MOURNING OR MELANCHOLIA

How have creative writers, thinkers, and artists responded imaginatively to the experience of loss? How have their responses varied by historical moment, culture, political outlook, gender, genre, or individual sensibility? This course will consider such questions through the lens of texts from across the globe and more than two thousand years. Pursuing the question of loss through love, war, politics, the mind, time, and everything in between, we will find ourselves continually coming back to the same vexed question: What is it about loss that makes it so rich in imaginative gains? In the process of exploring such questions, students in this course will gain familiarity with the history of thinking about and representing death and loss in European and non-European cultures, and will develop techniques for analyzing theoretical arguments, artistic texts, and contemporary social phenomena.

Required Course Materials (Available for Purchase Online)
Denise Riley, *Say Something Back & Time Lived, Without its Flow* (NYRB Books)
James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (Vintage Classics)
Other course materials, including excerpts from *They Say, I Say* (Graff and Birkenstein) and *Style* (Williams and Bizup) to be posted on Canvas the week before they are due to be discussed.

Course objectives
In addition to developing your understanding of what “mourning and melancholia” might entail, this writing-intensive summer course will attempt to:

1. Contribute to your “writing toolkit” by focusing on your individual writing process and encouraging you to examine, expand, and reinvent it where useful;
2. Develop your confidence as a reader and interpreter of texts in a variety of genres (scholarly and non-scholarly);
3. Enable you to construct a compelling argument by identifying a problem, making a defensible claim, supporting that claim with evidence and warrants, and successfully communicating a motive for your writing and your broader intellectual endeavors;
4. Allow you to approach writing from a variety of disciplines with confidence and excitement;
5. Cultivate your creativity and empower you as a persuasive, engaging, and lucid writer with a unique voice
Assignments and Assessment

Grading Distribution:
Essay 1 (3-4 pages) 15%
Essay 2 (4-5 pages) 25%
Essay 3 (8-10 pages) 30%
(A 1-page research proposal with a working bibliography will be worth 5%; a peer review and partial draft will be worth 10%; the paper itself will be worth 15%)
Final presentation 15%
Participation 15%

Due Dates:
Essay 1, draft: Thursday, July 15, 12pm EST
**Essay 1, final:** Monday, July 19, 12pm EST
Essay 2, draft: Thursday, July 22, 12pm EST
**Essay 2, final:** Tuesday July 27, 12pm EST
Essay 3, prospectus and bibliography: Friday, July 30, 11.59pm EST
Essay 3, partial draft: Tuesday, August 3, 11.59pm EST
Essay 3, full draft: Saturday, August 7, 11.59pm EST
**Essay 3, final:** Wednesday, August 11, 11.59pm EST
Oral presentations: Friday, August 13, in class

A note on deadlines: Please note that the deadline for the drafts of Essays 1, 2, and 3 will be extremely strict: due to our compressed schedule, I will aim to have your drafts back to you before start of class the next day. If your paper is not in at 12pm EST, I will not return it until the weekend, which will significantly cut into your revision time.

Course requirements and policies

1. **Attendance.** Attend all classes. The discussion and workshop elements that are at the center of this course cannot be made up, so attendance is vital. Please be on time. We will take a 5-minute break in the middle of class. I am quite happy for you to eat or drink during class, so long as the item under consumption is not your main source of attention.

2. **Preparation and Participation.** Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and participate in writing exercises and workshops. Make notes on what you read, even if only in the margins. In-class peer revision will provide you with valuable opportunities to give and receive feedback on writing assignments. Aside from the final presentation you will make during our final class, I will also ask you to **kick off our discussion of the text** in one of our classes. This will be part of your participation grade.

3. **Remote Learning and Zoom Etiquette:** The live discussion sessions will be held through Zoom. To access live sessions, click “Zoom” on the left side of our class’ Canvas page. Once you click the link, you may be prompted to install a small application necessary for Zoom. Once you do so, you will be taken directly into the Zoom meeting room. You can then use the audio and video settings menu (bottom left corner) to ensure the correct input/output sources are chosen. For more detailed information of Zoom operation, refer to the user guide in the Technical Support page in the "Modules" tab on Canvas. Remember: a headset with microphone is recommended in the live sessions, this will help
reduce audio feedback from participants. Additionally, be sure you are in a quiet location for the live sessions allowing you to focus on the discussion. Unless your internet connection is struggling, I ask that you keep your camera on. I would also like you to keep yourself unmuted.

