COURSE DESCRIPTION
Wallace Stevens holds an important place among modern American poets, yet his readers continue to puzzle over Stevens’ work, especially as it relates to the most pervasive concerns of the twentieth century. In his poetry, he writes relatively little about specific cataclysmic events of his time, yet Stevens ponders questions of faith in a secular world, considers heroism and loss in a century marked by two world wars, and probes our human relationship to nature in an increasingly industrialized and technological world. In this course, we will take a close look at Stevens’ relationship to the twentieth century. While his poetry will be at the center of the class, we will focus our attention on how Stevens gives voice to the contradictions and complexities of the modern world. Stevens’ own work will be the main text of the course, yet I will also post and/or distribute readings drawn from literary criticism, intellectual history, philosophy, and politics.

LEARNING GOALS
• Students will develop an understanding of the poetic works and essays of a major American poet of the twentieth century.
• Students will learn about the relationship between twentieth century American history and culture, specifically how the two world wars and growing industrialization affected the cultural shape of the US.
• Students will learn to master critical writing about poetry and culture, and the conventions of literary criticism.
• Students will learn to present their work orally in formal and informal presentation.
• Students will learn about the critical literature on Stevens (and modern poetry, more broadly), specifically the literature that treats the relationship between Stevens and philosophy, politics, 20th century American culture, and literary history.

REQUIRED TEXT
*Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (Library of America)

RECOMMENDED TEXT
*The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*, edited by John Serio (Cambridge UP)

All books have been ordered and should be available at the NYU Bookstore.

COURSE ROUTINES AND WRITING
Wallace Stevens and the Twentieth Century is designed to focus intensively on the work of Stevens, especially as it speaks to the concerns of the modern world. For each class students will be expected to have read closely several Stevens poems.
have assigned an additional grouping of poems for the week, from which each student should choose one on which to concentrate independently. Class discussion will focus on the assigned poems of each class and the assigned critical material for each week.

As writing about Stevens will help us to grapple more deeply with his work, each student will write a brief response to each poem (a few sentences), and an extended reading (no more than one page) of one additional poem weekly. The extended reading may concern any of the assigned readings for the week. Both shorter observations and extended readings will be collected at the end of each week. Longer readings will be returned to you with brief comments. If students would like to memorize and recite a poem in place of one of the one-page assignments, we can surely make arrangements (in fact, such recitations are encouraged!).

There will also be two five-page papers to be submitted during the course of the semester. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, and documented according to the guidelines in the MLA Handbook. The first paper may be revised as long as they are resubmitted within one week of the date they have been returned to you.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

*Wallace Stevens and the Twentieth-Century* is a seminar course that develops through class discussion. It is crucial for students to attend class regularly and arrive on time. If students cannot attend class, due to illness or emergency, please call or email me in order to be prepared for the next class. Participation in class is vital to the success of the class, as is the timely submission of all written work, both weekly assignments and formal papers.

Grades are based on the quality of all of students’ written work; informal and formal papers, as well as the quality of your class participation. Please note that excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) can jeopardize the course grade.

Grades will be calculated as follows:
- Class participation: 25%
- Informal papers: 25%
- Paper #1: 25%
- Paper #2: 25%

OFFICE HOURS

My office is in room 604 (1 Washington Place, 6th floor), and my office phone number is 998-7325. You can also reach me most easily by email at lg3@nyu.edu or lisa.goldfarb@nyu.edu

Spring Office Hours:
- Monday: 2:00-5:00, by appointment
- Tuesday: 9:30-10:30, 2:00-3:00
Thursday: 9:30-10:30, 2:00-3:00

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 – Introduction: Life, Social Context, and the poems of Harmonium
March 22
March 24

WEEK 2 – HARMONIUM
March 29
- Poems for discussion: “Sunday Morning” (53), “Anecdote of the Jar” (60)
March 31
- Poems for discussion: “Two Figures in Dense Violet Night” (69), “To the One of Fictive Music” (70), “To the Roaring Wind” (77), “Sea Surface Full of Clouds” (82)

WEEK 3 – IDEAS OF ORDER
April 5
April 7

WEEK 4 – THE MAN WITH THE BLUE GUITAR
April 12
- Poems and prose for discussion: “The Man with the Blue Guitar” (135) and “Two or Three Ideas” (839)
April 14
- Poems for discussion: Continued discussion of “Blue Guitar” and “The Men that Are Falling” (173)
- Additional Poems: Choose two sections of “The Man with the Blue Guitar” to look at and write about closely.
- Paper #1 due

WEEK 5- PARTS OF A WORLD
April 19

April 21

WEEK 6- PARTS OF A WORLD
April 26

April 28
- Poems and essays for discussion: “Examination of a Hero in Time of War” (244), “The Immense Poetry of War” (251), “Effects of Analogy” (707)
- Additional poems: Choose one or two sections of “Examination of a Hero in Time of War” to look at and write about closely.

WEEK 7- TRANSPORT TO SUMMER, THE ROCK, AND LATE POEMS
May 3

May 5
- **Paper # 2 due**