The best works of history explain the world by telling compelling stories. In this seminar, we will read about lives and events in the past, exploring the different ways in which scholars and writers combine storytelling and argument. We will ask questions about voice, style, narrative, and imagination, and even pay attention to footnotes in order to understand the research that lies behind the stories of history. Reading critically and thoughtfully, we will take on both professional historians and professional writers, both conventional and unconventional works, including a consideration of history and fiction. Around the seminar table, we will also engage, hands-on, with primary sources, in order to understand just what it takes to craft a sound historical narrative. Throughout the semester, students will make their own forays into history and storytelling, sharing work-in-progress and reflecting on one another’s efforts.

**NYU Classes website**

This course has an active NYU Classes website, accessible to all registered students.

**Readings**

Our readings focus on United States history, with occasional ventures beyond those geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

The following books are on reserve at Bobst Library and available at the NYU Bookstore, 726 Broadway. Recommended for the purchase of used books are Strand Bookstore, Broadway @12th St., and Advanced Book Exchange, <abe.com>.


Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1973)

James Goodman, *But Where is the Lamb: Imagining the Story of Abraham and Isaac* (2013)


All other assigned readings are available on our NYU Classes website; click on “Resources,” then “Assigned Readings.” Primary sources and other relevant materials will be distributed in class.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation
*You are expected to attend every class meeting and to arrive on time. If an absence is absolutely unavoidable, you must contact the professor beforehand.
*You are expected to have completed all reading assignments with care and to engage actively and intelligently in our discussions.

Electronic Devices
Our conversations are the centerpiece of the seminar. Wireless networks in the classroom make it difficult, often impossible, to resist the internet, thus interfering with the required sustained focus and participation. The following policies stem from experience:
*Cell phones must be turned off or silenced (no sounds or vibration) and put away for the duration of the seminar.
*Ideally, computers, tablets, and other electronic devices will be put away for the duration of the seminar.
*No online activity of any kind will be tolerated.
*If you have read the assigned course material electronically, either print it out with your markings visible; take notes in a separate file, and print and bring your notes to class; or write notes by hand and bring them to class.
*In-class note-taking is an art of intellectual engagement, not an exercise in mechanical transcription. Ideally, come to class prepared to take notes by hand.

Communication
Students are expected to check email for updates and further information about course procedures and assignments. If you have questions that are not already answered on this syllabus or on our NYU Classes website, you may contact the professor via email.

WRITTEN WORK

Academic Integrity
Plagiarism, including borrowing, pasting, paraphrasing, or otherwise appropriating from the internet without diligent and specific attribution, will be grounds for a failing grade and reporting to departmental and university authorities. You are fully responsible for the college’s policies on plagiarism, which can be found at cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. This information is also available on our NYU Classes website; click on “Resources,” then “Plagiarism Policy.”

Due Dates
The nature of the seminar depends upon every student meeting every deadline.
NO extensions will be granted.

Submission Procedures
Submit each of your assignments electronically via NYU Classes by 9am on the day of class, and hand in a printed copy, in person, at the beginning of class on the due date. The print and electronic versions must be exactly the same.
Assignments

250-word cogitation for each class in which reading is due. Specific questions will be given out one week prior to the due date. These are to be substantive first-person reflections, related directly to the week’s reading, and will be shared with the class in order to launch our discussions. Do not summarize the contents of the readings at any length. Write in your own voice and from your own experiences, expectations, and strivings as a scholar and a writer.

Double-space, with your name at the top of the page. Cogitations will be graded check, check-plus, or check-minus.

Due 9am, weeks #2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13. No extensions.

Two essays, a prospectus, and a final paper: Assignments are detailed under specified weeks.

Due 9am, weeks #4, 10, 12, 15. No extensions.

Form

*Observe word-length requirements. Page-counts are based on 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins (about 350 words per page). Footnotes are not included in word-counts.
*Always double space, and always number your pages.
*You are expected to follow correct citation form; on our NYU Classes website, click on “Resources,” then “Citation Form.”

GRADING

Course grades will be calculated as follows:
class participation, including cogitations and presentations..........................30%
essay #1...................................................................................................................20%
essay #2...................................................................................................................20%
final paper, including prospectus.............................................................................30%

You must hand in all written assignments in order to pass the course.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES
Week #1: Sept. 8. Introduction and expectations

Toward the end of class, we will engage in an informal discussion of the 2015 freshman summer reading, Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, in light of history and storytelling.

Week #2: Sept. 15. Thinking about history and storytelling
Due 9am: 250-word cogitation.
Reading


Week #3: Sept. 22. Historians (and others) telling stories
Due 9am: 250-word cogitation.
Reading


Week #4: Sept. 29. Crafting narrative from a document (1)
**Due 9am:** Essay #1, accompanied by class presentation. No extensions.
Writing a non-fiction narrative from a primary-source document.
750-1000 words (about 3 pages).

1. Go to [Digital History](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/), linked on NYU Classes under the “Assignments” tab, Essay #1.
   Under “Primary Sources,” click on “Newspaper Articles.”
   Click on the menu, scroll down (all the way), and select a headline that interests you.
   Click “Submit,” then click on “Web Link” (next to “Full Story Online”).
   You will find the article as it appeared originally, followed by a transcription.

2. Print the article.
   Read the entire article, marking it up and taking notes as you go along.
   No consultation of other sources is necessary or expected.