4. Writing. Each 114 student will produce 15-19 pages of polished writing (not including drafts). This will take the form of three major papers. The sequence of papers teaches the most fundamental skills early in the semester and then refines and augments those skills in more complex essay assignments later in the term. The course will also require the submission of drafts of each paper for workshopping, by peers and with the instructor. Think of drafts as the best possible piece of writing you can do at the time. The stronger the draft, the more helpful will be the feedback you receive. The assignments are as follows:

Essay 1: Close Reading Analysis (3-4 pages)
The foundational skill of academic writing is the ability to derive larger meanings from the smallest parts of a text (written, visual, a data set, &c. The goal of this assignment is to have you engage a theoretical or literary work at the level of its language and/or argument: locating a meaningful problem, articulating a claim that takes a stance on that problem, and analyzing relevant textual details to defend that stance. Students will have the option of writing on either a theoretical or literary text for the first assignment.

Essay 2: Lens Essay (4-5 pages)
One of the most productive things you can do as you sharpen your thinking on an issue is enter into conversation with a new perspective or voice. In our second assignment, you will identify the ways in which an encounter with one text (keep in mind the broad definition of “text” we used above) amplifies, complicates, deepens, or challenges understanding of another text. We will be using a text as a lens for considering another, and for considering our own writing.

Essay 3: Researched Argument (8-10 pages)
Researched arguments can take several forms. You can write an essay in which you place your reading of a text or your understanding of a problem in conversation with the accounts of a few other scholars. Or you might choose to write a “text in context” style essay in which you relate a text to the culture that produced it or to larger philosophies about one of its themes. Whichever approach you choose, you should construct a bibliography of secondary literature to put your own thoughts in conversation with the work of scholars in the field. In this way, the research essay will prepare you for the kind of high-level thinking required by any academic field, and help you practice the conventions of academic writing.

Assignment 4: Presentation (5-10 minutes)
The final assignment (2–3pp) will draw on concepts from the course to offer an opinion (op-ed) about an aspect of contemporary culture relevant to the course. On the last day of class, students will give brief presentations on their final assignments; these presentations will count towards your participation grade. Written texts of your op-eds are to be submitted at the end of class as part of your participation grade.

Expectations

Essay Submission
Please use the standard page setup: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, numbered pages. Papers should be submitted by email to me in MS Word format (please, no pdfs: I’ll be commenting using tracked
changes). All assignments are due at noon on the day listed. Late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day late.

Academic Honesty
One of the goals of this course is to help you understand how to use published research – the final product of someone’s hard work – to support your own thinking. Plagiarism, in brief, is the submission of work that contains uncited instances of language and ideas that are not your own. Any instance of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, such as unauthorized collaboration, will not be tolerated. If you are unsure about how to cite something, or have any other related doubts, it is better to ask me than to risk intellectual dishonesty. Please also acknowledge any legitimate help you have received on your papers in a footnote – these will most likely be from the Writing Center. Feedback from a friend or classmate also counts! You can consult Yale’s policies on academic honesty here.

Access
If you need some form of accommodation not already provided, have a medical condition, or have any other medically related information that you feel I should know, please inform me immediately either in person after class or, more privately, in an email. Additional information and resources are available at the website of Student Accessibility Services. You can always ask them to contact me directly on your behalf, too.

Writing Support
Yale’s Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning offers a range of assistance to student writers. They are there to support you, and I encourage all of you to make use of their services and expertise. You can sign up for online tutoring at this link. You need to upload a draft through this same scheduler at least 90 minutes before the tutoring session, so that your Writing Partner can read it beforehand. Drop-in session times are: Thursdays 6:30-8pm EDT; Saturdays 1:30-3:00pm EDT; Mondays 11:30am-1:00pm EDT.

Schedule of Meetings

This schedule is subject to modification as we work our way through the semester.

UNIT ONE: MODELS AND MYTHS

Monday, July 12
Course Introduction and Syllabus Review
Handout: Introduction to Key Terms
Handout: Essay 1
Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, “The Five Stages of Grief” (book chapter)
Sigmund Freud, “On Transience” (article)
Exercise: Close Reading Claims
Handout: Finding a Good Essay Question (Poorvu Center)

Wednesday, July 14
Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (article)
Virgil, Georgics, Book IV (poem/myth)
Discussion: Summarizing vs Analyzing
Thursday, July 15  
ROUGH DRAFT OF ESSAY 1 DUE, 12PM EDT

Friday, July 16
Terrance Hayes, “‘Ars Poetica for the Ones Like Us” (poem)  
Peter Sacks, The English Elegy, Chapter 1, “Interpreting the Genre: The Elegy and the Work of Mourning” (book chapter)

Introduction to Introductions  
Handout: Introductions (Poorvu Center)

