

English 298 Literature and Culture of 9/11
Spring 2011 Tues./Thurs. 2:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. Meneely 307

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Course Description:

Many claimed that “everything changed” after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Does American literature and culture reflect this change? How have authors and artists represented and responded to those attacks and their aftermath? To answer these questions, we will create a broad vista on the last eight years. We will analyze novels, poetry, graphic narratives, memoirs, music, films, television, advertising, and civic memorials to situate the events of that day in context. In addition, we will use recent studies in literary criticism, philosophy, and history to develop a theoretical framework for our investigation.

This course is an experiment. Its multigeneric approach is a way to organize the huge and still largely undifferentiated cultural response to the attacks of September 11th 2001. I look at the syllabus as an evolving part of that experiment—it is a hypothesis about we might theorize the artistic and cultural response to this national and international event. Indeed, this course will ask us to theorize the whole idea that art has a role in the “response” to political events, and require us to consider the role of those attacks in shaping the twenty-first century world.

Required Texts:

The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation (0809057395)
John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* (cd)
Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (1416546065)
Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets (0971865914)
Ken Kalfus, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (0060501405)
Joseph O’Neill, *Netherland* (0307377040)
Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* (0375423079)
Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (0618711651)
David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (0226759393)
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (0156034026)
Bruce Springsteen, *The Rising* (cd): **you are required to purchase this music, BUT I have not ordered it to the bookstore. You must acquire it yourself. You may want to download it from itunes, buy it as a cd—be sure that you get his 2002 album, however. [There is a deluxe edition; you are NOT required to get this, all we need is the music, though lyrics CAN be helpful.]**

Additional Readings are available on the course website.

(All texts are available at the Wheaton College book store. Please be sure to get these specific editions of the books; check that the ISBN, included here in parenthesis, is the same—note these ISBNs are most often for paperback editions, and so may differ for cloth editions. I may provide additional readings throughout the semester.)

Attendance and Participation: This course is driven by your ideas about literature; therefore, coming to class prepared to discuss the readings is an essential part of this course. Please be sure to read all of the assigned materials before you come to class. **More than four absences may result in failing the course.** You may use these absences in any way that you like; you need not contact me to explain why you are absent from class. Excessive lateness or leaving early may be counted as absences, so please be sure to come to class on time. **Final Note: There is no better way to make an impression on me about your performance in this course than to participate actively during class. It will help you immensely to speak regularly and intelligently about the readings.**

Papers: During this course you will be required to write **two original papers** for the course. The first paper will be **3 to 4 pages** in length. It will ask you to do a short reading of a text or set of texts. The second will be **5 - 6 pages** in length (double-spaced). I will provide possible topics for the paper from which students may choose. Students should also feel free to meet with me in office hours to further discuss topics, ideas and themes, and writing.

Exams: There will be a **take-home final exam** for this course. The final exam will be primarily essay format and will ask you to think synthetically about the issues of the course. The exam will be comprehensive. It is an opportunity for you to show me what you have learned in the course. *****The best way to prepare for this exam is to keep up with the reading and to participate in class.***** In my experience, students who have read all the material do well on the exam and help their final grade.

Presentations: Each student will be asked to present one new text, item, or contextualizing document for the course. **You should find this on your own through your own research. I have a list of possible avenues below.** You are not required to follow these; they are merely meant at starting points.

These presentations should be **extremely brief: 1 to 2 minutes at most. During your presentation: 1. Describe the object or document; 2. Analyze its significance in relation to the class: what does it add?** Please include a short handout with a description of the information and a reference to where you found it. This page should be **NO LONGER** than one page.

These presentations, which will happen toward the end of each class, are intended to give you some control over the material of the course. There is an enormous amount of material already written about 9/11. Much of it could not be included on this syllabus. These presentations will offer alternatives to this course. We may even want to think of them as possible substitutions for material on the syllabus. By the end of the course, we might have a very different syllabus in mind.

- Other films of 9/11
- Other commercials that touch on 9/11
- Other music that references 9/11
- Alternate oral histories of 9/11
- Conspiracy theories
- International journalistic accounts
- Art works—sculpture, memorials, paintings, plays, that touch on 9/11

Grading: Your grade for the course will be calculated according to the following formula: **your papers will account for 40% of your grade divided equally among the two papers, your final exam will account for 40% of your grade, attendance and participation in class will account for 20% of your grade. You get full credit for attendance and participation use must contribute regularly to class (meaning at least once a week).** Please note you must complete all of the written work for the course and the presentation to receive a passing grade.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code: Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. You should always cite your sources; references are an essential part of critical thinking and academic writing, so don't be afraid to use other people's ideas to develop and advance your own. If you are unsure about any aspect of the policy on plagiarism, please come and speak with me.

Below is a copy of the Wheaton College Honor Code. Please be sure to read it and follow it throughout this course:

As members of the Wheaton community, we commit ourselves to act honestly, responsibly, and above all, with honor and integrity in all areas of campus life. We are accountable for all that we say and write. We are responsible for the academic integrity of our work. We pledge that we will not misrepresent our work nor give or receive unauthorized aid. We commit ourselves to behave in a manner which demonstrates concern for the personal dignity, rights and freedoms of all members of the community. We are respectful of college property and the property of others. We will not tolerate a lack of respect for these values.

