The Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Spring 2013

First-Year Research Seminar:
Writing the Visible: Between Images and Prose (FIRST-UG 743)

Spring 2013
M/W, 12:30 - 1:45 PM
1 Washington Place,
Room 401

Instructor: Tahnee Oksman
Contact: to21@nyu.edu
Office: 1 Washington Place,
Room 429
Office Hours: M, 2:00-3:00,
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What can images reveal that words cannot, and vice versa? If “a picture tells a thousand words,”
would those words tell the same story as that image? What happens when you try to verbalize what
you see?

In this first-year research seminar, we will focus on texts that are invested in the relationship
between words and images. Specifically, we will examine photographs and drawn images, including
comics, as documentary evidence or testimonials, as sites of manipulation and fantasy, and as objects
that help us remember as well as forget. Our readings will confront the allure of the visual,
prompting us to explore the pulls, as well as the dangers, of believing in what we see. We will use
writing to think through these questions, and students will develop clear and original arguments in
order to respond to the ideas of others.

Over the course of the semester, students will be required to actively and regularly participate in
class discussions and activities. They will hone their research and writing skills, including developing
an argument, citing texts, and evaluating and documenting sources, through informal and formal
writing assignments. These include keeping a weekly journal, writing two formal essays (3-4 pages
each), and completing a final research paper (8-10 pages) and portfolio.
REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway). Some copies are also available at the independent bookstore, Shakespeare & Co (716 Broadway).

Sacco, Joe, and Chris Hedges. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt.*
Sebald, W.G. *The Emigrants.*

It is also strongly recommended that you purchase, or are familiar with, *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th Ed.).

All other readings will be made available via NYU Classes (indicated as CL on the schedule). There may be readings in addition to those mentioned on the syllabus, which I will also post on NYU Classes or distribute in class.

Additional recommended readings (we will be reading excerpts from the following texts, which you may also wish to purchase):

Berger, John. *Another Way of Telling.*
Sacco, Joe. *Journalism.*

COURSE POLICIES

It is essential that you attend class regularly, arrive promptly, and submit all work on time. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out about any work you may have missed. More than two unexcused absences will have an adverse effect on your grade, as will persistent lateness.

Participation is an important part of your course grade. We will do a fair amount of group work, class discussion, and in-class writing assignments. Your participation in each of these activities will count towards your grade. Come to class prepared to ask questions, to comment, to fully engage. You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting. You should also bring some sort of writing implement and paper for our in-class writing assignments.

Please make sure to turn off all electronic devices before class begins.

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] 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 always glad to meet with you to discuss assignments or any other aspect of the course.
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Formal papers: Throughout the first half of the semester, you will be assigned to write two short (3-4 page) papers exploring our course themes. 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. On the days that papers are due, you should hand in your papers, revised using the suggestions given to you during the workshop, along with the original drafts. Papers are due at the beginning of class.

All assignments should be typed, printed, and handed in as hard copies. Do not send work by email unless I ask for it. Late assignments will be progressively downgraded.

Journal: You are required to keep a running journal over the course of the semester. You should be sure to make an entry at least once a week. This journal will be a chance for you to reflect on the images and texts that we read and look at over the course of the semester. I would also suggest you purchase glue stick (or tape – or whatever adhesive you prefer to work with) and a pair of scissors, so you can cut and paste images into your journal.

I will sometimes assign informal writing assignments to be completed in your journals. These will count as your required weekly journal entries. For these and all journal entries, you will not be graded for grammar, style, or mechanics. Think of your journal as a tool to experiment with ideas, ask questions, and explore issues that have been raised in class.

You will be required to hand in at least six entries from the journal at the end of the semester as part of your final portfolio (these can be scanned or photo-copied). I will also sometimes ask you to bring your journals to class and have you discuss or share your informal assignments or other entries that you have been working on.

Final Research Paper: We will turn, mid-semester, to focus on short writing and research assignments that culminate in a final research paper. At the end of the semester, you will hand in an 8-10 page research paper based on the topic of your choice, which will need to be approved by me earlier on in the semester. This final draft of your paper will be turned in as part of a larger portfolio, which will include: six journal entries (not necessarily directly related to the final project), a library narrative, all drafts of your research proposal, an annotated bibliography, all drafts of your final paper, and a cover letter (to be composed in class).

MLA RESEARCH GUIDELINES

This course follows the research guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA). These guidelines were most recently revised in 2007 in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th Ed.).

CONFERENCES

You are each required to meet with me during office hours at least two times over the course of the semester. The first of these meetings should take place before the final draft of your first paper is due. The second can take place any time before your final paper is due. When you come to office hours, please bring any relevant materials with you (such as paper drafts or your journal), as well as any questions or ideas you might have. If you cannot make it to see me during my office hours,
please see me and we can discuss alternate appointment times. These meetings will count as part of your participation grade.

