First Year Writing Seminar, FIRST-UG 382-001:
The Body Politic and the Politics of the Body in American Culture
NYU Gallatin, Fall 2011

Tuesdays and Thursday, 9:30-10:45am
Room: C-7 (25 W 4th Street)
Professor Neil Meyer
Office:***
Email: nam12@nyu.edu

Course Description:
When a group of English Puritans sailed for New England, John Winthrop told them they would become "members of the same body." As Winthrop assigned some to be the heart, the head, and the limbs of their new colony he inaugurated an imagination of the American body that runs from the first colonial encounters to today. This class will examine the complex work of creating, describing, writing, and quite simply "inventing" American bodies. Through analytic and reflective writing, we will consider how the discourses of history, literature, psychology, and politics employ images and ideas about the body to represent the nation. Our own writing will explore the complex issues that arise when considering bodies and their representation, including representations of slavery, the women’s rights movement, and the birth of the modern homosexual identity. Writing assignments will include in-class writing, critical and descriptive essays, and feature workshops and revision as key parts of the learning process.

Required Texts and Materials:
- The above texts have been ordered for you at the NYU Bookstore. Our remaining readings will be posted as .pdf files on Blackboard. You are expected to download and bring those readings to class on the assigned dates.

Course Requirements:

Participation and Attendance: Participation counts for 15% of your overall grade. By participation I mean coming to class on time having done the necessary reading and writing, and being able to take full participation in class. I rarely lecture, so classes are structured around active student conversation and analysis. Taking part regularly in these discussions will assure a high score in this portion of your grade. Attendance affects your grade. If you are not in class when I take attendance you are late; regular lateness to class will negatively affect your grade.
Writing Assignments: There are four formal writing assignments over the course of the semester, each with a first and final draft. For each paper, you will workshop your first draft with your fellow students before revising and turning in the final draft. **All work must be handed in on time.** You must bring a first draft to each workshop—missing any workshop lowers the final grade of your paper by one letter grade. Final drafts are also marked down one letter grade for each class period late. I will comment on every paper once, but if you want additional help I am always available. We can meet during my office hours or find a convenient time for us to go over any concerns or questions you have.

In-Class Writing: At least once a week you will be assigned informal, in-class writing. The purpose of these writing exercises is to generate ideas for class discussions, later paper assignments, and give you the opportunity to share your ideas with me and your classmates in an informal format. In-class writing is only graded for completion and is never given a letter grade. I will collect and tally each in-class write and occasionally comment on it in order to encourage you to reflect and expand on your best ideas.

Assignments and Due Dates: You will write four papers over the course of the semester and each paper will include an in-class workshop on a first draft. Your paper is graded on the quality of your work, full participation in the workshop, and meeting all the due dates. Late assignments are marked down a letter grade for each class period late. Papers are also marked down a letter grade if you miss the student workshop.

Grading Breakdown:

- Paper #1: 15%
- Paper #2: 15%
- Paper #3: 20%
- Paper #4: 20%
- In-Class Writing: 15%
- Participation (including attendance): 15%
  - I will pass out in-depth descriptions of each of the four papers as they come up in class.
Classroom Expectations

Cell Phones, Laptops, Etc.: Any engagement with your cell phone during class time is forbidden; this includes hearing it ring, sending a text, answering a call, etc. Silence it before class, make your calls after class. I reserve the right to remove you from class and count you as absent for the day if you violate this rule. Though some students like to bring laptops in order to take notes, your full participation in our discussions is more important and can only be impeded by burying your face in a laptop. Please do not bring them to class.

Please Respect your classmates: Discussions can sometimes turn heated and you may find strong disagreements between yourself and someone else in this class. But it’s your responsibility to state your opinions tactfully and respect in turn the opinions of others. Everyone gets a chance to be heard.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: “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] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.”
Day-to-Day Syllabus

*All the readings listed below that are not Douglass, Melville, or Foucault will be posted on Blackboard.

9/6 Welcome and Introductions
9/8 Omi and Winant, “Racial Formations"

Unit 1: Slave Bodies
9/13 Douglass, Narrative
9/15 Douglass continued
9/20 Melville, Benito Cereno
9/22 Melville, continued
9/27 In-Class Workshop: On College Level Writing
9/29 Workshop, paper #1

Unit 2: Gazing at Women
10/4 Rubin, “The Traffic in Women"
Paper #1 Due
10/6 Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
10/11 No class
10/13 Hitchcock, Vertigo
10/18 Vertigo continued
10/20 Vertigo discussion
10/25 Paper #2 Workshop

Unit 3: Queer Bodies
10/27 Foucault, The History of Sexuality, 3-13, 36-49, 53-73
Paper #2 Due
11/1 Foucault, 135-159
11/3 Before Stonewall (in-class viewing)
11/8 Before Stonewall discussion
11/10 DeLauretis, “The Technology of Gender”

11/15 Cathy Opie and Robert Mapplethorpe Images

11/17 Workshop, paper #3

**Unit 4: Bodies for Sale**

11/22 Adorno, “The Culture Industry as Mass Deception”
   Paper #3 Due

11/24 Thanksgiving

11/29 Susan Bordo, “Beauty Rediscover the Male Body”

12/1 Field Trip

12/6 Post-Field Trip Discussion and Analysis

12/8 Advertising Images In-Class Presentations

12/13 Paper #4 Workshop

12/15 last day of class—let’s celebrate!
   Paper #4 Due