FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR
MULTICULTURALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE POLITICS OF WRITING

Dr. Steven Thomas
office phone: x3193
office: SJU Quad 352-B
e-mail: swthomas@csbsju.edu
office hours:
odd days 11:00—11:30 am; even days 1:00—2:00 pm;
and also by appointment

FYS 100 – 56A, fall 2009
time: even days 2:40—3:50 pm
place: SJU Quad 447

THE IDEA OF THIS COURSE

All writing and speaking has political and social implications. Sometimes these implications are obvious, and sometimes they aren’t, but one thing is for sure—how we go about representing people matters to the people we are representing. Likewise, how we go about representing ourselves affects how others see us. This first-year seminar proposes that we think carefully about how representation works with the goal that we become better writers. This course also proposes that writing occurs in a very complex world that is rapidly changing and whose economy and social organization is often hard to understand. The economy is more global than ever before, and the tools of communication and media (such as iPhones and Facebook) are getting faster and faster.

We will read imaginative literature that raises questions about the practice of writing and its relationship to the world in which we find ourselves. We will read some literary classics, such as novels by George Orwell and Toni Morrison, and we will also read some lesser-known, more recent authors who possibly have more to say to your generation, such as the Minnesotan, Kao Kalia Yang. We will engage in active discussions about the literature and the questions it raises, and—most importantly—we will practice writing. In doing so, we will meet the general goal of all FYS classes, which is to develop your writing, critical thinking, and academic discussion skills.

TEXTS IN BOOKSTORE

George Orwell, 1984
Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye
Kao Kalia Yang, The Latehomecomer
Josefina Lopez, Real Women Have Curves
Dinaw Mengestu, The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears

Other Reading Assignments Available on Moodle:

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Seven short essays …………………………………… 35% (5% each)
Seven graded in-class discussions …………………… 35% (5% each)
Final Project ………………………………………… 15%
Attendance and participation ……………………… 15%
ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Seven Short Essays (2-3 pages)
The semester has been divided into seven units, and you will write an essay for each unit. Each essay will address the theme of the unit and discuss the assigned reading. You will be graded on (1) how well you raise and answer a question, (2) how well you organize your ideas, (3) how well you follow the rules and conventions of good writing, and (4) how well you consider the assigned reading. You will bring one hard copy of your papers to class for discussion and peer review, and then within 24 hours, you will submit a final draft to Moodle.

Seven Graded In-Class Discussions
Although we will have informal discussions about the assigned reading every day, we will have formal graded discussions seven times—one for each unit. We will vary the format of these discussions, so that one unit might involve us sitting in a circle talking, another unit might be a more organized debate, and another unit might involve getting into smaller groups, etc. You will be graded on (1) whether you come to class prepared, having done all the assigned reading, (2) how politely, respectfully, and attentively you listen to your classmates, and (3) the effort you make to articulate your ideas or raise relevant questions.

Final Project
For our final project, I’d like us to produce an issue of an on-line magazine. Each of you will take one of your seven essays and work on improving it and making it more relevant to a general audience. All of us will work together in collaboration to edit each other’s work and put it on-line using google sites.

Attendance and participation
You are allowed three unexcused absences. For each unexcused absence beyond that, your attendance grade will be lowered by 10%. You are expected to come to class having completed the reading, and you are expected to be prepared to discuss it. Participation means not just talking, but also listening, respecting your classmates, and being prepared.

POLICIES

Academic Integrity
Students should abide by the Student Handbook’s principles of academic integrity. Dishonesty and plagiarism will be punished severely. Plagiarism is using someone else’s ideas or words without giving appropriate credit and/or citation. For The College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University’s official policy on plagiarism, see this website:

Accommodation
The College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University make every effort possible to accommodate students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that affects your academic work and for which you require accommodation, please communicate any needs to me at the beginning of the semester. It is the responsibility of the students to make their needs known.
CALENDAR

Unit One: The Politics of Writing

Aug. 27 (Thu)  Introductions
Langston Hughes, “Theme for English B”

Aug. 31 (Mon) George Orwell, 1984, chapter 1 (pp. 1-106)
in-class discussion

Sept. 2 (Wed)  1984, chapter 2 (pp. 107-230)
short presentation from Writing Center fellows
in-class writing practice

Sept. 4 (Fri)  1984, chapter 3 (pp.231-308)
meet with Information Technology Services in SJU training lab

Sept. 9 (Wed)  1984, appendix (pp. 309-323)
George Orwell, “Why I Write”
graded in-class discussion

Sept. 11 (Fri) essay #1 “on writing”
peer review with Writing Center fellows

Unit Two: Representation

Sept. 15 (Tue)  Axis of Evil Comedy Tour (movie)
Screenings: Sept. 10 (Thu) and Sept. 13 (Sun) at 7:20 pm in Quad 346
Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye, pp. 1-58
in-class discussion

