The Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Fall 2011

First-Year Writing Seminar: ARTISTS' LIVES, ARTISTS' WORK (FIRST-UG 323)
T/Th, 6:20 - 7:35 PM

Instructor: Yevgeniya Traps
Contact: yt21@nyu.edu
Office: 431 1 Washington Place
Office Hour: Tuesday, 5:00 – 6:00 PM and 7:45-8:30 PM and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the relationship between art and life, between the luxury of creating and the necessity of surviving? In this writing seminar, we will explore the many ways artists’ experiences and the circumstances of creation influence artists’ work. How are artists shaped by the societies in which they live? How do family background, historical events, political movements, social disruptions, and celebrity influence our creations? How do artists, in turn, shape social attitudes and values? Focusing on how art and writing reveal the effects of race, gender, sexuality, and politics in the second half of the 20th century, we will consider a number of works in their contexts.

Using writing as a way of thinking critically, we will work, throughout the semester, on the process of crafting descriptive, analytical, and literary-critical essays.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway).


All other readings will be made available via BlackBoard (indicated as BB on the schedule).

OPTIONAL TEXTS

COURSE POLICIES

It is essential that you attend class regularly, arrive promptly, and submit all work on time. If you suspect you might need an extension, please let me know well ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out about any work you may have missed. **Please keep in mind that more than two unexcused absences will have an adverse effect on your grade; so will persistent lateness.**

All assignments must be typed and printed and handed in as hard copies. Please do not send work by email.

Participation—both in class discussion and in smaller group work—is an important part of your course grade. Please come to class prepared to ask questions, to comment, to fully engage. **You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting.**

**Please make sure to turn off all electronic devices before class begins.** (Seriously. Please turn everything off.)

**REMEMBER: Any and all work you hand in this semester must be your own.** Whenever you use someone else’s words or ideas, you must cite them properly. As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I am glad to meet with you to discuss all assignments or any other aspect of the course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS and REQUIREMENTS

Each time we meet, four of you will initiate our discussion. On those days when you will be leading, you will be responsible for posting a page-long reading response to the appropriate BlackBoard forum, commenting briefly (three or four paragraphs should be about right) **but thoughtfully on the assigned reading/listening/viewing, identifying textual issues and other points meriting closer attention.** Ideally, the responses will serve to generate ideas; think of them as an opportunity to reflect on the reading and to prepare for more formal writing assignments. **Your response must be posted by noon of the day you will be leading discussion.** (Please make sure to hand in a hard copy of your reflection at the beginning of class as well.) We will occasionally use these responses for workshopping purposes, as well as in-class writing prompts. **You are also expected to comment on at least one classmates’ response on those days when you have not posted one. This must be done by noon of the day after discussion.**
You will also be responsible for four essays in the course of the semester. Because we will be approaching writing as a process, you will be expected to bring in drafts of work in progress for in-class workshops. Papers—revised using the suggestions given to you during the workshop, along with the original draft, and a one-to-two page letter, explaining your revision process—will be due at the beginning of the class meeting following the workshops. You will have the opportunity to revise the first three graded papers.

The FIRST PAPER will be a two- to three-page close reading. You will be asked to discuss a particular line/image/passage in relation to the work of which it is part, to consider its significance in relation to the whole, and discuss its contribution to the work’s meaning.

The SECOND PAPER will be a three- to five-page analysis of a significant discourse at work in your chosen text. That is, you will need to identify a particular belief or set of beliefs that makes meaning possible and structures the text. Put another way, the central issues you will want to grapple with here is about the social debate the work is participating in.

The THIRD PAPER will be a four- to six-page analysis of two texts, bound by a similar concern, in relation to each other. How you define the concern is entirely up to you, though part of the assignment is to make this definition clear. Bonus points for unexpected (but justified) pairings.

The FOURTH PAPER will be self-portrait with commentary. You can do just about anything for the portrait, which need not even be written. Whatever form your portrait assumes, you will use the commentary to analyze and explain the choices you have made in representing yourself.

(Tentative) READING SCHEDULE

**Tuesday, September 6**
Introduction

**Thursday, September 8**

**Tuesday, September 13**
Smith, “Monday’s Children” and “Just Kids”
**Group I**
Robert Mapplethorpe, “Self-Portraits” and “Portraits” (BB)

**Thursday, September 15**
Smith, “Just Kids” and “Hotel Chelsea”
**Group II**
Patti Smith, Horses (BB)

**Tuesday, September 20**
Smith, “Separate Ways Together” and “Holding
**Group III**

- **Thursday, September 22**
  - Cobain, Selections from the *Journals*
  - Nirvana, *Nevermind* (BB)
  - **FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP**

- **Tuesday, September 27**
  - Cobain, Selections from the *Journals*
  - Nirvana, *In Utero* (BB)
  - **FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP**

- **Thursday, September 29**
  - The Velvet Underground and Nico, *Andy Warhol*

- **Tuesday, October 4**
  - Andy Warhol, Videos

- **Thursday, October 6**
  - Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” (BB)

- **Tuesday, October 11**
  - NO CLASS

- **Thursday, October 13**
  - Emin, “Motherland”
  - Tracey Emin, “My Bed” and “To Meet My Past” (BB)

- **Tuesday, October 18**
  - Emin, “Fatherland”
  - Orlan, Carnal Art (BB)
  - **SECOND PAPER WORKSHOP**

- **Thursday, October 20**
  - Emin, “Traceyland”
  - **SECOND PAPER WORKSHOP**

- **Tuesday, October 22**
  - Davis, Selections from *Make Me a Woman*
  - **SECOND PAPER DUE**

- **Thursday, October 27**
  - Davis, Selections from *Make Me a Woman*

- **Tuesday, November 1**
  - Spiegelman, *Maus* (*Maus I: My Father Bleeds History: Chapter One - Five*)

- **Thursday, November 3**
  - Spiegelman, *Maus* (*Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Author/Book</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, November 8</td>
<td><strong>Spiegelman, Maus</strong> <em>(Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began: Chapter Two – Chapter Five)</em></td>
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<td>Thursday, November 10</td>
<td><strong>LaBute, The Mercy Seat</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 15</td>
<td><strong>Cole, “One” – “Six”</strong></td>
<td><strong>THIRD PAPER WORKSHOP</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, November 17</td>
<td><strong>Cole, “Seven” – “Thirteen”</strong></td>
<td><strong>THIRD PAPER WORKSHOP</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 22</td>
<td><strong>Cole, “Fourteen” – “Twenty-One”</strong></td>
<td><strong>THIRD PAPER DUE</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, November 24</td>
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<td><strong>NO CLASS</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 29</td>
<td><strong>David Foster Wallace, “The Nature of the Fun” and “Fictional Futures and the Conspicuously Young” (BB)</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, December 1</td>
<td><strong>O’Neill, 1-83</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, December 6</td>
<td><strong>O’Neill, 84-152</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, December 8</td>
<td><strong>O’Neill, 152-200</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday, December 13</td>
<td><strong>O’Neill, 200-256</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, December 15</td>
<td><strong>Conclusions</strong></td>
<td><strong>FOURTH PAPER DUE</strong></td>
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