**Geoff Dyer**

**Spring 2020**

**Engl 402 Narrative Composition**

Tuesday: 2-4:20pm WPH 200

(Office Hours at THH 430: Tuesday 12.45-1.45pm, or by appointment)

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Each week we will do 2 things:

1.Study a particular book or books by the authors listed below

2. Workshop pieces by students in the class.

I anticipate that there will be time for each student to submit two 3-5 page pieces in the course of the semester (though this will depend on the final number of students enrolled). Each of these pieces will be presented to and workshopped by the rest of the group. At the end of the semester one of these pieces should be re-submitted, fully revised and reworked – and possibly expanded. Or an entirely new piece can be submitted (See below under ‘Writing Requirements’).

NB: In some of the weeks listed below I have included extra books and/or essays in brackets that you might find helpful and interesting in addition to the main ones. Reading these additional titles is not mandatory.

**Pieces to be workshopped are to be submitted via email by 2pm of the Monday before each class.**

(This syllabus may be revised)

**Week 1: (January 14):**

Preliminary discussions. Outline what we’ll be doing and decide on running order for workshops

**Week 2: (January 21)**

**Edith Wharton: The Age of Innocence**

To be workshopped:

**Week3: (January 28)**

**Jean Rhys: *Voyage in the Dark***

(See also*Good Morning, Midnight*and *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie)*

To be workshopped:

**Week 4: (February 4)**

**Evan S Connell: *Mrs. Bridge***

(See also *Mr. Bridge*)

To be workshopped:

**Week 5: (February 11):**

**Eve Babitz: *Slow Days, Fast Company***

To be workshopped:

**Week 6: (February 18)**

**Annie Dillard: *Teaching a Stone to Talk***

To be workshopped:

**Week 7: (February 25)**

**V S Naipaul: *Among the Believers***

To be workshopped:

**Week 8: (March 3)**

**Ryszard Kapuscinski: *The Soccer War***

(See also: *The Shadow of the Sun* and *Another Day of Life*)

To be workshopped:

**Week 9: (March 10):**

**David Foster Wallace: A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again**

To be workshopped:

**Week 10: (March 17)**

**No class**

**Week 11: (March 24)**

**Nicholson Baker: *The Mezzanine* and *U and I***

(See also: John Updike: stories or one of the ‘Rabbit’ books)

To be workshopped:

**Week 12: (March 31)**

**Denis Johnson: Train Dreams** and **Jesus’ Son**

To be workshopped:

**Week 13: (April 7)**

**Martin Amis: *Money***

(See also: *The Moronic Inferno* and *Time’s Arrow)*

To be workshopped:

**Week 14: (April 14)**

**Ottessa Moshfegh: *My Year of Rest and Relaxation***

To be workshopped:

W**eek 15: (April 21)**

**Rachel Cusk: *Outline***

(See also *Kudos, Transit)*

To be workshopped:

**Week 16: (April 28)**

**Conclusions**

Writing requirements: A paper of 12-20 pages either on one or more of the authors read, or on one or more of the issues raised in the course, or a piece of creative narrative composition demonstrating an awareness of or a way of resolving some of the questions/issues raised in the course of the semester.

Also each week each student needs to hand in:

1. At the beginning of each class 2 paragraphs or so about the assigned reading (so, for example, on January 21 this brief paper would be on Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*)
2. Short response to the pieces workshopped the week before. This can also take the form of marked-up copies of the pieces themselves. These are to be handed in during class the following week.