Research Seminar: Coming Home: Identity and Place
T, TH 11-12:15, Fall 2011
Office hours: TH 12:30 – 1:30
& by appt.
Phone: 212-998-7371

The Gallatin School, NYU
Instructor: Jennifer Lemberg
Office: #403, 1 Washington Place
Classroom: Meyer Room 105
email: jl258@nyu.edu

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, 9/8. If you choose to do so, you may buy the books at that time (credit cards may be used).

Saidiya Hartman, Lose Your Mother, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

I recommend that you acquire a style manual for help with your writing; one I like is Ann Raimes’s Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook, published by Houghton Mifflin.

Additionally, you will be asked to watch one film, “The Messenger,” by our class session on Thursday, October 4. The film will be on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center, on the second floor of Bobst Library. Please plan accordingly.

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 #403, 1 Washington Place. 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 so that you can find out about any missed assignments.

Reading assignments: Reading assignments will consist of the texts listed above as well as additional handouts, articles, etc. as listed on the syllabus.
Course Requirements (cont’d):

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

In-class writing: 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.

Course blog: You will be asked to post to a blog created for our course almost every week, and to read and respond to your classmates’ posts. I will provide a suggested prompt for each blog assignment, but the topics will generally be open. Your post should be completed by the Friday of each week as required. I will provide a handout that describes the blog requirements.

Drafts and Formal Papers (90%): We will write three finished papers, including two 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. The papers will be written in a series of stages, from in-class writings through drafts we will workshop in class. 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, and peer responses: 10%
  Blog assignments: 15%
  Essay 1: 15%
  Essay 2: 20%
  Research Paper: 30%

*Please note that plagiarism will be handled in accordance with Gallatin’s student discipline rules. For a full description of Gallatin’s academic integrity policy, you may go to http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html
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Syllabus

In this research seminar, we will interrogate the concept of returning home--to places known briefly or well, to the deeply familiar or merely imagined. Through writing and class discussion, we will explore narratives that chronicle efforts to return to sites of memory. We will also consider the relationship between identity and place, and the tensions that can develop between collective versus individual ideas of the self. The ways in which contemporary authors treat the theme of "coming home" across boundaries of time and space and the role this notion plays in the construction of contemporary ethnic, racial, and national identities will serve as the impetus for frequent exploratory writing, weekly blog posts, two formal essays, and a final research paper.

**Week 1**
T 9/6 First day of class - introductions and course requirements
Th 9/8 Begin work on “Where I’m From” poems
A representative from Bluestockings Bookstore brings our books to class to purchase.

**Week 2**
T 9/13 Share “Where I’m From” poems

This week’s blog assignment: post your “Where I’m From” poem (feel free to include images - have fun with this assignment!) and be sure to respond to at least one of your classmates’ poems by Friday, 9/16.

**I. Soldiers Stories of Return: Ideas about ‘Homecoming’**

*Guidelines for Essay #1 distributed today.*

**Week 3**
T 9/20 *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 your thesis and organizing your paper.

This week’s blog assignment: we share our initial responses to *The Things They Carried*. Be sure to post by Friday, 9/23.

In-class review of MLA style for in-text citations, first-page format, and page numbering.
Week 4
T 9/27 Draft of essay #1 due – workshop in class. See assignment sheet for details. (Please email a copy of your essay to me in addition to handing in a hard copy.)

This week’s blog assignment: final responses to The Things They Carried. Please post by 9/30.

Th 9/29 Class cancelled – Rosh Hashanah

Week 5
T 10/4 Watch The Messenger (on reserve at Bobst) for class today, and read Jonathan Shay, “Pirate-Raid: Staying in Combat Mode.”

This week’s blog assignment: share your responses to “The Messenger” or our other readings this week by Friday, 10/7.


Essay #1 due.

Week 6
T 10/11 No classes – Columbus Day holiday

This week’s blog assignment: no blogging this week – enjoy the long weekend!

II. Returning to What You Never Knew


Guidelines for Essay #2 distributed today.

Week 7

This week’s blog assignment: respond to the readings or class discussions from this week by 10/21.

Th 10/20 Dominic LaCapra, “Trauma, Absence, Loss.” Additional readings TBA.

Week 8
T 10/25 Draft of essay #2 due – workshop in class. Please see assignment sheet for details.

This week’s blog assignment: initial responses to Lose Your Mother, by 10/28.

Th 10/27 Saidiya Hartman, Lose Your Mother, beginning through Chapter 4

Week 9
T 11/1 Lose Your Mother, Ch. 5-8

This week’s blog assignment: further responses to Lose Your Mother, by 11/4.
III. Objects of Return

Week 10
T 11/8 Louis Owens, “I Hear the Train;” additional readings TBA.
   Guidelines for research paper distributed today; class discussion of research paper topics.

   This week’s blog assignment: Respond to Owens and additional readings by 11/11.

Th 11/10  **Paper sketch for Essay #3 due for in-class workshop.**

Week 11
T 11/15  **Library visit – tentative date. More information TBA.**

   This week’s blog assignment: share something about your research paper topic by 11/18.

Th 11/17  Readings on sovereignty – TBA.

Week 12
T 11/22 **Annotated bibliography and rough outline for Essay #3 due for in-class workshop.**

   This week’s blog assignment: Updates on research projects: where are you now?

Th 11/24  **Class cancelled – Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 13
   Review research paper drafts: ideas and questions?

   This week’s blog assignment - our last: responses to *The Painted Drum*

   **Draft of paper #3 due for exchange with group members.** Please see assignment sheet for details.

Week 14

Th 12/8  **In-class workshop of responses to paper #3.**

Week 15
T 12/13  Class time – assignments TBA.

Th 12/15  Last day of class – wrap-up.  **Essay #3 due.**