I accept responsibility to maintain the Honor Code at all times.

SYLLABUS

REPRESENTING AND NARRATING THE EVENTS OF 9/11/01

Th Jan. 27 **Snow Day!**

T Feb. 1 **Naming the Event; Why We Study**

How are the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001 named and described? Why would we study it and what role does writing have in how we respond?

William Safire, "Nameless Event" *New York Times* (October 7, 2001)*

Carole Chabreis, "Fiction in a World that Exists After Terror" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Oct. 5, 2001)*

Carol Foster Segal, "The Solace of Literature" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Oct. 5, 2001)*

Begin watching *9/11: The Filmmakers' Commemorative Edition*, Guy and Jules Naudet, dirs. (2002) **On reserve at the library.**

[Everyone is required to see this film by Feb. 10th. Please plan accordingly and do not expect to be able to see it at the last minute.]

Th Feb. 3 **The Falling Man**

Richard Drew, "Falling Man"*

Tom Junod, "The Falling Man"*

[optional: watch Henry Singer, *9/11: The Falling Man** (app. 72 mins.)]

Diane Seuss, "Falling Man"*

Eric Fischl, "Tumbling Woman"

Don Delillo, *Falling Man*, 1-87

T Feb. 8 **The Falling Man**

Don Delillo, *Falling Man*, 87- 246

Giorgio Morandi, *Natura Morta* (1956)*

Th Feb. 10 **Visualizing the Events: Images of 9/11**

Marianne Hirsch, "I Took Pictures: September 2001 and Beyond"* in *Trauma at Home*

Slavoj Zizek, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real" (Sept. 15, 2001 version)*

****9/11: The Filmmakers' Commemorative Edition*, Guy and Jules Naudet, dirs. (2002) **on reserve in the library*****

[Selected photographs of World Trade Center and Pentagon on 9/11. These images are available as a Powerpoint presentation on our course website]

T Feb. 15 **Narrating the Events: Stories of 9/11**

The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (2004) “Preface”; “Chapter 1: ‘We Have Some Planes’” (v-46)*

Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón, *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*, “Foreword”; “Chapter 1: ‘We Have Some Planes’,” 1-30

Jean Elshtain, “Introduction” and “What Happened on Sept. 11th?” from *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (2004)*

“The Numbers: Remains of a Day” (2002)*

Richard Miller, “Falling Bodies: Cleaning up After the Apocalypse”*

Th Feb. 17 **Gender in the Aftermath of 9/11**

Susan Faludi, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2 from *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (2007)*

A.R. Torres, “Confessions of a 9/11 Widow”* from *Afterwords*

Cole Kazdin, “Sex in a Time of Terror”* from *Afterwords*

“NEVER FORGET”: MEMORIALIZING 9/11/01

T Feb. 22 **The Politics of Memorialization**

David Simpson, *9/11: Culture of Commemoration*, 1-85

Th Feb. 24 **The Politics of Memorialization**

David Simpson, *9/11: Culture of Commemoration*, 85-170

T Mar. 1 ****No class, I am out of town****

Th Mar. 3 **Witnessing, Remembering, Forgetting**

Nancy K. Miller, “Reporting the Disaster”*

New York Times, selections from *Portraits 9/11/01* (“Portraits of Grief”)*

The National September 11 Memorial and Museum*

<http://www.national911memorial.org> [Look at the links under “Building the Memorial”; Watch the film of the site, look at the images, and read the rationale behind the design and arrangement of names; read “Michael Arad, ‘Reflecting Absence’ Fact Sheet”]

[Optional: At renewnyc.com under “News and Events” look at all the finalists for the WTC Memorial competition.]

The Legacy Project (virtual memorial)

<http://www.legacy.com/Sept11/SearchResult.aspx?location=WTC>

[Look at the Profiles, view the Guest Books, and read the comments]

Pentagon Memorial

<http://memorial.pentagon.mil>

[Look at “Renderings” under the “Construction” banner]

United Flight 93 Memorial

<http://www.honorflight93.org/>

[Examine closely “The Memorial”]

Arizona 9/11 Memorial Controversy

Listen about the controversy at

<http://kjzz.org/news/arizona/archives/200612/911memorialcommissionmember>

Arizona Republican Party, “The Arizona 9/11 Memorial”

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=JJlhAbj63hk>

HotAir blog, Response to AZ 9/11/01 Memorial, including interview with Rep. Russell Pearce (R-AZ)

<http://hotair.com/archives/2006/09/24/video-fox-covers-arizona-911-memorial-controversy/>

Conservative blog “Riehl World View” on the Arizona Memorial controversy and teaching 9/11 in Arizona public schools:

http://www.riehlworldview.com/carnivorous_conservative/2006/09/more_on_az_911_.html

T Mar. 8 **Memorials/Memory/Trauma**

E. Ann Kaplan, “9/11 and Disturbing Remains”; “Why Trauma Now?”; and “‘Wounded New York’: Rebuilding and Memorials to 9/11” from *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Literature and Media* (2005)*

Lower Manhattan Development Corporation Masterplan*

<http://www.renewnyc.com/>

[Look at “The Plan” for the current incarnations of the Freedom Tower and Memorial. Look also at the Image Gallery for the Freedom Tower under “News and Events”]

[Don’t forget to examine the remnants of an **eighteenth-century ship** they found while excavating in the process of rebuilding: <http://www.drewfulton.com/world-trade-center-ship/>

The Freedom Tower*

http://www.gothamgazette.com/rebuilding_nyc/freedomtower/

[Look at the images of the 2003 Freedom Tower design and follow the link for the 2005 redesign.]

