

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:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/itservices/teaching/webcourse.htm>.

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:

http://www.csbsju.edu/catalog/2003-2005/Academic_Programs/Rights_and_Responsibilities/002.htm

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 Namwalie, *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)
excerpts from Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane, eds., *Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia's Challenge to Globalization*
excerpts 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*
 excerpts 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*
 excerpts 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