

Unreal City: Urban Environments in Literature and Film ENG368, Spring 2020

*Under the brown fog of a winter dawn
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many
I had not thought death had undone so many
--T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land*

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Office/Hours: Skolkovo 2.07, Monday 14:00 – 16:00 or by appointment

As places where the best and worst parts of humanity converge, cities are huge, unwieldy signifiers capable of containing a multitude of meanings—as centers of cultural and economic production, as social experiments, as the sources of moral decay, as breeding grounds for crime, and as sites of multicultural exchange. Using novels, films, poems, and short essays, we will explore the significance of the city in English language literature, primarily focusing on Paris, London, New York, and Los Angeles but with excursions all over the globe and to urban landscapes that are entirely invented. Naturally, this course should promote reflection on the multiple cultural and social meanings of the city we are presently in. The three novels on the syllabus will be supplemented with brief readings provided by the instructor and selected films, including Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris*, Martin Scorsese’s *The Gangs of New York* and Christopher Nolan’s *The Dark Knight* trilogy.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Perform “close reading”—reading that is sensitive to the nuances of language, the importance of form and genre, and the use of literary devices.
- Interpret literary texts according to three critical approaches: Formal, Historical, and Cultural.
- Demonstrate advanced proficiency in written English.
- Write short critical papers about literary works that consist of a strong, original thesis and supporting evidence from the text.
- Deliver honest, constructive feedback to peers during peer review and workshop sessions.
- Thoughtfully revise essays based on incorporation of peer and instructor feedback.

Required Texts:

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

James Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*

Supplemental readings provided by the instructor

Required Films:

Midnight in Paris

Gangs of New York

The Dark Knight

Assessment:

- 10% - Quizzes
- 15% - Group Discussions
- 15% - Blog contributions
- 30% - Short papers (3)
- 30% - Final Paper

Attendance:

Regular and timely attendance is essential to doing well in this class. You are counted absent if you miss more than twenty minutes of any given class period. You are allowed 4 “free” absences for the entire semester. Each subsequent absence will result in the deduction of 1 point from your final grade. The only absences that are excused are those that have been documented and approved by the Joint Program office.

Late Papers:

Short Assignments – All papers are due by midnight on the day listed on the syllabus. Papers submitted by the deadline will be graded and returned to you promptly and may be revised and resubmitted once for a better grade. Papers submitted after the deadline will be graded whenever I get to it and may not be revised.

Final Project – The deadline for the final project is absolute. In extraordinary circumstances, requests for an extension may be made *in writing* at least *one week* before the deadline. Just because a request is made does not mean it will be granted.

Make-up Work:

If a student receives a failing grade in the course, he/she must complete any blocking assignments that are failing or incomplete. These assignments must be completed during the designated make-up period and will be assessed by the course instructor.

If the course instructor determines that the student has still not passed the course, the student will complete an additional make-up assignment that will be assessed by a three-member panel. This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis to determine whether the student has demonstrated all the skills they should have acquired during the course (see Course Description).

Electronics:

Unless use is authorized during group activities, laptops must be put away during class. Phones and tablets may be used as dictionaries, to access assigned readings, and to record lectures but must be kept silent. Suspected inappropriate use of electronics will result in points deducted from your participation grade.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to observe the following basic rules of classroom decorum:

- You must come to class on time.
- When the instructor or another student is talking in front of the class, you should not be talking.
- If discussion is happening in class, you should not be conducting side conversations with your friends.

- If you find yourself becoming sleepy during class, you are permitted to leave the room for a few minutes to collect yourself. Under no circumstances should your head be on your desk. Blatant violations of these rules (talking during student presentations, excessive lateness, sleeping during class) may result in an unexcused absence or deductions from your participation grade.

Academic Honesty:

This course seeks to uphold the Joint Program's commitment to ensuring academic honesty. All work submitted in this class must be the student's own. Assignments calling for the use of outside sources must contain both a Reference page and in-text citations or footnotes. APA and MLA are the standard citation formats for this course. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Joint Program administration.

Communication:

Students should check their nes.ru email accounts regularly, as important information about the course (emergency cancellations, deadline changes) may be communicated in that way. Email is also the best way to reach me, though you should understand that I generally do not respond to email after 22:00 or before 9:00. If you have a question about an assignment, you should not wait until the night before it is due to ask.

The Writing and Communication Center

The WCC is a free student support service designed to assist you with all your writing needs during your time in the program (and even after you graduate). Consultants (both English and Russian speakers) are available to meet with you for 45-minute sessions. You may sign up for a consultation using the "WCC" tab on my.nes.ru. Limited walk-in hours are also available. For further information, see the WCC's website at wcc.nes.ru and follow the WCC's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/neswcc).

Schedule (*subject to change*):

Homework assignments and required readings are listed on the date they are due. All written assignments are due online by 23:59 pm on the date listed.

Week 1 (Jan 10 – 13)

W – Introduction

F – City vs. Country (selected readings on my.nes)

Week 2 (Jan 16 – 20)

W – Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, Ch. 1 – "European Russia"

F – Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, Ch. 1 – "European Russia"

Week 3 (Jan 23 – 27)

W – Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, Ch. 3 – "Moscow! Moscow!"

F – Allen, *Midnight in Paris*

Week 4 (Jan 30 – Feb 3)

W – no class

F – no class

Week 5 (Feb 6 – 10)

W – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book I Ch. 1 – Book II Ch. 5

F – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II Ch. 6 – Ch. 10 (Group Discussion)

Week 6 (Feb 13 – 17)

W – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II Ch. 11 – Ch. 20

F – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II Ch. 21 – 24 (Group Discussion)

Short Essay 1 Due

Week 7 (Feb 20 – 24)

W – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III Ch. 1 – 10 (Group Discussion)

F – Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III Ch. 11 - end

Week 8 (Feb 27 – Mar 3)

W – Scorsese, *Gangs of New York*

F – Scorsese, *Gangs of New York*, Anbinder, “From Famine to Five Points” (Group Discussion)

Week 9 (Mar 6 – 10)

W – Federal holiday – no class

F – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 1-5

Short Essay 2 Due

Week 10 (Mar 13 – 17)

W – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 6-9 (Group Discussion)

F – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 10-11

Week 11 (Mar 20 – 24)

W – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 12-15 (Group Discussion)

F – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 16-17

Week 12 (Mar 27 – 31)

Consultation Week (no classes)

Short Essay 3 Due

Week 13 (Apr 3 – 7)

W – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 16-24 (Group Discussion)

F – Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Ch. 25-end

Week 14 (Apr 10 – 14)

W – Nolan, *The Dark Knight*

F – Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (Group Discussion)

Final Project Proposal Due

Week 15 (Apr 17 – 21)

W – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part One

F – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Calendar 1952 – Calendar 1953 (Group Discussion)

Week 16 (Apr 24 – 28)

W – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part 2 Ch. 14-23

F – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part 2 Ch. 24-30 (Group Discussion)

Rough Draft of Final Project due (Optional)

Week 17 (May 1 – 5)

Spring Holidays (no class)

Week 18 (May 8 – 12)

W – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part 2 Ch. 31-Part 4 Ch. 57

F – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part 4 Ch. 58-64

Week 19 (May 15 – 19)

W – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Part 4 Ch. 65-77

F – Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, Calendar 1958 – end

Final Projects due

Week 20 (May 22 – 26)

Exam Week (no classes)