Mapping the Literary Mind of New York City
First Year Seminar, NYU College of Arts & Science - Fall 2020

Mondays, 4:55-7:25PM; Room: TBD

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Office Hours (virtual or in-person): TBD

Course Description
New York City has inspired many great writers, past and present. In this course, we’ll explore some of their works, as well as the actual locations they map, to find our own inspiration as readers, writers, and inhabitants of the city. We’ll think about the layers of history and imagination that overlay the streets, parks, and neighborhoods around NYU and across Manhattan. How has the city’s contours and currents, diversity and density, shaped the way authors have experienced and imagined life? Engaged discussion, frequent writing, and field excursions will focus our critical appraisal of the city and its texts. The culminating project of the semester will ask you to plot your most meaningful engagements on a digital map, as part of a collaborative class essay. We’ll be reading a selection of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, from the 19th century to the present day.

Questions to Explore
● What does New York City mean? What does it mean to live in the city? Think in and through it?
● How has NYC shaped—and been shaped by—the texts that have imagined it?
● What layers of literary and cultural history underlie NYU and its urban environs?
● How have different literary schools, styles, genres, and periods—from the 19th century to today—perceived and constructed NYC?
● How can writing—your writing—serve as a tool of both discovery and invention of place?

Skills to Develop
● Observation—of texts and places; noticing detail and nuance.
● Interpretation—developing conclusions and connections based on what you observe in a text.
● Literary analysis—how to view texts through the lenses of genre, period, and place; gender, race, and class.
● Writing—using writing to develop ideas and to articulate ideas cogently with evidence.
● Multi-modal composition—using images, maps, and digital platforms to develop and express ideas.
● Oral communication—verbally expressing and listening to ideas; reformulating ideas based on others’ perspectives.
● Collaboration—working in small groups; giving and taking feedback; supporting each other’s learning.
● Reflection—reflecting on what you read, learn, and experience throughout the course to deepen understanding.

**Course Practices and Assessments (assignments not finalized)**

In-Class Discussion (all together and in small groups): 25% of grade
Class Blog (every week a post, credit/no-credit): 25%
Two short analytical papers (five pages each): 25%
Collaborative Map Project (includes short essay, reflection, and informal presentation): 25%

**Course Schedule (Note: This is a DRAFT. Many of these texts will remain on the final syllabus, but some will not; the sequence will likely change.)**

*Week 1: Introductions; Walt Whitman, selections TBD; excerpts from *Walt Whitman’s America* (David Reynolds)*
*Wk 2: Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” selections from *Specimen Days*; Luc Sante, selections from *Low Life*
*Wk 3: Excursion 1* *
*Wk 4: Washington Irving, selections; Edgar Allan Poe, TBD; **Paper 1 Due (5 pg)***
*Wk 5: Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener*; Emma Lazarus, TBD*
*Wk 6: Excursion 2* *
*Wk 7: Henry James, *Washington Square*; Edith Wharton, TBD*
*Wk 8: F. Scott Fitzgerald; Langston Hughes; **Paper 2 Due (5 pg)***
*Wk 9: Frank O’Hara; Allen Ginsberg*
*Wk 10: James Baldwin, TBD; Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That”; Excursion 3 (self-guided)*
*Wk 11: Paul Auster, *City of Glass*; **Map Post Due (500 words)***
*Wk 12: Teju Cole, *Open City***
*Wk 13: Presentation/Discussion of Collaborative Essay; **Reflection Post on Map project Due (500 words)***

*”Excursions” refer to neighborhood field trips to sites of literary interest. Your blog post that week will be a reflection on that experience.*
Other possible writers/texts: Stephen Crane, Countee Cullen, Nella Larsen, Anatole Broyard (Kafka Was the Rage), Anne Waldman, Alice Notley, Patti Smith (Just Kids), Colson Whitehead (The Colossus of New York)

Disability Disclosure Statement:
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating (adapted from the website of the College of Arts & Science, https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html):
Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious — for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects).