

**V55. 0710-001**

**\* Expressive Cultures: Words \*  
Summer 2010 - Session I**

**MWTh 9:30-11:30**  
**409 Silver**

**Prof. Eliot Borenstein**  
**Temporary Address:**  
**19 West 4th Street, Room 210**

**Office Hours:**  
**T 11-12**  
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**Course Description:** What is literature or the literary? Is there a literary language that works differently from ordinary language? What is literary style and form? What does it mean to tell a story, and how is it different from telling a lie? What kinds of stories do we tell about our lives? Paying particular attention to questions of manipulation and emotion, we examine the status of fiction and representation through short stories, novels, and graphic novels by a range of authors.

**Course requirements:** No knowledge of any foreign language is expected, as all works will be read and discussed in English. However, when we read poetry in translation, copies of the poem in the original are also made available. In written assignments, untranslated quotes from Russian and French texts are acceptable.

**Blackboard and the Internet.** Blackboard, which is accessible through the "Academics" tab of NYU Home, is an important part of course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, Blackboard uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

**Writing Assignments:** There will be two short papers, a midterm paper (5-7 pages), and a final paper (8-10).

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *three* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed. That is, if you want to write a short paper about "Bartleby," you must turn this paper in no later than

**May 20.** If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the short paper at the beginning of that class. No late short papers will be accepted under any circumstances.

You may not wait until August to turn in two short papers. The semester has been divided into two parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these two deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **May 26**, and your second is due no later than **June 17**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first segment of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your *midterm paper* and *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on two-page papers, as long as you are not tapping the same paper for both longer works.

The midterm paper is due on **June 7**, and the final must be turned by **June 24**.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date..

**Electronic submission of written assignments.** You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Words Assignment" or "Gogol Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Dostoevsky the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Dostoevsky).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Richard Brautigan then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Brautigan).doc". A final paper on Muriel Spark by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Spark).doc".

**Final Grade.** Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Two-page papers:	30%
Midterm paper:	20%
Final paper:	30%

**Class participation.** Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the short papers.

Active and constructive class participation can significantly improve your final grade. Frequent absences can have a negative effect on your final grade.

**Required Texts, Part One**  
**(NYU Book Store)**

Barth, John. *Chimera*.  
Diaz, Junot. *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*  
Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.  
Kristof, Agota. *The Notebook. The Proof. The Third Lie*  
Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*.  
Roth, Philip. *The Ghost Writer*.  
Spark, Muriel. *Aiding and Abetting*  
Tolstoy, Leo. *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

**Required Texts , Part Two**  
**(On Blackboard)**

The rest of the readings for this class will be available in two formats on Blackboard: Rich Text Format (.rtf), which can be read and printed using virtually any word processing program on any platform, and .pdf, which treats the articles as images rather than texts. Occasionally, the files are in .html format rather than .rtf.

Please also note that the first two readings on Blackboard are not assigned for specific days; rather, they are ancillary materials designed to help you perform well in the class. I expect you to familiar yourself with them before you turn in any written assignment.

Finally, please note that you must **bring the texts with you to class**.

A-1 Advice for Student Writers.  
A-2 Citation  
Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. (excerpts)  
Bloom, Amy. "Psychoanalysis Changed My Life."  
Borges, Jorge Luis. "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*."  
Chekhov, Anton. "A Boring Story"  
---"The Lady with the Little Dog"  
Gogol, Nikolai. "The Overcoat"  
Melville, Herman. "Bartleby the Scrivener."  
Moore, Lorrie. "People Like That Are the Only People Here."  
Moser, David. "This Is the Title of the Story, Which Is Also Found Several  
Times in the Story Itself."  
Tertz, Abram. "Pkhentz."

## CLASS SCHEDULE

**May 17 (M) Introduction**

**May 19 (W) Speaking and Doing**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Lectures I-III, VI, IX, XII)

⊛ Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"

**May 20 (Th) Preferring Not**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"

**May 24 (M) Confessing**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*

**May 26 (W) Just the Facts**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Haddon, *The Curious Incident*

**Final Deadline for First Short Paper**

**May 27 (Th) Little Men and Big Coats**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Gogol, "The Overcoat"

**May 31 (M) NO CLASS**

**June 2 (W) Life Stories**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Roth, *The Ghost Writer*

**June 3 (Th) Slices of Life**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Chekhov, "A Boring Story"; "The Lady with the Little Dog"

**June 7 (M) The Composition Must Be True (1)**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Kristof, *The Notebook*

**Midterm Paper Due**

**June 9 (W) The Composition Must Be True (2)**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Kristof, *The Proof*

**June 10 (Th) The Composition Must Be True (3)**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Kristof, *The Third Lie*

**June 14 (M) Raw Sharks**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Moore & Gibbons, *Watchmen*

**June 16 (W) Li(f)e Stories**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Spark, *Aiding and Abetting*

**June 17 (Th) Alien Soil**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Tertz, "Pkhentz"

**Final Deadline for Second Short Paper**

**June 21 (M) Geek Tragedy**

⊛ Diaz, *Oscar Wao*

**June 23 (W) Cliffhangers**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Barth, "Dunyazadiad"

**June 24 (Th) Mellow Dramas**

▼ For Today:

⊛ Bloom, "Psychoanalysis"

⊛ Moore, "People Like That"

**Final Paper Due**