

LS 898: Graduating Seminar – Looking forward, looking back

Spring 2020 | Dr. Sasha Colby

Course Description

For a long time, the tag line for the GLS Program was “looking back to look forward,” gesturing to the way a study of the past can inform the present and future. In the end, the motto was changed because of the unexpected debate and uncertainty about what looking back to look forward meant, exactly. In this course, we will seize on this ambiguity to explore the hermeneutic in a variety of ways. Our central text, Henri Ellenberger’s monumental, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, will guide us through humanity’s recognition that our personal pasts shape our current actions and future plans in an untold number of ways. In visiting and revisiting works by Anne Carson, we will study the revitalization of the ancient past and its contemporary relevance. In reading graphic novels by Art Spiegelman and a novel by Amy Tan, we will assess the impact of family history, and traumatic war histories in particular, on subsequent generations. And in finishing with James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*, we will study the artist’s ability to synthesize recent experience to create a compelling portrait of time and place. All of this we will do not only in the spirit of intellectual inquiry, but also with the intention of performing acts of looking back/ looking forward as students will be at once asked to write a reflective essay on their experience in the program and also to create an outline for some kind of intellectually informed project they intend to embark upon on completing GLS.

Evaluation:

This course is complete/incomplete or pass/fail as it is more conventionally known. To complete, students must submit a past looking essay, a forward looking outline, and introduce one of the major course texts at a level consistent with well executed graduate work.

Past looking essay, 5-6 pages – a reflective personal essay tracing your journey through the program or a personal essay that incorporates GLS theme.

Forward looking outline, 4 pages or equivalent in some other medium as discussed with the instructor. This could take on myriad forms including examples such as: a course outline for a class you plan to teach in Continuing Studies based in your M.A training, the

synopsis for a new play based in a theme of your GLS work, text for a blog you intend to start coming out of interests in your M.A., a digital excerpt from a film or YouTube channel you intend to launch, etc.

Author/Text introduction: 10 mins.

Required Texts:

Ellenberger, Henri. *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. Basic Books, 1981.