

The Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
 Fall 2012

First-Year Writing Seminar: Photo-Graphic Selves: the Art of the Visual Memoir (FIRST-UG 391)

Fall 2012
 T/Th, 9:30 - 10:45 AM
 Silver Center, 100 Washington Square East/
 33 Washington Place, Room 406

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 Room 613
Office Hours: T, 11:00 – 12:00 PM
 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on the interplay of images and words in autobiographical texts. We will ask what it means to represent the self on the page, and how the added element of the visual – including photographs and graphic images – complicates the many negotiations involved in self-portraiture. What, if anything, do pictures convey that words cannot? How does the inclusion of images or descriptions of images affect the ways we tell, or the ways that others read, our lives? Do the formal differences between visual images that are hand-drawn, as in comics, and those that appear more “realistic,” like photographs, change how we approach personal narratives? Throughout the semester, you will become acquainted with the basic theories and vocabularies surrounding the intersections between the visual and the verbal.

Over the course of the semester, you will learn to form focused and thesis-driven arguments drawing on the use of textual evidence, research, and the incorporation of various points of view.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway).

Auster, Paul. *The Invention of Solitude*. Penguin Books, 2007.
 Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Hill and Wang, 2010.
 Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home*. Mariner Books, 2007.
 Kalman, Maira. *The Principles of Uncertainty*. Penguin, 2009.
 Leonard, Joanne. *Being in Pictures*. U. of Michigan Press, 2008.
 Trethewey, Natasha. *Native Guard: Poems*. Mariner Books, 2007.

It is strongly recommended that you purchase, or are familiar with, *MLA Handbook*, Seventh Edition.

All other readings will be made available via BlackBoard (indicated as BB on the schedule). There may be readings in addition to those mentioned on the syllabus, which I will post on BlackBoard or distribute in class.

COURSE POLICIES

It is essential that you attend class regularly, arrive promptly, and submit all work on time. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out about any work you may have missed. More than two unexcused absences will have an adverse effect on your grade, as will persistent lateness.

Participation is an important part of your course grade. We will do a fair amount of group work, class discussion, and in-class writing assignments. Your participation in each of these activities will count towards your grade. Come to class prepared to ask questions, to comment, to fully engage. You must bring the assigned readings to each class meeting. You should also bring some sort of writing implement, and paper, for our in-class writing assignments.

Please make sure to turn off ALL electronic devices before class begins.

Remember: Any and all work you hand in this semester must be your own. Whenever you use someone else's words or ideas, you must cite them properly. 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.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I am glad to meet with you to discuss all assignments or any other aspect of the course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS and REQUIREMENTS

You will be responsible for four essays in the course of the semester. Because we will be approaching writing as a process, you will be expected to bring in drafts of work in progress for in-class workshops. On the days that papers are due, you should hand in your papers, revised using the suggestions given to you during the workshop, along with the original draft and a cover letter of 1-2 pages explaining your revision process. Papers are due at the beginning of class. You will have the opportunity to revise the first three graded papers.

All assignments must be typed, printed, and handed in as hard copies. Do not send work by email unless I ask for it; I will not read it. Late assignments will be progressively downgraded.

Paper One: The first paper will be a two- to three-page close reading. You will be asked to discuss a particular line/image/passage in relation to the work of which it is part, to consider its significance in relation to the whole, and discuss its contribution to the work's meaning.

Paper Two: The second paper will be a three- to five-page analysis of a chosen text in relation to a particular theory of reading words and images together. You will need to identify a

particular idea about how words and images interact, and discuss a chosen text in relation to whatever notion of reading such juxtapositions that you have chosen.

Paper Three: The third paper will be a three- to five-page analysis of two texts in relation to each other. For this paper, you will choose a particular concern that connects two texts, and you will decide how the texts compare and contrast in light of that particular concern. Bonus points for unexpected (but justified) pairings.

Paper Four: The final paper will be a visual memoir with at least two pages of commentary. You can do just about anything for this project, which need not even be written. Whatever form your visual memoir assumes, you will use the commentary to analyze and explain the choices you have made in representing yourself, and to link your visual memoir with other texts and ideas that we have explored over the course of the semester. Be prepared to share this visual memoir with the class.

MLA Research Guidelines

This course follows the research guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA). These guidelines were most recently revised in 2007 in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th Ed.).

BLACKBOARD PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT

You will also be responsible for posts on BlackBoard. Each person in class will sign up to initiate discussion for two separate texts. On those days when you will be leading the class, you will be responsible for posting a page-long critical assessment to the appropriate BlackBoard forum, commenting briefly (three or four paragraphs should be about right) but thoughtfully on the assigned reading/listening/viewing, identifying textual issues and other points meriting closer attention. Ideally, the responses will serve to generate ideas; think of them as an opportunity to reflect on the reading and to prepare for more formal writing assignments. Your responses should also serve as the basis for the class discussions that you lead. Therefore, be sure, somewhere in these response papers, to include questions for the class.

