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ENG 3604-001: Special Topics (The Literature of the City: New York, London, Paris)

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English 3604: Special Topics (The Literature of the City: New York, London, Paris)
spring 2000

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Rental System Texts:
Dickens, Our Mutual Friend
Dos Passos, Manhattan Transfer
Hemingway, A Moveable Feast
Perkins, The American Tradition in Literature, vol. 2
Orwell, Down and Out in Paris and London
Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway
Yezierska, Hungry Hearts
Zola, L'Assommoir

Other Texts:
handouts of shorter selected works as distributed in class

Course Description and Objectives:

"We get the cities we imagine. But first, in order to imagine new or better cities, we must learn to see the cities that we have. Imagination is rooted in past experience and perception. We see the city we have been taught to see, and literature teaches us to see cities" (Sizemore, A Female Vision of the City, 1).

New York, London, Paris. We all know something about each of these cities, and each has a rich, complex history and has attracted the attention of some of the world’s greatest writers. This course gives you an opportunity to deepen your understanding of these cities through the study of selected literary responses to them, but also to consider more broadly what the urban experience has come to mean to those who flock to it as well as to those who flee it. For the most part, primary reading will come from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when urban populations increased rapidly, and the modern metropolis took shape. I have organized the material thematically and geographically, so that we will return to each city over and over again as we consider a series of fundamental issues that writers associate with city life. Our goal is to develop an appreciation for the wonders and dangers of these three cities as well as for the city as a metaphorical, illusory place – the center of modern life.
Requirements and grading:

careful preparation of assigned reading
regular participation in class discussions
weekly in-class writing assignments – 20%
one twenty-minute class presentation on an approved topic of your choice – 30%
a mid-term exam – 25%
a final exam – 25%

Course Policies:

Attendance at all class meetings is expected but not required. (After the first two or three weeks, I will not take attendance.) Remember, however, that in-class writing cannot be made up without a valid excuse, and that exams are based, in part, on class discussions and lectures.

If you cannot make a deadline, please let me know in advance. I do not accept late work without a valid excuse. Please see me if you are having difficulty keeping up with the work. Sometimes even a brief conversation can clear up difficulties.

I would like to see each of you in conference some time during the semester, though I am not requiring it. I like talking to you about how your work is going in this course and in the others you are taking. The more I get to know a class, the more rewarding I find my own work in preparation for class lectures and discussions. Feel free to stop by at any time or you may make an appointment.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

I enforce the English Department Statement on Plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism . . . has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of F for the course.”

Tentative Schedule:

1/11: introductions

Section I: The Flaneur

1/13: Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” (handout)

1/18: Baudelaire, from Prose Poems and Fleurs du Mal (handout)
1/20: Poe, “The Man in the Crowd” (handout)


1/27: Dickens, from *American Notes*; James, from *The American Scene*; Seabrook, “Nobrow Culture” (handouts)

2/1: Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”; Hart Crane, from “The Bridge” (in Perkins); Lorca, from *The Poet in New York* (handout)

**Section II: Immigrants, Expatriates, and Other Urban Colonists**

2/3: Coan, from *Ellis Island Interviews* (handout)

2/8: Yezierska, “Wings,” “Hunger,” and “How I Found America” from *Hungry Hearts*


2/15: *Feast*, pages 67-140

2/17: *Feast*, pages 141-211


2/24: Countee Cullen, poems; Langston Hughes, poems and fiction (in Perkins and handouts)

2/29: **Mid-term exam**

**Section III: Women in the City**

3/2: Crane, “Maggie: A Girl of the Streets” (in Perkins); class presentations begin

3/7: James, *Washington Square*, chapters 1-16

3/9: *Square*, chapters 17-35

3/14; 3/16: **Spring recess**


3/23: *Dalloway*, pages 72-154

3/28: *Dalloway*, pages 154-228
3/30: Dalloway, pages 228-296

4/4: Zola, L’Assommoir, chapters 1-3

4/6: L’Assommoir, chapters 4-6

4/11: L’Assommoir, chapters 7-9

4/13: L’Assommoir, chapters 10-13

**Section IV: Money, Labor, Class, Power**

4/18: Orwell, from Down and Out in Paris and London

4/20: Doyle, “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (handout); Dickens, from Our Mutual Friend

4/25: Dos Passos, from Manhattan Transfer

4/27: from Manhattan Transfer

5/1 - 5/5: **Final Exam** – date and time to be announced