

ENGL-UA 59.001

# Digital Literary Studies: Novel Maps of New York

<http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

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MW 12:30–13:45

Office hours: 244 Greene, 506, T 15:00–16:30

## Course description

How does the geography of New York City shape the literature of New York City? Does the literature shape the geography in return? In this course, we aim to understand the spatiotemporality of the Big Apple through novels of the 20th and 21st centuries that recreate and react to it. Not only will we read spatially, however, but we will also create spatially. Students will make maps that launch projects of geographical storytelling as a mode of literary analysis. More concretely, we will build online data repositories and exhibits (using JavaScript and HTML) that synthesize our reading and mapping practices. No previous programming knowledge is needed, but a curiosity and interest in puzzle solving is. Novels we read may be from among those by Renata Adler, Julia Alvarez, Teju Cole, Don DeLillo, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tanwi Nandini Islam, Rachel Kushner, Imbolo Mbue, Claude McKay, Toni Morrison, Ann Petry, Ernesto Quiñonez, Kim Stanley Robinson, Tess Slesinger, Edith Wharton, and Colson Whitehead.

## Goals of the course

- to make you better readers and writers by
  - introducing you to
    - \* the history of literature as an object of study;
    - \* tools and resources provided by the university for literary study;
  - developing your skills in
    - \* reading literary texts carefully and analytically;
    - \* summarizing and presenting analytical texts in class;
    - \* engaging with opinions in academic writing;
    - \* writing short analytical essays about literary texts;
    - \* revising writing; and
    - \* writing analyses that are cogent and syncretic, making use of the various methods on hand.

## Books

- Cole, Teju. *Open City* (2009)

- Crockford, Douglas. *JavaScript: The Good Parts* (2008) [**optional**]
- Hardwick, Elizabeth. *Sleepless Nights* (1979)
- Haverbeke, Marijn. *Eloquent JavaScript* (2011)
- McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth* (1941)

## Course requirements & policies

### Assessment

#### Participation

**25%** The success of any course is directly related to the levels of engagement brought both by the instructor and the students. As such, class participation is vitally important. Similarly, though attendance is logically required for class participation, it is not sufficient. This class requires active participation both inside the classroom and outside.

You can miss up to three meetings without penalty, and you can use these opportunities tactically, to provide space and time to either fulfill other obligations or recuperate from the previous night. I don't care why you didn't come. I start to care with the fourth absence, and I start to require documentation. Repeated unexcused absence quickly gobbles up the class participation component of the grade and begins to threaten your ability to even *pass* the course.

In a discussion-oriented class, "active participation" involves the following components. All of these are necessary to receive maximum points for participation:

- being in class on time,
- arriving having done the reading for that day,
- having considered the reading and found points of entry into class discussion via questions about specific passages,
- participating in class discussion in ways that build upon contributions from others, and
- refraining from the use of electronic devices.

#### First essay

**15%** The first essay will be in response to a prompt. It should be 900–1200 words long.

#### Second essay

**10%** The second essay features a reading of a passage from a work we have read for class. You should show the passage's importance to the text as a whole. This essay should also be 900–1200 words long. It should also include, marked on the page, the various "templates" (in the Graff and Birkenstein sense) you make use of. It should be handed in by 5 p.m. on the due date in my mailbox on the second floor of 244 Greene St.

#### Second essay rewrite

**10%** The rewrite of the second essay is an opportunity to build upon the second essay by incorporating some of the additional texts you have been exposed to in the presentations. This rewrite should be 1200–1500 words long, and it should also feature the aforementioned templates.

## Presentation

**20%** Throughout the semester, secondary texts have been paired with with primary reading for that day. At the beginning of the semester, you will choose a secondary text and present on it later in the semester. The presentation should be 10–15 minutes long. A good presentation will provide context for the secondary text itself, feature a thorough summary of the secondary text and its argument, and close with links between the secondary text and that day’s primary text. Slides, etc., are not necessary. The presentation will be accompanied by a short document (800 words) laying out the same information as the presentation did to be turned in at the same time as the presentation.

The texts for the presentations will not be easy to read, understand, or even summarize. These presentations will, hence, require time to prepare. As with any assignment, make use of office hours to help clarify any questions you may have.

## Final project

**20%** The final essay is a critical work on one of the primary texts we have read. It should build on the reading techniques from the first two essays as well as make use of at least one of the secondary texts from the course. A short précis of the essay (up to 600 words) is due two weeks earlier. It should be the essay in miniature—a prose outline, illustrating the essay’s structure, context, and argument.

## Policies

### Assignments

The assignment instructions, though detailed in the syllabus, may be enhanced or supplemented during the course. If you have any questions about an assignment, you should ask for clarification early. The assignments are due on the dates noted in the syllabus.

The writing can be submitted electronically, *except* for the second essay and its rewrite, which must be submitted in paper form. I prefer 2up (two pages per sheet), two-sided printing. Documents should be formatted sanely: 12pt type and double-spaced.

Late assignments jeopardize both your and my rhythms in the class, so they will be penalized. I will give you feedback and will happily discuss any work with you, but grades should be considered final.