If you need additional help with your writing, you can contact the Gallatin Writing Center at 1 Washington Place, room 423. See <gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html> for instructions on how to make an appointment.

**COURSE GRADE BREAKDOWNS**

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<td>First Paper</td>
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<td>Second Paper</td>
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<td>Journal (including informal assignments)</td>
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<td>Participation (including attendance and individual meetings)</td>
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<td>Final Research Paper</td>
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**SCHEDULE** (subject to change)

- **Monday, Jan. 28**
  - Introductions and diagnostic essay

- **Wednesday, Jan. 30**
  - Grant Wood’s *American Gothic* and John Stone’s “American Gothic” (CL)
  - Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*, David Ray’s “A Midnight Diner by Edward Hopper,” and Samuel Yellen’s “Nighthawks” (CL)

- **Monday, Feb. 4**
  - Vincent Van Gogh’s *Vincent’s Bedroom in Arles* and Jane Flanders’s “Van Gogh’s Bed” (CL)
  - Georgia O’Keeffe’s *Black Cross, New Mexico* and Ellen Bryant Voigt’s “Wormwood: The Penitents” (CL)

- **Wednesday, Feb. 6**
  - Margaret Atwood’s “This is a Photograph of Me” (CL)
  - Required informal journal assignment, due in class: Find an image to go along with Atwood’s poem and write at least a 300 word explanation of or response to this pairing. We will share these responses in class.

- **Monday, Feb. 11**
  - Selections from “Appearances,” by John Berger (pps. 83-103 in *Another Way of Telling*) (CL)

- **Wednesday, Feb. 13**
  - Required informal journal assignment, due in class: Research one of the paintings that we have looked at or one of the poems that we have read, and describe how the information you learned does or does not affect your reading of the painting/poem pairing. Please cite your source, and bring it in to class (a print-out of an online source is fine). You may research Atwood’s poem or the image that you chose to pair with her poem. We will discuss your research sources in class, so be prepared to share them.

- **Monday, Feb. 18**
  - **NO CLASS (President's Day)**
Wednesday, Feb. 20  Paper #1 workshop

“A Framed Portrait of a Woodcutter,” by John Berger (pps. 59-71 in Another Way of Telling) (CL)

Wednesday, Feb. 27  *The Emigrants*, pps. 1-64
Monday, March 4  *The Emigrants*, pps. 65-95
**Paper #1 due**

Wednesday, March 6  *The Emigrants*, pps. 95-146

Monday, March 11  *The Emigrants*, pps. 147-end
*Required informal journal assignment, due in class*: Choose a captioned photograph from a newspaper or magazine and bring it to class. We will do in-class writing based on the images you select.

Wednesday, March 13  Errol Morris, “Photography as a Weapon” and “Thought Experiment #2” (CL)

Monday, March 18  **NO CLASS (Spring Recess)**

Wednesday, March 20  **NO CLASS (Spring Recess)**

Monday, March 25  Paper #2 workshop

Wednesday, March 27  Paper #2 workshop cont.
*Excerpts from A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge* (CL)

Monday, April 1  *Days of Destruction*, pps. 1-58
**Paper #2 due**

Wednesday, April 3  *Days of Destruction*, pps. 59-115

Monday, April 8  Joe Sacco, Introduction to *Journalism* (CL)
*Days of Destruction*, pps. 115-225

Wednesday, April 10  *Days of Destruction*, pps. 225-end
*Required informal journal assignment, due in class*: Write at least 300 words describing the kind of research that you imagine was required for Sacco and Hedges to create their book. Do you think they needed to do the same kinds of research? What materials and resources do you think they each would have needed? Explain.

Monday, April 15  Library visit

Wednesday, April 17  **Library narrative due**
Monday, April 22  
Screening in class (provided there is time): *Born into Brothels*  
**Research proposal draft due**

Wednesday, April 24  
Screening in class (provided there is time): *Born into Brothels*, cont.  
Research proposal draft discussion, cont.

Monday, April 29  
**Final research proposal due**  
Bring two research sources to class

Wednesday, May 1  
**Annotated bibliography due**  
*Required informal journal assignment, due in class:* Bring in an object that represents your writing process in some way.

Monday, May 6  
Draft workshop

Wednesday, May 8  
Cover letters to be written in class  
Informal research paper presentations

Monday, May 13  
Informal research paper presentations  
**Final Portfolio Due**

Note: cover image, *Imagetext*, by iBlinkant.  
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