

## WRITING NEW YORK

Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30–10:45 a.m.  
13–19 University Place, Room 102

### Professor Bryan Waterman

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**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 (Bobst 437)  
004 W 4:55-6:10 (Silver 702)  
Lenora Warren  
lenorawarren@gmail.com

003 W 3:30-4:45 (Bobst 737)  
005 4:55-6:10 (Silver 821)  
Brendan Beirne  
brendan.beirne@nyu.edu

006 F 9:30-10:45 (Bobst 436)  
007 F 11:00-12:15 (Bobst 437)  
Meghan Hammond  
mmh340@nyu.edu

008 F 11:00-12:15 (Bobst 536S)  
009 F 12:30-1:45 (Bobst 737)  
Laura Fisher  
why\_laura@yahoo.com

**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)  
Henry James, *Washington Square* (Penguin)

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (Theatre Communications Group)  
Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns* (DC Comics)  
Philip Shaw, *Patti Smith's Horses* (Continuum)  
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)

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 13–15 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 25, April 20, and April 22 on the schedule below. Available at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst Library; for rent from Netflix; and for purchase at amazon.com or wherever DVDs are sold.

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.

### **Papers and Projects:**

The first paper assignment will be due in lecture on February 20. 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.
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.

**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.

**Staff Office Hours** are posted on the Blackboard site.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1

Jan. 21 Introduction

### WEEK 2

Jan. 26 **The Problem of Dutch New York**  
E. B. White, *Here is New York*; Washington Irving, *A History of New York*: Introduction by Elizabeth Bradley; “Account of the Author,” “To the Public,” and Chapter 1 (Blackboard).  
Jan. 28 Washington Irving, *A History of New York*, Chapter 2 (Blackboard).

### WEEK 3

Feb. 2 **The City on Stage**  
Royall Tyler, *The Contrast (EAD)*; Washington Irving, “Jonathan Oldstyle Letters” (Blackboard); Bryan Waterman, “The City on Stage” (Blackboard).  
Feb. 4 Mowatt, *Fashion (EAD)*; Baker, “Glance at New York” (Blackboard); Whitman, “The Old Bowery” (Blackboard).

### WEEK 4

Feb. 9 **City Prose and the Emergence of a Business Culture**  
Cyrus Patell, “New York, 1819–61”; Thomas Augst, “Melville, at Sea in the City”; Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” and “Loomings” from *Moby-Dick* (all on Blackboard).  
Feb. 11 Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*.

### WEEK 5

Feb. 16 **Cosmopolitan Vistas**  
Holiday: Presidents’ Day  
Feb. 18 Walt Whitman, Selections from the *New York Aurora* and *Leaves of Grass* (Blackboard); Thomas Bender, “New York as a Center of Difference” (Blackboard).  
Feb. 20 **First paper assignment due at 13–19 University Place and in the Digital Dropbox by 5:00 p.m.**

- WEEK 6**                    **The Novel of Manners I: James, Riis, Crane**  
Feb. 23                    Henry James, *Washington Square*.  
Feb. 25                    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.
- WEEK 7**                    **The Novel of Manners II: Edith Wharton**  
Mar. 2                    Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (read entire novel).  
Mar. 4                    F. Scott Fitzgerald, “My Lost City”; Sarah Wilson, “Beaufort’s Bastards” (both on Blackboard).
- WEEK 8**                    **The Novel of Manners III: Abraham Cahan**  
Mar. 9                    Eric Homberger, “City of Immigrants: Politics and the Popular Cultures of Tolerance” (Blackboard); Abraham Cahan, *Yekl*.
- Mar. 11                    **Midterm Examination. No section meetings this week.**
- Mar. 16-20                **SPRING BREAK**
- WEEK 9**                    **Ragtime and Jazz**  
Mar. 23                    E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*.  
**Proposals for final paper or project accepted starting now.**  
Mar. 25                    View before class: Crosland, *The Jazz Singer*.
- WEEKS 10 & 11 Enclaves**  
Mar. 30                    Melissa Bradshaw, “Performing Greenwich Village Bohemianism” (Blackboard); Djuna Barnes, “Greenwich Village As It Is” (Blackboard); Eugene O’Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (Blackboard).  
Apr. 1                    Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance (Blackboard); Thulani Davis, “The Harlem Renaissance.”
- Apr. 6                    Lin Yutang, *Chinatown Family*  
Apr. 8                    Lytle Shaw, “Whitman’s Urbanism”; Marshall Berman, “In the Forest of Symbols: Some Notes on Modernism in New York” and “Robert Moses: The Expressway World” (all on Blackboard); Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*.
- WEEK 12**                **Pop Arts: Music**  
Apr. 13                    Berman, “The 1960s: A Shout in the Street.” Listen before class: *The Velvet Underground and Nico*.  
Apr. 15                    Philip Smith. Listen before class: Patti Smith, *Horses*.
- Proposals for final paper or project due in section this week.**
- WEEK 13**                **Pop Arts: Film**  
Apr. 20                    Berman, Introduction to *New York Calling* (Blackboard); view before class: Woody Allen, *Manhattan*.  
Apr. 22                    View before class: Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing*.

**WEEK 14**

Apr. 27

**Apocalypse or Utopia?**

Robin Bernstein, “Staging Lesbian and Gay New York” (Blackboard);

Kushner, *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*.

Apr. 29

Kushner, *Angels in America: Perestroika*.

**WEEK 15**

May 4

**Conclusion**

Frank Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns*.

**Final paper or project due in lecture and in the Digital Dropbox.**

May 6

**Final Examination (8:00 a.m.)**