

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
The City University of New York

Department of ENGLISH

Title of Course:	Course Number:	ENG 358
ENGLISH 358: CONTEMPORARY URBAN WRITERS	Class Hours per Week:	3
	Lab Hours:	0
	Credits:	3

A. Description

English 358 focuses on literature of urban America since 1950 and in particular on how contemporary writers use the images and themes of the city.

B. Prerequisites and/or Corequisites

English 201 or English 121

C. Student Outcomes

Students will

- Discuss course content in a range of critical contexts.
- Demonstrate knowledge of themes and genres of course texts.
- Critique the complexities and differences among course texts.

D. Required Texts and/or Supplementary Materials

Recommended Readings Include the Following:

Big City Stories, ed. Tom and Susan Cahill (Bantam)
The Jazz Poetry Anthology, ed. S. Feinstein and Y. Komunyakaa (Indiana)
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*
Paule Marshall, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*
Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*; Lawrence Ferlingetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind*
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
Bernard Malamud, *The Tenants*
Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day*
Pedro Pietri, *Puerto Rican Obituary*
Tom Wolfe, *A Bonfire of the Vanities*

Don DeLillo, *Mao II*
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Norman Mailer, *Armies of the Night*
Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
Anna Deveare Smith, *Fires in Mirror*
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*
Edward Rivera, *Family Installments*
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*

E. Evaluation and Requirements of Students

Students will be required to read novels, short stories, plays, and poems that reflect urban life. Quizzes will be given on the important readings, or students may be asked to write a journal recording their responses to some of the readings. Written assignments may include a long term paper or a series of short essays. A creative project may be encouraged, such as a journalistic essay on urban issues, a creative autobiographical essay of urban life, or an urban-based short story or play. A midterm and final examination will be given, and students should expect to participate in class discussions and small groups and possibly give an oral report. Grades will be based chiefly on written work, but participation counts.

College Attendance Policy

At BMCC, the maximum number of absences is limited to one more hour than the number of hours a class meets in one week. For example, you may be enrolled in a three-hour class. In that class, you would be allowed 4 hours of absence (not 4 days). In the case of excessive absences, the instructor has the option to lower the grade or assign an F or WU grade.

Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course must contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities. BMCC is committed to providing equal access to all programs and curricula to all students.

BMCC Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the idea or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The library has guides designed to help students to appropriately identify a cited work. The full policy can be found on BMCC's web site, www.bmcc.cuny.edu. For further information on integrity and behavior, please consult the college bulletin (also available online).

F. Outline of Topics

Week 1: Introduction: The City as Setting and Subject of Literature

Weeks 2-4: The 1950s: Postwar America and Urban Life

- A. Conformity and Rebellion: the Beats and *Catcher in the Rye*
- B. Urban Ghettos: *A Raisin in the Sun*; *Invisible Man*; *Brown Girl, Brownstones*

Weeks 5-8: Urban Culture in the Sixties

- A. Background: *Gates of Eden*, Morris Dickstein
- B. Selected Poetry and Short Stories; Bob Dylan's Lyrics
- C. Norman Mailer, *Armies of the Night*
- D. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
- E. Bernard Malamud, *The Tenants*

Weeks 9-11: The Seventies and the Women's Movement

- A. Toni Cade Bambara, "The Lesson"
- B. Urban poems by Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton
- C. Ntozake Shange, *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough*

Weeks 12-14: Cities of the Eighties and Nineties: Social and Economic Contrasts

- A. Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities*; Don DeLillo, *Mao II*; Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*
- B. Stories and Poems of the Eighties and Nineties