### Attendance

As indicated above, attendance is required. Three absences will be excused without supplemental documentation, and I encourage you to use these tactically. Catching up is your responsibility.

Subsequent absence requires formal documentation. Otherwise it begins to harm your final grade. Though class participation is only part of the final grade, extreme absenteeism (more than six meetings missed) will put your ability to pass the course at risk.

Please show up on time to class, as well.

### Electronics

Our time in class is meant as a sanctuary from the distractions of the rest of the world. Additionally, our class relies on discussion and engagement, and the front of a laptop screen is a brilliant shield behind which a student can hide, even unintentionally. During our meetings, then, there can be no use of electronic devices. Please also set whatever devices you have but aren’t using to silent mode.

### Communication

Communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process, and this course depends on clear communication in both directions. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, the best course of action is to come visit me during my office hours as noted at the top of this document. If your questions, etc., cannot wait until then, then clearly you can also email me. I should respond within 48 hours, but please write again if I do not.

This is a new course, meaning that there will be even more unfinished edges ready to scratch someone than in a typical course. We have a collective goal of learning, however, so if the unfinished edges get to be overwhelming, I'll adjust the parameters of the course appropriately. I'm not out to catch you, nor is this course a process of grotesque punishment. Please don't treat it as such.

Once more, with feeling: *communication is vitally important to the pedagogical process*. If you have concerns or worries, please let me know about them sooner rather than later.

## Disabilities

If you have a disability, you should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities ([mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu); 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, 212.998.4980), which can arrange for things like extra time for assignments. Please inform me *at the beginning of the semester* if you need any special accommodations regarding the assignments.

## Academic integrity

Please look at NYU's full statement on academic integrity<sup>1</sup>. Any instance of academic dishonesty will result in an F and will be reported to the relevant dean for disciplinary action. Remember that plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intention. Know what it is, and don't do it.

## Syllabus

This syllabus is available at the course webpage<sup>2</sup>. A pdf version is also available<sup>3</sup>. The source code and documentation for this document is available at its Github repository<sup>4</sup>. The syllabus is ©2017, Moacir P. de Sá Pereira. It is licensed as Creative Commons 3.0 by-nc-sa, giving you permission to share and alter it in any way, as long as it is for non-commercial purposes, maintains the license, and gives proper attribution. Further information regarding the license, the history of the document, and influences can be viewed at the Github repository.

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<sup>1</sup><http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>

<sup>2</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

<sup>3</sup><http://moacir.com/courses-nyu/novel-maps-of-ny-2017/syllabus.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><http://github.com/muziejus/novel-maps-of-ny-2017>

## Schedule

Required readings indicated with quotation marks (“”) will be available as pdfs. *They should be printed out for use in class.* The texts for presentations, save the Du Bois, are also available as pdfs.

The list of references at the end of the pdf version of the syllabus provides bibliographic details for all the texts for the course.

### 1. Who is it?

In the first section of this course, we begin by thinking about how literature can describe a person in the world and how that has changed over time.

- Monday, 23 Jan: Introductions.
- Wednesday, 25 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* through ch. 6.
- Monday, 30 Jan: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* to end. Presentation: Du Bois, “Of our Spiritual Strivings” and “The Sorrow Songs.”
- Wednesday, 1 Feb: From S/Z: “Evaluation,” “Interpretation,” “Reading, Forgetting,” “Step by Step,” “The Starred Text,” “The Broken Text,” “How Many Readings?,” “(1),” “(2),” “(3),” and “The Five Codes”; *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 25.
- Monday, 6 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* through ch. 77. Presentation: White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.”
- Wednesday, 8 Feb: *The Book of Margery Kempe* to end.
- Thursday, 9 Feb; Friday, 10 Feb: Carolyn Dinshaw **plenary**.
- Monday, 13 Feb: **Library visit**; *They Say / I Say* to p. 105.
- Wednesday, 15 Feb: *The Tempest* through Act III. Presentation: Foucault, “Preface” and “Las Meninas.” **First essay due.**
- Monday, 20 Feb: **No class.**
- Wednesday, 22 Feb: *The Tempest* to end. Presentation: “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

### 2. Life during wartime

Next, we look to the role literature plays in the scope of war.

- Monday, 27 Feb: “You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming;” *They Say / I Say* to p. 144.
- Wednesday, 1 Mar: “Prayer in the Furnace” & “War Stories.”
- Thursday, 2 Mar; Friday 3 Mar: Patrick Deer **plenary**.
- Monday, 6 Mar: From *U. S. A.*: “Newsreel XIV,” “Emperor of the Caribbean,” “The Camera Eye (20),” “Newsreel XXII,” “The Camera Eye (30),” “Randolph Bourne,” “Newsreel XXIII,” “Newsreel XXIX,” “The Camera Eye (36),” “Meester Veelson,” “Newsreel XXX,” “Newsreel XXIV,” “The House of Morgan,” “Newsreel XXXV,” “The Camera Eye (39),” “Newsreel XLIII,” “The Body of an American,” “Newsreel LXVIII,” “The Camera Eye (51).” Presentation: Martí, “Our America.”
- Wednesday, 8 Mar: *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*.
- Friday, 10 Mar: **Second essay due** in my mailbox in 244 Greene St. by 5 p.m.
- Monday, 13 Mar: **Spring Break.**

### 3. Around the world

What does it even mean to speak of “English” literature? Is this distinction important?

