American Literature (Master Year 1 / Spring)

Master in English and American Language, Literature and History / Faculty of Liberal Arts

Introduction

This course proposes to look at the fictionalization of a recent event in American history: the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It will question the idea of representation in works that paradoxically address it only through avoidance and circumvention, adopting what will be referred to as an asymptotic approach, in that it brings us closer to reality, all the while revealing the existence of a gap. The course will be based in particular on the study of two complete works: Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) and Falling Man by Don DeLillo (2007). Extracts from other novels in this sub-genre will complete the overview.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:
• Understand the American literary landscape surrounding 9/11
• Be able to identify some of the ways in which fiction can attempt to represent recent history as well as question the very idea of representation
• Have acquired the skills and vocabulary necessary to closely analyze a literary text

Admission

Prerequisite

Prerequisites training

Everyone with an interest for contemporary literature is welcome in this class. The two novels to be discussed should have been read before the beginning of the seminar. Some experience with the method of textual analysis would be useful.

Program

Methods of Instruction

Each session will start with a few minutes of lecture about the topic at hand that day. Then a student will present a close reading of a passage illustrating the notion at stake. The discussion will then be opened to the rest of the group to supplement the presentation.

Duration

1 semester

Teaching languages

- English

Conditions of submission

If you need more information about this course, kindly send an email to: incomingdri@icp.fr

Assessment and Final Grade

Oral presentation (close reading): 50%
In-class paper (essay question): 50%

Course Requirements

Students need to have read the two novels to be discussed before the beginning of the seminar. For each session, they need to come to class prepared to discuss the excerpt that will be presented that day.
Oral presentations (close reading)
At each session, a designated student will present a close reading of the excerpt to be discussed that day. The distribution of assignments will take place during the first session. Students are expected to offer a structured (introduction, clear outline and conclusion) and detailed (any idea developed needs to be supported by a variety of micro readings) analysis of the passage. The requirements will be presented in the first session. The form of the presentation (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation…) will also be assessed.
In-class paper (essay question)
To conclude the course, the students will be given two hours in class to answer an essay question about one (or both) of the novels. The detailed requirements for this paper will be presented in the first session. Both content and form will be assessed.
Class participation
Participation is valued as a meaningful contribution in the classroom. Students are expected to always come to class prepared to react to their classmates' presentations, to offer suggestions and feedback, and to engage with the material as thoroughly as if they were presenting that day.