

## WRITING NEW YORK

Mondays and Wednesdays 12:30–1:45 p.m.  
13 University Place, Room 102

### Professor Cyrus R. K. Patell

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30–4:30 p.m.

### Professor Bryan Waterman

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 p.m.  
Tuesdays 10:00–11:00 a.m.

**Course Objectives:** This course examines the evolution of New York City as a literary construct as well as the city's emergence and continual reinvention as one of the country's — and the world's — premier sites of literary and cultural production. Beginning with Dutch settlement, moving through the earliest New York theaters in the eighteenth century, and continuing to the present, we will examine a range of drama, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry to reveal a variety of New York experiences. Students will also learn about the city's cultural history; note the development of literary forms in American literature from the late eighteenth century to the present; understand how writing about New York contributed to American literary history as we commonly understand it today; think about the relationship between literature and other artistic forms and media; and explore the nature of interdisciplinary work in the humanities.

**Course Requirements:** attendance and participation (20%); short paper (10%); mid-term examination (15%); final paper or project (30%); final examination (25%).

**Sections:** Discussion sections meet once per week. Attendance is required. The following sections are scheduled and will begin meeting during the **first** week of the term:

002 W 3:30-4:45 (25 W4 C-10)  
004 W 4:55-6:10 (Silver 708)  
Jessie Owens  
jmo242@nyu.edu

003 W 3:30-4:45 (48 Cooper Square 112)  
005 4:55-6:10 (Tisch UC57)  
Adrienne Ghaly  
adrienne.ghaly@nyu.edu

006 F 9:30-10:45 (Bobst 437)  
007 F 11:00-12:15 (Bobst 437)  
James Brooke-Smith  
jbs390@nyu.edu

008 F 11:00-12:15 (Bobst 536S)  
009 F 12:30-1:45 (Bobst 536S)  
Stephanie Hsu  
sh821@nyu.edu

### Papers and Projects:

The first paper assignment will be due in lecture on February 21. The final paper or project will require you to choose from one of the following 3,000-word projects:

1. Write a critical essay about one of the primary texts on the syllabus.
2. Write a critical essay about one of the central themes of the course, using textual analysis from two or three primary texts.
3. Create your own "cultural edition" of one of the works on the syllabus.

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4. Imagine a film adaptation of one of the works on our syllabus. Create a soundtrack of at least 10 songs to accompany your imaginary film and write scholarly liner notes.
5. Imagine an art exhibition that might be inspired by or correspond thematically or historically with one of the texts or movements on our syllabus. Write a catalog for the exhibition.
6. Devise a walking tour related to a cluster of texts on our syllabus and write a tour guide.
7. Propose your own analogous project, using options 4 through 6 as a model.

**Books Required:** Available at the NYU Book Center.

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (Signet)  
Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and The Imported Bridegroom* (Dover)  
Stephen Crane, *Maggie* (Bedford Cultural Edition)  
E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* (Plume)  
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (City Lights)  
Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City* (Owl Books)  
Henry James, *Washington Square* (Penguin)  
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (Theatre Communications Group)  
Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns* (DC Comics)  
Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *Early American Drama [EAD]* (Penguin)  
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, ed. Cynthia Griffin Wolff (Penguin)  
E.B. White, *Here Is New York* (Little Bookroom)  
Lin Yutang, *Chinatown Family* (Rutgers – ordered, available shortly)

Additional required reading will be available on the course Blackboard site, as indicated below. Students are also responsible for all materials distributed in class.

**Required Listening:** See April 9 on the schedule below. Available at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst Library (call numbers listed). The first two albums are available on iTunes and in most music stores.

*The Velvet Underground and Nico* XCD 10044 v.2:1 sound disc (disc 2 of a 5CD box called *Peel Slowly and See*; includes some tracks not on the 1967 release)  
Patti Smith, *Horses* XCD 3161

**Suggested Listening:** *Blank Generation: The New York Scene (1975-1978)* XCD6267

**Required Viewing:** See March 19, April 16, and April 18 on the schedule below. Available at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst Library. The films will also be shown as part of the Writing New York Film Series (see below).

Alan Crosland, *The Jazz Singer*  
Woody Allen, *Manhattan*  
Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing*

**Optional viewing:** Ric Burns, *New York: A Documentary Film* (7 videodiscs) DVD 739 v. 1-7. Films shown in the Writing New York Film Series that are not part of the required viewing listed above may be used in your final project and on the final exam.

**Resources:** The course has a Blackboard website. The *Course Documents* section will contain post-lecture notes and questions, which you should consult after each lecture. These notes and questions are designed to reinforce what you have learned in lecture; they will not serve you well if you have not attended the lectures to which they refer. Readings marked “Blackboard” below can be found in the *Required Readings* section; the *Additional Readings* section will contain recommended readings or supplementary texts to which we refer in class. The site will also list information such as office hours and optional events related to the class. You should make a habit of checking the Blackboard site regularly. It is accessible through your NYUHome page.

During the term, we will be communicating with you via e-mail. You should check your NYU e-mail account (or the account to which you have your NYU e-mail forwarded) regularly.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1

Jan. 17 Introduction

### WEEK 2

#### **Mythologizing New York City; Dutch Origins**

Jan. 22 Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, 7–33, 170–71; E. B. White, *Here Is New York*; excerpts (all on Blackboard): Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World*; “Letter of the Reverend Jonas Michaëlius”; Adriaen Van der Donck, *The Representation of New Netherland*; “The Flushing Remonstrance.”

