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 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
W 9/5  First day of class - introductions and course requirements

Week 2
M 9/10  “Where I’m From” poems
       A representative from Bluestockings Bookstore brings our books to class to purchase (optional).

I. Soldiers Stories of Return: Ideas about ‘Homecoming’
W 9/12  Tim O’Brien, The Things They Carried, 1 - 58
       Guidelines for Essay #1 distributed today.

Blog assignment: post your “Where I’m From” poem (feel free to include images - have fun!) and respond to at least one of your classmates’ poems by Friday, 9/14.

Week 3
M 9/17  Class cancelled – Rosh Hashanah

W 9/19 The Things They Carried, 59 – 117
       We work on strategies for developing your thesis and organizing your paper.

Blog assignment: share your response to a particular story, theme, or idea in The Things They Carried by Friday, 9/21.

Week 4
M 9/24 The Things They Carried, 118 – end; Jonathan Shay, “Pirate-Raid: Staying in Combat Mode”
       In-class review of MLA format

W 9/26 Class cancelled – Yom Kippur

Blog assignment: Where are you headed with your paper draft? To be completed by Friday, 9/28.
Week 5
M 10/1 Draft of essay #1 due – workshop in class. See assignment sheet for details.

W 10/3 Watch “The Messenger” (on reserve at Bobst) for class today, and read selections from Operation Homecoming: “3 A.M. in Bangor, Maine,” “The Hardest Letter to Write,” and “Taking Chance.”

Blog assignment: Reflections on “The Messenger” and/or Operation Homecoming by Friday, 10/5.

II. Returning to What You Never Knew


Essay #1 due.

Blog assignment: share your responses to this week’s readings by Friday, 10/12.

Week 7
M 10/15 Fall Break – Classes Cancelled

W 10/17 Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, Harlem is Nowhere, beginning through Chapter 3

Guidelines for Essay #2 distributed today.

Blog assignment: initial responses to Harlem is Nowhere, posted by Friday, 10/19.

Week 8
M 10/22 Harlem is Nowhere, Chapters 4 & 5

W 10/24 Harlem is Nowhere, Chapters 6-8

Blog assignment: What direction will you take with your essay? Posted by Friday, 10/26.

Week 9
M 10/29 Draft of essay #2 due – workshop in class. See assignment sheet for details.

W 10/31 Excerpts from Isabella Wilkerson, The Warmth of Other Suns; additional readings TBA

Blog assignment: Take a break if you like – blogging optional this week.
III. **Objects and Their Return**

**Week 10**
M  11/5  Kathleen Fine-Dare, excerpt from *Grave Injustice*; additional reading TBA

W 11/7 Guidelines for Essay #3 distributed today: we discuss research paper topics. Come prepared to share your (as yet possibly unformed) ideas…

*Essay #2 due*

Blog assignment: your choice: respond to the readings from this week, or share your tentative ideas for the final paper. To be completed by Friday, November 9.

**Week 11**
M  11/12  *Paper sketch for Essay #3* due for in-class workshop.

W 11/14  Library visit – tentative date. More information TBA.

Blog assignment: update us on your paper topic and research. To be posted no later than Friday, 11/16.

**Week 12**
M  11/19  *Annotated bibliography for Essay #3 due for in-class workshop. Please make sure to email me a copy of your bibliography as well.*


No blog assignment required this week.

**Week 13**


Final blog assignment: share your thoughts about *The Painted Drum*.

**Week 14**
M  12/3  *Draft of Essay #3 due for exchange with group members*. Please see assignment sheet for details. Groups will also meet to discuss progress, questions, etc.

W 12/5  Class time for research paper drafts: ideas and questions?

**Week 15**
M  12/10  *In-class workshop of responses to essay drafts.*

W 12/12  Last day of class – wrap-up.

*Essay #3 must be turned in no later than Friday, December 14.*
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 Monday, 9/10. If you choose to do so, you may buy the books at that time (credit cards may be used).

Sharifa Rhodes Pitts, Harlem is Nowhere, Little, Brown & Co.

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 Wednesday, October 3. 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 Wednesdays 3:30-4:30, and my office is #506, 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 will therefore be part of your grade. This includes keeping up with assignments and contributing to discussions and other class activities such as in-class writing and peer group workshops.

Regular attendance is 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, and I will 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: 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 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