Tips for critical responses and presentations: Do analyze a particular theme, image, or selection from the text. In other words, be specific. Don't just summarize what you've read. Do connect your response to an issue or discussion that we've had in class. You should feel comfortable bringing up a thought or idea that was voiced in class (or preciously on the discussion board) and responding to it. Remember to always credit others by name. Don't generalize or make superficial assessments without providing specific textual evidence. Do use these responses as an opportunity to experiment with your readings of the text or to make connections between different works we've read (extra points for unexpected pairings). Do use MLA-style to cite your sources. Do end your responses with questions, which you can then pose to the class.

Your response must be posted by five p.m. on the day before you will be leading class discussion. Please make sure to hand in a hard copy of your reflection at the beginning of class

as well. We will occasionally use these responses for workshopping purposes, as well as in-class writing prompts.

You are also expected to comment on at least one classmate's response on those days when you have not posted one. These responses should be about one or two paragraphs. This must be done, at the latest, by noon of the day after discussion.

COURSE GRADE BREAKDOWNS

First Paper	10%
Second Paper	20%
Third Paper	20%
Fourth Paper	20%
Participation (In-Class and on BlackBoard)	30%

CONFERENCES

I am available to meet with you to discuss papers and assignments during my weekly office hours, over the telephone, or over e-mail. When you come to see me, please bring a draft of the paper you are working on and any other related texts or images. If you need additional help with your writing, you can contact the Gallatin Writing Center at 1 Washington Place, room 423. See [gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html] for instructions on how to make an appointment.

FURTHER READING

The following texts include visual memoirs in the forms of graphic memoirs, books of poetry, and books of and about photography. You will find many of these texts to be useful examples of visual memoirs that might help you think about your final project. I encourage you to look at one or two of these in preparation for your final assignment. If you are looking for further recommendations, please ask.

Some of these books have been put on reserve at the library (indicated as R on the schedule).

Ashbery, John. *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*.
 B, David. *Epileptic*.
 Barry, Lynda. *One Hundred Demons*. R
 Bell, Gabrielle. *Lucky*.
 Brown, Jeffrey. *Funny Misshapen Body*. R
 Carson, Anne. *Nox*.
 Doucet, Julie. *My New York Diary*.
 French, Renée. *H Day*. R
 Gallop, Jane. *Living with his Camera*. R
 Goldin, Nan. *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. R
 Keller, Corey, et al. *Francesca Woodman*.
 Kominsky Crumb, Aline. *Need More Love*.

Liebovitz, Annie. *A Photographer's Life*. R
 McGinley, Ryan. *You and I*.
 Mann, Sally. *Immediate Family*.
 Pekar, Harvey. *American Splendor*.
 Plath, Sylvia. *The Colossus and Other Poems*.
 Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*.
 Small, David. *Stitches*.
 Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. R
 Spence, Jo. *Putting Myself in the Picture*. R
 Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*.

Tuesday, September 4	Introduction
Thursday, September 6	Auster , <i>Portrait of an Invisible Man</i> (first book of <i>The Invention of Solitude</i>), pps. 1-32
Tuesday, September 11	Auster , <i>Portrait of an Invisible Man</i> (first book of <i>The Invention of Solitude</i>), pps. 32-69
Thursday, September 13	Tretheway , <i>Native Guard</i> , “Theories of Time and Space” and Part I
Tuesday, September 18	FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP PART I
Thursday, September 20	FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP PART II
Tuesday, September 25	FIRST PAPER WORKSHOP PART III
Thursday, September 27	Bring family photograph to class FIRST PAPER DUE
Tuesday, October 2	Tretheway , <i>Native Guard</i> , Parts II and III
Thursday, October 4	Barthes , <i>Camera Lucida</i> , pps. 1-30
Tuesday, October 9	Barthes , <i>Camera Lucida</i> , pps. 30-60
Thursday, October 11	Barthes , <i>Camera Lucida</i> , pps. 63-119
Tuesday, October 16	NO CLASS
Thursday, October 18	Gallop , “Observations of a Photographed Mother” (from <i>Living with his Camera</i>) BB
Tuesday, October 23	SECOND PAPER WORKSHOP PART I

Thursday, October 25	SECOND PAPER WORKSHOP PART II
Tuesday, October 30	Class cancelled due to storm
Thursday, November 1	Class cancelled due to storm
Tuesday, November 6	Goldin , excerpts from <i>Ballad of Sexual Dependency</i> BB
Thursday, November 8	Leonard , <i>Being in Pictures</i> , pps. 1-121
Tuesday, November 13	Leonard , <i>Being in Pictures</i> , finish SECOND PAPER DUE
Thursday, November 15	Spence , excerpts from <i>Putting Myself in the Picture</i> BB
Tuesday, November 20	Sontag , “In Plato’s Cave” (from <i>On Photography</i>) BB OPTIONAL THIRD PAPER DUE
Thursday, November 22	NO CLASS
Tuesday, November 27	Bechdel , <i>Fun Home</i>
Thursday, November 29	Bechdel , <i>Fun Home</i>
Tuesday, December 4	Kalman , <i>The Principles of Uncertainty</i>
Thursday, December 6	Kalman , <i>The Principles of Uncertainty</i>
Tuesday, December 11	FINAL PRESENTATIONS
Thursday, December 13	FINAL PRESENTATIONS FINAL PAPER DUE