Jan. 24 Washington Irving, Excerpts from *Knickerbocker’s History of New York*; Elizabeth L. Bradley, “Whose New York: Samuel Mitchell and Washington Irving’s Dueling Histories.” Both on Blackboard.

### WEEK 3

#### **The City on Stage**

Jan. 29 Royall Tyler, *The Contrast (EAD)*; Washington Irving, “Jonathan Oldstyle” letters (Blackboard); Homberger 34–51, 172–73.

Jan. 31 Mowatt, *Fashion (EAD)*; Baker, “Glance at New York” (Blackboard); Whitman, “The Old Bowery” (Blackboard); Homberger, 174–75.

### WEEK 4

#### **City Prose and the Emergence of a Business Culture**

Feb. 5 Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” and “Loomings” from *Moby-Dick* (Blackboard); Andrew Delbanco, Excerpt from *Herman Melville: His World and His Work* (Blackboard); Homberger, 54–89.

Feb. 7 Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*.

### WEEK 5

#### **City of Dreams and Disappointments**

Feb. 12 Walt Whitman, Selections from the *New York Aurora* and *Leaves of Grass* (Blackboard); Thomas Bender, “New York as a Center of Difference” (Blackboard); Homberger, 176–77.

Feb. 14 Stephen Crane, *Maggie*; Jacob Riis, “The Problem of the Children” and “The Working Girls of New York,” in the Bedford *Maggie*, 128–132 and 202–207.

<b>WEEK 6</b> Feb. 19 Feb. 21	<b>The Novel of Manners I: Henry James</b> Holiday: Presidents' Day Henry James, <i>Washington Square</i> ; Homberger, 90–111. <b>First paper assignment due in lecture.</b>
<b>WEEK 7</b> Feb. 26 Feb. 28	<b>The Novel of Manners II: Edith Wharton</b> Edith Wharton, <i>The Age of Innocence</i> (read entire novel). Homberger, 114–31; Fitzgerald, “My Lost City” (Blackboard).
<b>WEEK 8</b> Mar. 5	<b>The Novel of Manners III: Abraham Cahan</b> Abraham Cahan, <i>Yekl</i> ; Homberger, 132–33, 136–37.
Mar. 7	<b>Midterm Examination</b>
Mar. 12-16	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>WEEK 9</b> Mar. 19	<b>Ragtime and Jazz</b> E. L. Doctorow, <i>Ragtime</i> <b>Proposals for final paper or project accepted starting now.</b>
Mar. 21	View before class: Crosland, <i>The Jazz Singer</i>
<b>WEEKS 10 &amp; 11 Enclaves</b>	
Mar. 26	Djuna Barnes, “Greenwich Village As It Is” (Blackboard); Eugene O’Neill, <i>The Hairy Ape</i> (Blackboard); Homberger, 134–35.
Mar. 28	Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance (Blackboard); Homberger, 138–39, 178–79.
Apr. 2	Lin Yutang, <i>Chinatown Family</i>
Apr. 4	Hart Crane, Excerpts from <i>The Bridge</i> (Blackboard); Allen Ginsberg, <i>Howl</i>
<b>WEEK 12</b> Apr. 9 Apr. 11	<b>Pop Arts: Music and Comic Book Art</b> Listen before class: <i>The Velvet Underground and Nico</i> ; Patti Smith, <i>Horses</i> Frank Miller, <i>The Dark Knight Returns</i> <b>Proposals for final paper or project due in section.</b>
<b>WEEK 13</b> Apr. 16 Apr. 18	<b>Pop Arts: Film</b> View before class: Woody Allen, <i>Manhattan</i> View before class: Spike Lee, <i>Do the Right Thing</i>
<b>WEEK 14</b> Apr. 23 Apr. 25	<b>Apocalypse or Utopia?</b> Kushner, <i>Angels in America: Millennium Approaches</i> Kushner, <i>Angels in America: Perestroika</i>
<b>WEEK 15</b> Apr. 30 May 2	Conclusion. <b>Final paper or project due in lecture.</b> <b>Final Examination (12:00 p.m.)</b>

## THE WRITING NEW YORK FILM SERIES 2007

All films at 3:00 p.m. at the location indicated.

- Jan. 19      *Saturday Night Fever*, dir. John Badham (1977) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Jan. 26      *The Cruise*, dir. Bennett Miller (1999) – Silver 407
- Feb. 2        *Gangs of New York*, dir. Martin Scorsese (2002) – Silver 407
- Feb. 9        *Dead End*, dir. William Wyler (1937) – Silver 407
- Feb. 16      *The Heiress*, dir. William Wyler (1949) – Silver 407
- Feb. 23      *The Age of Innocence*, dir. Martin Scorsese (1993) – Silver 407
- Mar. 2        *The Jazz Singer*, dir. Alan Crosland (1927) – Silver 407
- Mar. 23      *Looking for Langston*, dir. Isaac Julien (1988) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Mar. 30      *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, dir. Wayne Wang (1989) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Apr. 6        *Manhattan*, dir. Woody Allen (1979) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Apr. 13      *Do the Right Thing*, dir. Spike Lee (1989) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Apr. 20      *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, dir. Mike Nichols (2003) – Palladium Multipurpose Room
- Apr. 27      *Angels in America: Perestroika*, dir. Mike Nichols (2003) – Palladium Multipurpose Room