3. Write a non-fiction narrative, based on this document.
   Strive for storytelling, but do not fictionalize.
   Do not write an academic narrative that directly discusses the document.
   Craft your narrative through a first draft and at least two re-reads and revisions.
   Title your essay to reflect its content.

4. Place correct citation, including document and web address, at the head of the first page.
   Double-space, using 12-point type and reasonable margins.
   Number your pages.
   Attach the printed and marked-up article to the printed copy of your essay.

Week #5: Oct. 6. Telling the story of a life
**Due 9am:** 250-word cogitation.
**Reading**


Week #7: Oct. 20. Telling the story of a war
**Due 9am:** 250-word cogitation.
**Reading**
Art Spiegelman, Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History (1973), all.

Week #8: Oct. 27. Telling the story of a story
**Due 9am:** 250-word cogitation.
**Reading**
James Goodman, But Where is the Lamb: Imagining the Story of Abraham and Isaac (2013), selections.
Conversation with the author.
Week #9: Nov. 3. Telling history through fiction
Due 9am: 250-word cogitation.
Reading
Tiya Miles, The Cherokee Rose (2015), all.

Week #10: Nov. 10. Crafting narrative from a document (2)
Due 9am: Essay #2, accompanied by class presentation. No extensions.
Writing a narrative from a primary-source document, with option to fictionalize.
750-1000 words (about 3 pages).

1. Go to History Matters <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>, linked on NYU Classes under the “Assignments” tab, Essay #2
   Click on “Many Pasts” on the left-hand side. There are about a thousand documents here, arranged chronologically.
   Scroll and click through the pages, skimming summaries to find one that interests you, or search by topic, clicking on “Many Pasts” after you type in your search term(s).
   Some entries include links to original scans.

2. Print your selection.
   Read the introduction and entire document, marking it up and taking notes as you go along.
   No consultation of other sources is necessary or expected.

3. Write a narrative based on this document, either fiction, non-fiction, or some of each.
   Strive for storytelling.
   If you fictionalize any part of your narrative, you must alert the reader.
   Do not write an academic narrative that directly discusses the document.
   Craft your narrative through a first draft and at least two re-reads and revisions.
   Title your essay to reflect its content.

4. Place correct citation, including document and web address, at the head of the first page.
   Double-space, using 12-point type and reasonable margins.
   Number your pages.
   Attach the printed and marked-up document to the printed copy of your essay.

Week #11: Nov. 17. No class. You are expected to use this time to work on your prospectus.
**Week #12: Nov. 24. Formulating Ideas**

**Due 9am:** Prospectus for final paper. **No extensions.**
500-600 words (about 2 pages), not counting bibliography.

The final paper will combine history and storytelling, focusing on a single primary source and placing that document into its historical context. If you fictionalize any part of your narrative, you must alert the reader.

The prospectus consists of a description and annotated bibliography.

1. Click on the “Resources” tab on NYU Classes, then on the “Primary Sources” folder, for a sampling of reputable websites. You are not limited to these sites and are encouraged to search more widely, both on the internet and even on the shelves of Bobst Library.
   Clear your selected document with the professor, via e-mail.
   Click on the “Resources” tab on NYU Classes, then on the “Secondary Sources” folder, to search for sources for your bibliography.

2. Print and read your selected document, marking it up and taking notes as you go along.

3. Write a description of your document.
  Pose one or two questions you wish to answer in your final paper.
   List and annotate five to seven secondary sources that will provide historical context.
   In first-person, reflect on ideas for the form of your paper: How will you tell this story?
   Title your essay to reflect its content.

4. Place correct citation, including document and web address, at the head of the first page.
   Double-space, using 12-point type and reasonable margins.
   Number your pages.
   Attach the printed and marked-up document to the printed copy of your essay.

**Week #13: Dec. 1. Sitting down to write**

**Due 9am:** 250-word cogitation.

**Reading**

Lynn Hunt, “How Writing Leads to Thinking (And not the other way around),” *Perspectives on History* (Feb. 2010), 3 pages.


readings continued on next page


**Week #14: Dec. 8. Assessing progress**  
Discussion of visions for final papers.  
Arrive prepared to pose one query or dilemma to your fellow classmates and to engage with the questions posed by others.

**Week #15: Dec. 15. Thinking back and ahead**  
**Due 9 am:** Final paper. No extensions. Discussion of forays into history and storytelling.  
2500-3000 words (about 10 pages).

1. Combine history and storytelling, placing your selected document into its historical context.  
   Do not write an academic narrative that directly discusses the document.  
   If you speculate, fictionalize, or take any creative liberty in any part of your narrative, you must alert the reader.  
   Craft your narrative through a first draft and at least two re-reads and revisions.  
   Write a half-page explanation explaining your choice of form (not part of the word-count).  
   Title your paper to reflect its content.

2. Your paper must be clearly documented.  
   Place the citation of your primary-source document at the head of the first page.  
   Secondary sources must be properly footnoted.  
   For citation form, consult our NYU Classes website; click on “Resources,” then “Citation Form.”

3. Double-space, using 12-point type and reasonable margins.  
   Number your pages.  
   Attach the printed and marked-up document to the printed copy of your essay.

The best work will present a compelling and well-crafted narrative, clearly documented and properly footnoted.