Modern Poetry and the Senses IDSEM UG 1859-001
Spring 2017
Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15
1 Washington Place, 527
Professor Lisa Goldfarb

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In a letter that he wrote to his Cuban friend and correspondent, Jose Rodriguez Feo, Wallace Stevens referred to Marcel Proust as a poet. “It seems like a revelation,” Stevens wrote of Proust, “but it is quite possible to say that that is exactly what he was and perhaps all that he was.” Proust’s masterpiece, *Remembrance of Things Past*, is often considered for the way it challenged and enlarged the form of the novel, as well as for the author’s meticulous exploration of the workings of time, history, memory, psychology, and the senses. Yet, it is more unusual to study Proust as a poet or for his impact on poetry of the 20th century and beyond. In this course, we therefore begin our study of the presentation and importance of the senses in modern poetry with Proust (via portions of *Remembrance of Things Past*). Proust will then serve as prelude to our examination of the various ways that modern poets respond to, follow, and reach beyond him in their use and portrayal of the senses, and, by extension, time and memory. Contextual material will include Bergson’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Santayana’s “The Function of Poetry,” and Susan Stewart’s *Modern Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, as well as work of Valéry, Eliot, Pound, Moore, Bishop, Auden, Stevens, and Brooks, among others.

LEARNING GOALS
• Students will learn about the work of Marcel Proust, a seminal figure in the development of modern fiction and poetry, specifically about how Proust’s work impacts the literary arts across genres in the 20th century and beyond.
• Students will learn about the intellectual temper of Proust’s time, and his relationship to ideas about memory, time, history, and psychology. They will also study and learn about other major figures in the intellectual life of the period – George Santayana and Henri Bergson.
• Students will learn about the relationship between literary genres of fiction and poetry by studying the resonance of a monumental work of fiction in the poetry of the 20th century in the poetry of the modern period.
• Another major goal of this class is for students to become fine close-readers of modern poetry. They will become familiar with a range of poets of the modern period contemporary with Proust and after him.
• Students will become stronger writers as they practice writing about fiction and poetry in both informal and formal writing assignments. They will also learn to present their work orally in class presentations.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Auden, W.H. *Selected Poems* (Vintage)
Bishop, Elizabeth, *The Complete Poems* 1927-1979 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Moore, Marianne, *Complete Poems* (Penguin/MacMillan)
Pound, Ezra, *Selected Poems* (New Directions)
Proust, Marcel/ Lydia Davis (translator), *Swann’s Way* (Viking Press)
Valéry, Paul, *Selected Writings of Paul Valéry* (New Directions)

*Please note that this particular translation is required so that we are all using the same text.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT**
Bales, Richard (editor), *The Cambridge Companion to Marcel Proust*

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

Please also bear in mind that I will be handing out and posting on NYU Classes supplementary materials related to the historical and literary period as well as individual poems and poets during the semester. These supplementary readings will, from time to time, arise out of our class discussions.

**COURSE ROUTINES AND WRITING**
“Modern Poetry and the Senses” is a class that is designed both to pursue the themes and concepts presented in the course description, and to develop students’ close reading and writing skills. With these goals in mind, the course requires both informal and formal writing assignments, and we will develop routines around the informal writing assignments, in particular. The informal writing assignments will be weekly or sometimes bi-weekly critical reading responses to assigned readings. On weeks when we are working on poems, students will write a brief formal observation (one sentence) of each poem and bring it class on the day the reading will be discussed, and a one-page extended observation of one of the assigned poems. I will collect the one-page observations on the Thursday of each week they are assigned.

There will be three formal papers to be submitted during the course of the semester. Please bear in mind that all written work – informal and formal – must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, and documented according to the MLA Handbook.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**
“Modern Poetry and the Senses” is a seminar course that develops through class discussion. It is crucial students 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 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 and informal papers: 25%
Paper #1 – 25%
Paper #2 – 25%
Paper #3 – 25%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
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.

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 e-mail at lg3@nyu.edu or lisa.goldfarb@nyu.edu

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

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 – Introduction: Modern Poetry and the Senses
January 24
• Introduction: Overview of course and historical/intellectual context
• Close reading: A passage from Proust (“Awakenings” 1-9) / Stevens “A Dish of Peaches in Russia” (handout)

January 26
• Reading Proust’s *Swann’s Way* (“Bedtime at Combray” and “Resurrection of Combray” 9-48)
• Writing: What do you notice about the structure of Proust’s narrative? How would you characterize the speaker’s voice? What is the difference between voluntary and involuntary memory?

