

HI-225: HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY

Paper #3 due April 2

3 pages, double-spaced

APA, MLA or Chicago style (note which one you're using)

For this assignment, you'll be exploring the social history of New York City— history from the perspective of an individual. Bottom-up (as opposed to top-down) pieces give insights into how larger events and systems affected regular people. New York City has a rich literary culture. Perhaps because it offers so much to write about, the city is the setting of numerous classic short stories written by now-legendary writers.

In addition to being great works of art, these stories offer a peek into a time capsule of New York City from the standpoint of an author's gender, race, class, culture and ability.

The introduction to *Writing New York: A Literary Anthology*, edited by Philip Lopate, gives a great background as to what criteria he used to select quintessentially "New York City" stories and what makes these useful sources of knowledge.

Please read this introduction. You do not have to write about it.

For your essay, choose two of the following short stories to read and discuss:

James Baldwin, from *The Fire Next Time*, 1963

Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Cafeteria*, 1968

Joan Didion, *Goodbye to All That*, 1967

Ralph Ellison, *New York, 1936*, 1986

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, 1932

Langston Hughes, *When the Negro Was in Vogue*, 1940

Jane Jacobs, from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961

José Martí, *New York Under the Snow*, 1888

Edgar Allan Poe, from *Doings of Gotham*, 1844

E. B. White, *Here is New York*, 1949

Anzia Yezierska, from *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, 1950

Pdfs are posted via moodle.

You may choose to discuss the two stories alongside each other in your essay (comparing and contrasting) or write about them one at a time (devoting half of your essay to each).

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Here are some questions to consider as you create your thesis:

- What point of view is this written from (gender, class, race, etc.)?
- What values is the author trying to convey?
- Consider what insight letters and memoirs can provide (and why/how) that a document such as a newspaper cannot necessarily do.
- What is the objective of the writing?
- What details add to your knowledge of the topic/time period? Big events and everyday living?
- How is New York City a character in the story?
- What institutions feature in the work?
- What is the time period this was written in and how did the author respond to notable events/changes/upheavals in NYC at the time? Technological advances, world events?
- Compare the tone and views of New York City in the two works
- Why in your opinion is this story considered a classic?
- What, if any, criticism do you have of the work?