

## **Shifting Plates: Literature of Change in Twenty-First-Century America**

**Lecturer's Name: Ron Ben-Tovim**

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**Course Description:** Change, the nature of change, and its dramatic effects have been a staple fascination of Western literature, and literature as such, from its very inception. From Ovid to Tolstoy and Kafka there have been few notions as central writing as of shifting circumstances, shapes, and times. In our time together we will study the manner in which some of the leading writers of the contemporary American writing field tackle the topic of change, whether sudden and dramatic or slow and imperceptible - whether through the aftermath of 9/11, the mundane trials of life or the challenges of sexual transformation.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, Gender Studies, Critical Theory, American Literature, Trauma Studies, Memoir, History.

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### **Course Requirements:**

Midterm Paper: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Written Responses: 10%

Final Paper: 50%

**Schedule (subject to, you guessed it, change).**

**SEM A**

- 1.1 Introduction: Change in the House of Flies
- 8.1 Susan Brison, "On the Personal as Philosophical"; Descartes, "Meditation I."
- 15.1 Intro to *Falling Man* (first chapters up on Moodle): Sigmund Freud, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*
- 22.1 Don DeLillo, *Falling Man*, Hamilton Carroll, "September 11 and the Limits of Representation."
- 29.1 *Falling Man*; Kelly Oliver: "Witnessing and Testimony."
- 5.2 *Falling Man*  
  
*Midterm assignment given*
- 12.2 *Falling Man*
- 19.2 *Falling Man*; Frederic Jameson, "The Logic of Late Capitalism."  
  
*Midterm assignment due*
- 26.2 Larissa Ray, "Rachel"; Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."
- 4.3 David Foster Wallace, "Wiggle Room"
- 11.3 "Wiggle Room"

**SEM B (tentative)**

- 6.5 Introduction
- 13.5 Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*
- 20.5 *The Argonauts*
- 27.5 *The Argonauts*; Nagoshi and Brzuzi, "Transgender Theory"

3.6 *The Argonauts*

10.6 *The Argonauts*

17.6 *The Argonauts*; Rita Felski: "Transsexuality, Postmodernism, and the Death of History."

24.6 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Our Broad Present."

1.7 George Saunders, "Home"

8.7 Presentations

15.7 Presentations