[Optional: Read about the design competition for the Freedom Tower at *The New Yorker*:

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/03/10/030310crsk_skyline]

“Sacred Ground”: An extensive *PBS: Frontline* site with images and histories of the design competition.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sacred/>

“Tribute in Light”:

Julian LaVerderie and Paul Myoda, “Genesis of *Tribute in Light*”

<http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2005/Tribute/tribute2005.swf>

Maya Lin, Original Proposal for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.*
[Lin was one of the judges of the WTC Memorial Competition]

Search for “Vietnam Veterans Memorial” at flickr.com and look at images

THE ARTISTIC GENRES OF 9/11

Th Mar. 10 **Poetry**

Karen Alkalay-Gut, “The Poetry of 9/11: The Testimonial Imperative”*

Billy Collins, “The Names” (2002)*

Diane Schoemperlen, *Names of the Dead: An Elegy for the Victims of September 11* (2004);

[Read sections the front matter and sections “A”, “W” “Y” “Z”]*

Richard Howard “Fallacies of Wonder” (2002)*

Diane di Prima and Clive Matson, *Towers Down: Two Poems**

T Mar. 14 **No class, Spring Break**

Th Mar. 16 **No class, Spring Break**

T Mar. 22 **Poetry**

Jeffrey Grey, “Precocious Testimony: Poetry and the Uncommemorable”* [in *Literature after 9/11*]

From *Poetry After 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets*:

Dennis Loy Johnson and Valerie Merihans, “Foreword”; Alicia Ostriker, “Introduction”

Hal Sirowitz, “Cookies for Peace”

Bill Kushner, “In the Hairy Arms of Whitman”

Eliot Katz, “When the Skyline Crumbles”

Jean Valentine, “In the Burning Air”

Norman Stock, “What I Said”

Ross Martin, “The Message Will Self-Destruct in Sixty Seconds”

Karl Kirchwey, “Nocturne, Morningside Heights”

Kimiko Hahn, “Boerum Hill Tanka”

Geoffrey O’Brien, “Aubade 2”

Nikki Moustaki, “How to Write a Poem after September 11th”

Paper #1 Due

Th Mar. 24 **Satire**

Ken Kalfus, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), 1-126

T Mar. 29 **Satire**

Ken Kalfus, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), 127-237
Susan Faludi, "Epilogue: What if?" from *The Terror Dream**

Th Mar. 31 **Short Form**

Martin Amis, "The Last Days of Mohammed Atta" from *House of Meetings* (2006)*
Terry Tempest Williams, "Scattered Potsherds"* (from *American Writers Respond*)
Deborah Eisenberg, from *Twilight of the Superheroes* (2007)*

T Apr. 5 **Novel**

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, opening - 107

Th Apr. 7 **Novel**

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 108-208

T Apr. 12 **Novel**

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 208 - end

POPULAR CULTURE ENGAGES WITH 9/11

Th Apr. 14 **Comics**

Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers*

T Apr. 19 **Visit from Charlotte Meehan**

Reading, if any, to be determined

Th Apr. 21 **Music**

Bruce Springsteen, *The Rising* (2002)

John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* (performance, 2002-03; recorded 2004)

Listen to the WNYC interview with John Adams and read a transcript of some of the language of *On the Transmigration of Souls**

Garth Brooks, "The Dance"* (a remix in commemoration of September 11th)

Neil Young, "Let's Roll"*

Blue Man Group, "Exhibit 13"*

Other Materials:

Clear Channel's List of Songs Deemed "Inappropriate" After 9/11*

Eliza Truitt, "It's the End of the World and Clear Channel Knows it" *Slate* (Sept. 17 2001)*

Eliza Truitt, "Profiles in Ass Covering" *Slate* (Sept. 18, 2001)*

[Start Reading *Netherland*]

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

T Apr. 26 **Cosmopolis: International New York after 9/11**

Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (2008) [Please read the whole book]

Jill Bennet, "The Limits of Empathy and the Global Politics of Belonging"*

Th Apr. 28 **Cosmopolis: International New York after 9/11**

Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (2008)

Jill Bennet, "The Limits of Empathy and the Global Politics of Belonging"*

T May 3 **Fundamentalism**

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)

Paper #2 Due

Th May 5 **Fundamentalism**

Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)

Take Home Exam: Due May 10, between 1 and 2 pm. During this time, I will be in my office, Meneely #317. YOU MUST hand your exam to me in person. You cannot turn your exam in early without special arrangements. Any exam handed in after this time will not be accepted.