- Monday, 20 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* through p. 125. Presentation: Dimock, “Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents.”
- Wednesday, 22 Mar: *Green-Eyed Thieves* to end. Presentation: Cheah, “Missed Encounters: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature, and Postcoloniality.”
- Monday, 27 Mar: *Migritude* through p. 72.
- Wednesday, 29 Mar: *Migritude* to end.
- Thursday, 30 Mar; Friday, 31 Mar: Jini Kim Watson **plenary**.

### 4. Who will survive in America?

Finally, how does the world reconstruct itself in an American milieu?

- Monday, 3 Apr: “The White House,” “A Capitalist at Dinner,” “The Tropics in New York,” “If We Must Die,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “The Weary Blues,” “White Man,” and “Advertisement for the Waldorf-Astoria.” Presentation: Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism.” **Second essay rewrite due.**
- Wednesday, 5 Apr: “kitchenette building,” “obituary for a living lady,” “the mother,” “the soft man,” “when Mrs. Martin’s Booker T.,” and *Riot*. Presentation: Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village.”
- Monday, 10 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections). Presentation: Fernández Retamar, “Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America.”
- Wednesday, 12 Apr: *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (selections). Presentation: Anzaldúa, “La Prieta.”
- Monday, 17 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* through p. 59. Presentation: Cheng, “The Melancholy of Race.”
- Wednesday, 19 Apr: *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* to end. Presentation: Berlant “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency).”
- Monday, 24 Apr: “Native Sons” & “A Confession.” Presentation: Baldwin, “Me and My House.”
- Wednesday, 26 Apr: “Waterfalls” & “The Call of Blood”
- Thursday, 27 Apr; Friday 28 Apr: Jess Row **plenary. Final précis due.**
- Monday, 1 May: Debrief.
- Wednesday, 3 May: **No class.**
- Wednesday, 10 May: **Final essay due.**

## References

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- Baldwin, James. "Me and My House . . ." *Harper's Magazine*, November 1955, 54–61.
- . "Stranger in the Village." *Harper's Magazine*, October 1953, 42–48.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. 1970. New York: Hill / Wang, 1974.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 253–264. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
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- . "obituary for a living lady." In *Blacks*, 34–35.
- . *Riot*. In *Blacks*, 469–480. 1969. Chicago: Third World Press, 1969.
- . "the mother." In *Blacks*, 21–22.
- . "the soft man." In *Blacks*, 25.
- . "when Mrs. Martin's Booker T." In *Blacks*, 24.
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- Cheng, Anne Anlin. "The Melancholy of Race." *The Kenyon Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 49–61.
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- . "The Sorrow Songs." In Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 187–196.
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- Foucault, Michel. "Las Meninas." In *Order of Things*, 3–16.
- . "Preface." In *Order of Things*, xv–xxiv.
- . *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. 1966. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
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- . “The Weary Blues.” In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 50.
- . “White Man.” In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 194–195.
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- . “The White House.” In *Complete poems*, 148–149.
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## Calendar

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>Who Is It?</i>				
23 Jan	Introductions	Johnson		
30 Jan	Johnson; P: Du Bois (Bethany)	Barthes & Kempe;		
6 Feb	Kempe; P: White (Hannah)	Kempe	Dinshaw plenary	Dinshaw plenary
13 Feb	Library visit; Graff & Birkenstein	Shakespeare; P: Foucault (Alex);	<b>1st essay due</b>	
20 Feb	<b>No class</b>	Shakespeare; P: Benjamin (Elizabeth)		
<i>Life during Wartime</i>				
27 Feb	Fallon; Graff & Birkenstein	Klay	Deer plenary	Deer plenary
6 Mar	Dos Passos; P: Martí (Marco)	Roy		<b>2nd essay due</b>
13 Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>			
<i>Around the World</i>				
20 Mar	Coovadia; P: Dimock (Kaity)	Coovadia; P: Cheah (Tim)		
27 Mar	Patel	Patel	Watson plenary	Watson plenary; <b>2nd essay rewrite due</b>
<i>Who Will Survive in America?</i>				
3 Apr	Hughes & McKay; P: Césaire (James)	Brooks; P: Baldwin (Caroline)		
10 Apr	Moraga; P: Fernández Retamar (Debbie)	Moraga; P: Anzaldúa (Trishita)		
17 Apr	Rankine; P: Cheng (Ally)	Rankine; P: Berlant (Emily)		
24 Apr	Row; P: Baldwin2 (Elia)	Row	Row plenary	Row plenary; <b>Final précis due</b>
1 May	Debrief	<b>No class</b>		
8 May		<b>Final essay due</b>		