Strong Body Paragraphs and Their Structure  
Handout: Paragraphs (Poorvu Center)  
Peer Review Workshop, Paper 1 (paragraph-level revision)

UNIT TWO: CHALLENGES TO THE NORMATIVE MODEL

Monday, July 19
Denise Riley, “A Part Song” (poem)  
Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Rites for Cousin Vit” (poem)  
Lorna Dee Cervantes, “Poema Para Los Californios Muertos”  
Melissa F. Zeiger: Beyond Mourning (book chapter)

Setting Our Terms of Discussion

Exercise: Placing Sources in Conversation  
Handout: They Say, I Say  
Handout: Conversation Verbs and Clauses (Poorvu Center)  
Handout: Essay 2

ESSAY 1 (FINAL DRAFT) DUE, 12PM EDT

Wednesday, July 21
Denise Riley, Time Lived, Without Its Flow (memoir)  
Exercise: Developing Transitions  
Handout: The Segue in Scholarly Conversations  
Handout: Stitching—Signal Words (Poorvu Center)

Writing Skills Lecture—Changing the Lens

Thursday, July 22
ROUGH DRAFT OF ESSAY 2 DUE, 12PM EDT

Friday, July 23
Yiyun Li, “Do Not Let Mother Dear Find Us” (novel excerpt);  
Dear Friend, From My Life, I Write To You in Your Life (memoir);  
“The Reason Why” (story)

Peer Review Workshop, Paper 2 (introductions)
A Glance at Conclusions
Handout: Conclusions (Poorvu Center)

UNIT THREE: GRIEVING IMAGES

Monday, July 26
André Bazin, “Ontology of the Photographic Image” (article)
Francesca Mari, “Mourning in Cyberspace” (article)

Exercise: What Motivates Us?
Picking A Research Topic and Developing a Proposal
Handout: Motivating Moves (Poorvu Center)

Tuesday, July 27
ESSAY 2 (FINAL DRAFT) DUE, 12PM EDT

Wednesday, July 28
Alice Munro, “Lichen” (story)

7:15-8:15pm Library Visit: Identifying Sources
Handout: Essay 3
Handout: Working with Sources (Poorvu Center)

Friday, July 30
Nan Z. Da, “The Angelus” (essay)
Sheila Heti, “A Common Seagull” (memoir)

Writing Skills Lecture—Establishing Your Voice
Handout: “And Yet”—Distinguishing What You Say

Building the Research Paragraph
Handout: Research Paragraphs (Poorvu Center)
Writing Time and Individual Instructor Consultations

RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY
DUE, 11.59PM EDT

UNIT FOUR: LOVE AND LOSS

Monday, August 2
Kālidāsa, Meghadūta (poem)
Propertius, Elegies 1.1 and 4.7 (poems)
Su Xiaoxiao, “Song of the West Tomb” (poem)
Angelina Weld Grimké, “El Beso” (poem)
Rachel Eliza Griffiths, “Aubade to Langston” (poem)
Ocean Vuong, “Aubade with Burning City” (poem)
Handout: Aubade as Elegy

Exercise: Keeping It Complicated—Destabilizing Interlocutors
Handout: “Skeptics May Object”: Planting a Naysayer
Tuesday, August 3  
**ESSAY 3 (PARTIAL DRAFT, WITH INTRODUCTION, CLAIM, AND AT LEAST 3 BODY PARAGRAPHS) DUE, 11.59PM EDT**

Wednesday, August 4  
James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room, Part One (pp. 3–71) (novel)

Writing Skills Lecture—Strategies for Revision: Lingering, Deepening, Cutting, and Expanding
Handout: The Process of Revision (Poorvu Center)

Friday, August 6  
James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room, Part Two (pp. 75–169) (novel)

Peer Review Workshop, Paper 3 (structure, transition, claim)

So What? Saying Why It Matters
Handout: Presentation Assignment

**Writing Time and Individual Instructor Consultations**

Saturday, August 7  
**ESSAY 3 (COMPLETE DRAFT) DUE, 11.59PM EDT**

UNIT FIVE: DON’T MOURN, ORGANIZE!

Monday, August 9  
Douglas Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy” (article)
Heather Pool, “The Politics of Mourning” (article)
Judith Butler and Brandon M. Terry, “The Radical Equality of Lives” (interview)

Concision, Clarity, Polish
Handout: Presentation Assignment

Wednesday, August 11  
Jonathan Lear, “We Will Not Be Missed!” (article)
Roy Scranton, “Learning to Die in the Anthropocene” (op-ed)

**ESSAY 3 (FINAL DRAFT) DUE, 11.59PM EDT**

Friday, August 13  
Final Presentations