Instructor: Scott Korb
E-mail: smk21@nyu.edu
Classroom: 1 Washington Place, 401
Office Hours and location: Mon., 12:30-3:30; Thurs. 12:30-3:00 | 1 Washington Place, Room 530

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
Expanding on Nabokov’s idea that “one cannot read a book: one can only reread it,” this first-year interdisciplinary seminar asks students what happens—to our minds, our souls—when we read or listen or see again and again a work of literature, music, visual art, or film. Rooted in the disciplines of religious and literary studies, the course asks students to consider the depths our stories, our artistic creations, can plumb if we return to them—ritually, in a way—always seeking more and different meaning. How does ritual returning deepen the meaning of a story we know like we know our own name? How does a piece of music prepare us to hear it again? How does a novel teach us how to read it? Beginning with a rereading of a favorite book (or the return to another piece of art) this class will ask students to explore a wide variety of cultural expressions in order see what happens when we see something again for the first time. The seminar also introduces the idea that reading well will always mean rereading.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
- The aim of this course is to make a convincing argument that there’s much to be gained—intellectually, emotionally, within community—from learning how to return to those things we think we already know.
- Over the course of the semester you will read and reread, write and rewrite, imagine and reimagine, always in conversation with the texts we read and the intellects that will assemble in the classroom.
- Most importantly, you will learn to present your own new ideas about what you’ve returned to over the course of the semester, both in writing and through course presentations.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**
In addition to reading all that is listed on our course calendar, you’ll be responsible for regular, short written responses to the texts and two extended pieces of writing. These two more formal pieces will both deal with the same subject matter, a work of art of your choice. The second piece may be a
revision and expansion of the original piece; it may be an entirely new piece of writing in response to your original work; it may be a rejection of what you’d originally thought. Wouldn’t that be exciting?

All essays and out-of-class writing exercises should be typed, double-spaced, in twelve-point font with one-inch margins. Please use MLA citation style (with in-text citation and a Works Cited list) for all papers. We will go over the specifics of citation in class.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**
This course requires a great deal of class participation. You’ll be expected not only to share your responses to your classmates and the required readings, but also to question both me and your classmates and to be ready to defend (and, occasionally, abandon) your own ideas.

Every student will have marked at least one passage from each class’s required reading that you will be prepared to read aloud and discuss with the class. The selection may be a beautiful paragraph, or a revealing turn of phrase, or an example of what you believe to be awful thinking. Whatever it is, it should be marked. This means that you must print out those readings you access either from online sources or through a library database.

If, due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, you cannot attend class, please be in touch with me directly as soon as possible so that you can be prepared for your next class. Please be aware that more than two absences will jeopardize your course grade.

**STANDARDS AND GRADES**
All final writing will:

- explore and develop an idea from diverse evidence in a coherent, interesting way;
- have a thoughtful, elegant beginning, middle, and end;
- be grammatically correct; and
- have a tone appropriate for the intended audience.

A work achieves excellence in all listed standards. B work achieves general superiority in all listed standards. C work is average in each standard. D or F work is seriously deficient in one or more of the listed standards. Final grades break down as follows:

- Each of your two essays: 30% (totaling 60%)
- Daily writing assignments and participation: 15%
- Final presentations: 25%

**A NOTE ON 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
[http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about/bulletin/undergrad/policies/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

**REQUIRED READINGS**
Many of the readings listed in this syllabus are available in various formats either online or through the library, by which I mostly mean the library’s vast database resources. (Hard copies of most of the magazines and journals are also available.) During our first few meetings—and beyond that as much as necessary—I will explore with you several research tools that I’ll expect you to use to find the required readings.

The required books for this course are:

Karen Armstrong’s *A Short History of Myth*  
Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead* and *Lila*  
James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*  

There are readings from the New Testament, as well, and you’re welcome to use any version (in print, online) you’d like.

*Remember: You are required to print out all required readings and bring them, marked up, to class.*

**Course Calendar**

Section one: *Reimaginging*

**Week 1**  
Sept. 7—introductions

**Week 2**  
Sept. 12  
Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, chapters i-iv

Sept. 14  
Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, chapters v-vii  
*Recommended reading: J.Z. Smith, To Take Place, chapter 1*

**Week 3**  
Sept. 19  
Sections of the Gospels of Mark and Luke  
Mark Chapters 1, 8-16  
Luke Chapters 1-3, 19-24

Sept. 21
Sections of the Gospel of John
John Chapters 1-3, 10-21

**Week 4**
Sept. 26
A. Bartlett Giamatti, “The Green Fields of the Mind” and “Baseball as Narrative”

Sept. 28
David Foster Wallace, “Roger Federer as Religious Experience” (*New York Times Magazine*)

**Week 5**
Oct. 3
David Foster Wallace, “Wiggle Room” (*The New Yorker*)

Oct. 5
[Stephen Kuusisto talk.]

*Section two: Rereading*

**Week 6**
Oct. 10—No class

Oct. 12—**Essay one due**
Vladimir Nabakov, “Good Readers and Good Writers”
Patricia Meyer Spacks, *On Rereading*, chapters 1, 2, Coda

*Suggested reading:*
Casey Michael Henry, “How Dennis Smith Turns GIFs into Fiction” (*The New Yorker* Page-Turner blog)

**Week 7**
Oct. 17 & 19
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*, pp. 1-139

**Week 8**
Oct. 24 & 26
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*, pp. 140-247

**Week 9**
Oct. 31 & Nov. 2
Marilynne Robinson, *Lila*, pp. 1-154

**Week 10**
Nov. 7 & 9
Marilynne Robinson, *Lila*, pp. 154-261
**Week 11**
Nov. 14
Leslie Jamison, “The Power of Grace” (*The Atlantic*)

Nov. 16
[Leslie Jamison visit]

*Section 3: Rewriting*

**Week 12**
Nov. 21 & 23

**Week 13**
Nov. 28 & 30

**Week 14**
Dec. 5 & 7
Class presentations

**Week 15**
Dec. 12 & 14—**Essay two due**
Class presentations