Sept. 17 (Thu)  Bluest Eye, pp. 59-93
Walt Whitman, “I Hear America Singing”
Langston Hughes, “I Too Sing America”
in-class writing practice and lecture

Sept. 21 (Mon)  Bluest Eye, pp. 94-183
bell hooks, “happy to be nappy”
Kanye West, “All Falls Down” (find video and lyrics on the internet)
in-class movie: Happy to be Nappy

Sept. 23 (Wed)  Bluest Eye, pp. 184-216
“Introduction” and “Black Men” from Barry Glassner, Culture of Fear
graded in-class discussion

Sept. 25 (Fri) essay #2 “on representation”
peer review

Sept 28 (Mon)  -- Peace Studies Conference
               -- 7:00 pm talk on antiracism by Jeff Middlebrook
Unit Three: How to Write about Violence
Sept. 29 (Tue)  library’s power point on plagiarism and the university’s plagiarism policy here: http://www.csbsju.edu/library/help/citing.htm
brainstorm

Oct. 1 (Thu)  newspaper stories about Kenya (on Moodle)
interviews from Kwani? (Moodle)
Sitawa Namwali, Cut Off My Tongue (Moodle)
in-class discussion on how to research violence
*inauguration of new SJU pres. Robert Koopmann – short schedule*

Oct. 5 (Mon)  class in library or computer room – time and place to be announced
presentation on research methods in library by Molly Ewing
bring a short memo about your research topic and the research you’ve done so far

Oct. 7 (Wed)  Cut Off My Tongue
graded in-class discussion on how to write about violence

Oct. 8-11  Fall Break

Oct. 13 (Tue)  workshop – bring your research to class and be prepared to discuss it
critical methods

Oct. 15 (Thu)  essay #3 “on how to write about violence”
in-class presentation on ATLAS by Erica Rademacher, Academic Advising

Unit Four: The Context of Global Economics
Oct. 19 (Mon)  no-class: individual conferences
movie: You Only Live Twice (screening time and place to be announced)
excerpt from Jeremy Black’s The Politics of James Bond
reviews of Casino Royale and Quantum of Solace

Oct. 21 (Wed)  no-class: individual conferences
movie: Quantum of Solace (screening time and place TBA)
extracts from Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane, eds., Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia’s Challenge to Globalization
extracts from Vandana Shiva, Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit
Steven Thomas, “The New James Bond and Globalization Theory”

Oct. 23 (Fri)  essay #4 “on the context of globalization”
graded in-class discussion

Unit Five: Translating Migration and the Metaphor of Home
Oct. 27 (Tue)  Kao Kalia Yang, The Latehomecomer
in-class writing practice and discussion

**spring term 2010 registration begins Oct. 28, ends November 11**
Oct. 29 (Thu)  *The Latehomecomer*  
excepts from *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora*  
graded in-class discussion

Nov. 2 (Mon)  *The Latehomecomer*  
Salman Rushdie, preface from *Imaginary Homelands*

Nov. 4 (Wed)  essay #5 “on metaphor and home”

**Unit Six: The Ideology of Pop Culture**

Nov. 6 (Fri)  Josefina Lopez, *Real Women Have Curves*, Act. 1

Nov. 10 (Tue)  *Real Women Have Curves*, Act. 2  
articles about sweatshop labor in Mexico and the U.S. (Moodle)

Nov. 12 (Thu)  the Hollywood movie version of *Real Women Have Curves* (movie)  
screening time and place TBA  
in-class graded discussion: compare and contrast the play and the movie

Nov. 16 (Mon)  essay #6 “on the ideology of pop culture”

**Unit Seven: The Dreaminess of Dreams**

Nov. 18 (Wed)  Dinaw Mengestu, *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*  
extcepts from *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora*

Nov. 20 (Fri)  *Beautiful Things*  
“Fallen Beats” from *Ogina* (summer 2008) www.ogina.org

Nov. 24 (Tue)  *Beautiful Things*  
“Organic Oromian Coffee” from *Ogina* (summer 2008) www.ogina.org  
*Black Gold* (movie – screening time and place to be announced)

Nov. 25-29  Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 1 (Tue)  *Beautiful Things*  
Li-Young Lee, “Self-Help for Fellow Refugees” and “Mnemonic”  
graded in-class discussion

Dec. 3 (Thu)  essay #7 “on dreams”  
discussion of final project and production

**Final Project: a class on-line magazine**

Dec. 7 (Mon)  workshop on exigency

Dec. 9 (Wed)  workshop on editing and production

Dec. 11 (Fri)  presentation of final project