

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

**Literature as a Vocation: Pessoa, Gaité, Lispector, Vila-Matas, and the Writing Life
CLC 3392F**

Fall of 2009

Mondays 10:30 AM to 12:20 PM

Wednesdays 10:30 to 11:20 AM

Room: TBA

Professor Hugo Moreno

University College 251

Office hours: TBA

Phone: 519-661-2111, ext. 80438

hmoreno@uwo.ca

Scope

Is writing a calling? If so, what does the literary vocation call for? What gives meaning and purpose to this vocation? What are the main psychological, political, and philosophical forces that drive individuals to write (and sometimes) publish a diary, a memoir, a novel, and other types of autobiographical literature? Also, why do people read this kind of literature? Why are so many contemporary readers interested in knowing about the life of writers, and about the writing life? We're going to explore these and similar questions by reading Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*, Carmen Martín Gaité's *The Back Room*, Clarice Lispector's *Stream of Life*, and Enrique Vila-Matas's *Bartleby & Co.*.

The main objective of this course will be to approach literature as a vocation—which means not treating literature as an academic subject, or as an object of critical inquiry, but as a calling and a way of life. Since an essential part of this vocation demands producing literary works, the most important project for this course will be the writing and polishing of a literary piece, namely, a diary. This diary will record the life and thoughts of a character that you (the student) will invent. We will read the above-mentioned texts as possible models for this literary genre. In addition, we will use as a guidebook Tristine Rainer's *The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self-Guidance and Expanded Creativity*. Writing this diary will require learning to read both closely and constructively, not only the texts composed by consecrated authors, but also by your own classmates, and—very crucially—by yourself.

Required Texts:

- Lispector, Clarice. *Stream of Life*. Trans. Elizabeth Lowe and Earl Fitz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Martin Gaité, Carmen. *The Back Room*. Trans. Helen Lane. Place?: City Lights Publishers, 2001.
- Pessoa, Fernando. *Book of Disquiet*. Trans. Alfred MacAdam. Boston: Exact Change, 2004 (1998).
- Rainer, Tristine. *The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self-Guidance and Expanded Creativity*.
- Rooke, Constance, ed. *Writing Life: Celebrated Canadian and International Authors on Writing and Life*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006.
- Vila-Matas, Enrique. *Bartleby & Co.*. Trans. Jonathan Dunne. Place: New Directions, 2007.

Prerequisite: CLC 1020, or permission of the Department.

Please note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites (or have special permission from your Dean to waive the prerequisite) and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. If you are not eligible for the course, you may be removed from it at any time, and it will be deleted from your record. In addition, you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions can not be appealed.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's **verbatim** or **paraphrased** text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against the possible charge of plagiarism. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism-checking site called Turnitin.com.

Absenteeism

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness
(<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading