First-Year Writing Seminar: ARTISTS’ LIVES, ARTISTS’ WORK (FIRST-UG323)
MW, 4:55 - 6:10 PM
501 1 Washington Place

Instructor: Yevgeniya Traps
Contact: yt21@nyu.edu
Office: 603 1 Washington Place
Office Hour: Monday, 2:30 – 4:00 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 reading and thinking critically, we will work, throughout the semester, on the process of crafting 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) or as handouts.

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.

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 cell phones before class begins. (Seriously. Please turn everything off.) You may choose to use laptops or tablets in order to follow along with the assigned readings and/or take notes, but please make sure that your device is used solely for these purposes.

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. Per official school policy: “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.”

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 REQUIREMENTS

The class will be divided into four groups. The groups will be responsible for initiating and guiding our discussions on assigned days. In preparation for leading the discussion, each group member will post a page-long close reading of a particularly striking textual moment to the discussion board on BlackBoard. The reflections will be used as a way of sparking and focusing our discussions, but they will also direct our conversations about writing; as such, your reflections should stake out an argumentative position, organized in clear paragraphs. Your reflection must be posted no later than midnight on the day your group is leading discussion. PLEASE NOTE: it is everyone’s responsibility to become familiar with all submitted reflections as part of preparations for class.

You are expected to comment on at least one reflection 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 formal essays in the course of the semester. We will approach writing as a process, and a rough draft of each paper will be workshopped. You must be prepared to bring several copies of your work to class on designated days; your participation in the workshops is essential and will be part of your grade for the paper. You will submit an official draft of each paper following the workshop. You will have the opportunity to revise the first three graded papers should you wish to do so.

The submitted draft of each paper must be accompanied by a reflection on the writing and revision process, articulating your goals for and concerns about the paper, as well as a careful consideration of the choices you made in accomplishing these goals and addressing these concerns.
All papers—including the writing and revision reflection—must be submitted electronically as PDF files; the file name must be “LastName EssayNumber DraftNumber.” Please submit papers by 4PM on the date due. PLEASE NOTE: Late papers will be marked down half a grade for each day after the due date.

Your final course grade will be based on:
- Participation: 15%
- Reflections: 15%
- Essays: 70%

FORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
The FIRST PAPER will be a three- to four-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 four- 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 a self-portrait with a two- to three-page 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Depending on the pace we establish, this schedule is subject to change with notice.

- **Wednesday, September 5**
  - INTRODUCTION and Diagnostic

- **Monday, September 10**
  - **Groups I-IV**
  - David Foster Wallace, “E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction” (BB)

- **Wednesday, September 12**
  - **Group I**
  - Broyard, *Kafka Was the Rage* (Part One: “Sheri”)
  - Allen Ginsberg, Selected Poems (BB)

- **Monday, September 17**
  - **Group II**
  - Broyard, *Kafka Was the Rage* (Part Two: “After Sheri”)
  - Frank O’Hara, Selected Poems (BB)

- **Wednesday, September 19**
  - **Group III**
  - Cobain, Selections from the *Journals* (pp. 1-146)
  - Nirvana, *Nevermind* (BB)

- **Monday, September 24**
  - **Group IV**
  - Cobain, Selections from the *Journals* (pp. 147-286)
  - Nirvana, *In Utero* (BB)
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, September 26</strong></td>
<td>CLASS CANCELED</td>
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<td><em>Group I</em></td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 3</strong></td>
<td>Warhol, “Death,” “Economics,” “Atmosphere,” “Success,” “Art,” “The Tingle”</td>
<td><strong>Andy Warhol, Videos (BB)</strong></td>
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<td><em>Group II</em></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 8</strong></td>
<td>Emin, <em>Strangeland</em> (“Motherland”)</td>
<td><strong>FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP</strong></td>
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<td>Tracey Emin, Selected Works (BB)</td>
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<td>Orlan, Carnal Art (BB)</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 10</strong></td>
<td>Emin, <em>Strangeland</em> (“Fatherland” and “Traceyland”)</td>
<td><strong>FIRST PAPER DUE</strong></td>
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<td><em>Group III</em></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 15</strong></td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 17</strong></td>
<td>Bourgeois, Selections</td>
<td><strong>SECOND PAPER WORKSHOP</strong></td>
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<td><em>Group IV</em></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 22</strong></td>
<td>Bourgeois, Selections</td>
<td><strong>SECOND PAPER DUE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 24</strong></td>
<td>Vonnegut, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em> (Ch. 1-4)</td>
<td><strong>SECOND PAPER DUE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 29</strong></td>
<td>Vonnegut, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em> (Ch. 5-10)</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, October 31</strong></td>
<td>Vonnegut, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em> (Ch. 5-10)</td>
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<td><em>Group II</em></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, November 5</strong></td>
<td>Kushner, <em>Angels in America</em> (Part One: Millennium Approaches)</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, November 7</strong></td>
<td>Kushner, <em>Angels in America</em> (Part Two: Perestorika)</td>
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<td><em>Group IV</em></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, November 12</strong></td>
<td>Bechdel, <em>Are You My Mother?</em> (Ch. 1-3)</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, November 14</strong></td>
<td>Bechdel, <em>Are You My Mother?</em> (Ch. 4-5)</td>
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Monday, November 19  
*Bechdel, Are You My Mother?* (Ch. 6-7) 
*Group III*

Wednesday, November 21  
THIRD PAPER WORKSHOP

Monday, November 26  
*Lerner, Leaving the Atocha Station* (pp. 7-99) 
THIRD PAPER DUE

Wednesday, November 28  
*Lerner, Leaving the Atocha Station* (p. 100-181) 
*Group IV*

Monday, December 3  
In-Class Film Screening

Wednesday, December 5  
In-Class Film Screening

Monday, December 10  
FOURTH PAPER WORKSHOP

Wednesday, December 12  
CONCLUSIONS 
FOURTH PAPER DUE