WEEK 2 - Proust – Close reading/ Proust and his Contexts
January 31
• Reading: *Swann’s Way* (“Combray” 49-137)
February 2
• Kern, “The Nature of Time” (1-36, additional pages tba, posted)
• Continued discussion of Proust
• Writing: How do you see time unfolding in Combray? Focus on one short section that you find illustrative of Proust’s method.

WEEK 3 – Close Reading /Proust and his Contexts
February 7
• Swann’s Way
• Reading: Swann’s Way (“The Way by Swann’s” and “Awakenings” 137-169)

February 9
• Reading: Swann’s Way (“Guermantes Way” 169-191)
• Bergson’s “Introduction to Metaphysics” (posted, 21 pages)
• Writing: How might you relate Bergson’s ideas about intuition to Proust’s text? Consider the role of the sense in relation to the way Proust’s narrative advances.

WEEK 4 – Proust- Close Reading
February 14
• Reading: Swann’s Way (Part II, “Swann in Love” – “Verdurins” to “Saniette” 195-273)

February 16
• Reading: Swann’s Way (Part II, “The little phrase” to “Longing for death” 273-334)
• Writing: Consider the shift in tone and mood to “Swann in Love.” How might you see the relation between “Swann’s Way” and “Swann in Love”? Choose one portion/paragraph to close-read.

WEEK 5
February 21 – Proust and Criticism
• Reading: Swann’s Way (Part II, “An evening at the Marquise de Saint-Euverte’s” “The whole past toppled” 334-396)

February 23
• Reading: Cambridge Companion – Rogers, “Proust’s Narrator” (85-99, posted)
• Paper #1 Due (topics tba)

WEEK 6 – Proust and Criticism
February 28
• Reading: Swann’s Way (Part III “Place Names”: “Dreams” and “In the Champs-Élysées 399-438)

March 2
• Reading: Swann’s Way (“The Bois” 438-444)
• Reading: Cambridge Companion – Bales, “Proust and the fine arts” (183-199, posted)
• Writing: Choose either a passage of Proust to close-read in terms of the relation between sense of place and character or write a response in which you engage one aspect of the critical essay you have read.

**WEEK 7** – “The Function of Poetry” – Santayana, Proust, Valéry
March 7
• Reading: Santayana, “The Function of Poetry” (posted)
• Discussion: Thinking about the role of the senses in poetry

March 9
• Discussion: Continued conclusion to discussions of Proust
• Writing: Choose one Valéry poem for an extended observation. Try to relate to Santayana’s ideas about the recovery of the senses in poetry.

**SPRING BREAK – MARCH 13 – MARCH 17**

**WEEK 8** – Poetry and the Senses / T.S. Eliot
March 21
• Reading: Susan Stewart: from *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (tba, posted)

March 23
• Reading: Eliot- “The Waste Land” (51), “The Hollow Men” (75)
• Writing: Choose one Eliot poem for an extended observation. You might also write a page in which you respond to Susan Stewart, including questions you might have about the reading in relation to the poems assigned for the week.

**WEEK 9** – Poetry and the Senses/ Ezra Pound
March 28

March 30 – Class canceled

**WEEK 10** – Poetry and the Senses/ W.H. Auden
April 4
• Reading: Auden – “Taller to-day, we remember similar evenings” (5), “It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens” (9), “This lunar beauty” (17), “Dear, though the night is gone” (46), “Lay your sleeping head, my love” (53)

April 6
• Writing: Choose one Auden poem for an extended observation
• Paper # 2 Due (Close-reading guidelines tba)

WEEK 11 – Poetry and the Senses/ Gwendolyn Brooks
April 11

April 13
• Reading: Brooks – “Notes from the Childhood and the Girlhood” (33-37) “The Anniad” (38-51)
• Writing: Choose one Brooks poem for an extended observation

WEEK 12 – Poetry and the Senses/ Marianne Moore
April 18

April 20
• Writing: Choose one Moore poem for an extended observation

WEEK 13 – Poetry and the Senses/ Elizabeth Bishop
April 25

April 27
• Writing: Choose one Bishop poem for an extended observation
• Paper# 3 Due

WEEK 14- Poetry and the Senses/ Wallace Stevens / Conclusion
May 2

May 4
• Reading: Stevens – “Evening without Angels” (100), “On the Road Home” (164), “Certain Phenomena of Sound” (235), “A Dish of Peaches in Russia” (handout), “Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself” (387)

• Summary and review of class

• Paper #3 Due (only if on Stevens)