but you may find it to be more convenient to choose to purchase the full book for some of our readings, particularly if you choose to work on that reading for a paper.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Class</u>	<u>Writing</u>
1/21	Introduction to syllabus and class.	
1/26	<i>If and Petrov</i> : 1 - 50	Writing Assignment 1: What are the major questions that we bring to a work about the United States written by a foreign writer? What are some of the difficulties of interpretation?

1/28	<i>Ilf and Petrov</i> : 51 – 100	Response to <i>Ilf and Petrov</i> .
2/2	<i>Ilf and Petrov</i> : 101 – 139	Response to <i>Ilf and Petrov</i> . -- Topics for presentations due
2/4	Writing Workshop	-- Bring in thesis and outline for paper 1
2/9	Tocqueville: excerpts from <i>Democracy in America</i> (http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/toc_indx.html)	Paper 1 DUE
2/11	Tocqueville: excerpts from <i>Democracy in America</i>	Response to Tocqueville
2/16	No Class	
2/18	Trollope: excerpts from <i>Domestic Manners of the Americans</i> (http://www.fullbooks.com/Domestic-Manners-of-the-Americans.html)	Response to Trollope
2/23	Marti: “Coney Island”, “Oklahoma Land Rush”, “Our America”, “The Truth About the United States”	Response to Marti
2/25	Mayakovsky, “New York”	Comparative response: Mayakovsky and <i>Ilf and Petrov</i>
3/2	Mayakovsky, “Brooklyn Bridge” (http://ww2.lafayette.edu/~noblea/russian.htm) Lorca: selections from <i>Poet in New York</i>	Response to Lorca/Mayakovsky
3/4	Writing Workshop	**Email your thesis and outline by 3/3** and bring copy to class.

3/9	<u>Italian visions:</u> -- Sarfatti: “American English, II”, “Eve in America”, “Two Facets of American personality” -- Soldati: “Love in Brooklyn”, “Al Capone’s Barbershop”, “US Hotel”	Response to readings.
3/11	-- Jean-François Revel, excerpts from <i>Anti-Americanism</i> -- Pavese: “Yesterday and Today”	Paper 2 DUE
3/16 and 3/18	Spring Break!	
3/23	<u>Post-War Travelers 1</u> -- Piovene: “American Life” -- Soavi: “America Loved and Hated” -- Camus: excerpts from <i>American Journals</i>	Response to readings.
3/25	<u>Post-War Travelers 2</u> -- Beauvoir: excerpts from <i>America Day by Day</i> -- Sartre: “American Cities”, “America has rabies!”	Response to readings.
3/30	<u>Post-War Travelers 3</u> -- Yusuf Al-Hasan (Palestine) “The Washington Memoirs” -- Mahmud Al-Sadani (Egypt) “America You Cheeky Devil” -- Shafiq Jabri (Syria) “The Land of Magic” -- Yusuf Idris (Egypt) “New York 80”	Response to readings
4/1	Baudrillard, “Vanishing Point”, “New York”	Response to Baudrillard, 4/1 OR 4/6.
4/6	Baudrillard, “Astral America”	Response to Baudrillard, 4/1 OR 4/6.
4/8	Eco: “Preface” and excerpts from “Travels in Hyperreality”	Response comparing Eco, Lévy, Baudrillard, 4/8 OR 4/13

4/13	Lévy: excerpts from <i>American Vertigo</i>	Response comparing Eco, Lévy, Baudrillard, 4/8 OR 4/13.
4/15	Writing Workshop	-- Paper 3 DUE -- Bring in thesis for final paper and list of secondary sources.
4/20	Haruki Murakami, "The Elephant Vanishes"	Response to short story.
4/22	Discussion of Wim Wender's film, "Don't Come Knocking"	Watch and respond to film, "Don't Come Knocking" *screening times to be scheduled
4/27	Baudrillard, "Utopia Achieved" and conclusions	Response to Baudrillard, "Utopia Achieved"
4/29	Writing Workshop	Bring in complete draft of final paper.
5/1	Last day of class. Evaluations and wrap up.	Final Paper Due.