

Note from Professor Bob Barsky:

Here is the syllabus for the course; it's on the ambitious side, given the time we have together, but this'll provide you with a sense of the materials and direction of the course.

I'm very excited to see you all, and it's fun to move from my last course, on law, to this one, on literature. I have a new book that discusses some of the themes from last semester's course, coming out soon:

<http://www.routledgeentalhealth.com/books/details/9781138849488>

My next book will, as you can imagine, be on literature (the French modernist influence on the Beat Generation writers).

See you all next week! (March 18th, 9:30AM, Vanderbilt).

Sincerely,

Bob

From the Romantics to the Beat Generation

Professor Robert Barsky (robert.barsky@vanderbilt.edu)

This course will explore the influence that Romantic poets, notably Lord Byron, and P.B. Shelley, had upon Beat Generation poets and writers. We will begin by discussing some of the seminal works in Romantic poetry, including Keats's and Wordsworth's descriptions of their poetic ambitions and projects, and we'll then turn to some of the characteristics of the literature and politics of the Beats. We will undertake our reading under the assumption that there was something profoundly liberating in such works as the "Lyrical Ballads" and, moreover, in the comical and irreverent masterpiece by Lord Byron, Don Juan, which served as impetuses for the kinds of work we found in post-war American Beats.

Texts: *I will provide WAY MORE than enough, in case you have time to peruse lots of material, or in case you have significant familiarity with the work. All of the texts I'll discuss are on-line, and I'll have them all up on the screen for discussion during class. If you do wish to buy books, though, the ones below come highly recommended.*

1. *Beat Writers at Work: The Paris Review.* Collected here are interviews with the great Beat and Black Mountain writers from the pages of "The

Paris Review". In this new compendium, the writers describe their art and lives, creating a unique and fascinating record of their inspirations.

2. *The Portable Beat Reader*. Through poetry, fiction, essays, song lyrics, letters, and memoirs, this authoritative single-volume collection of Beat literature captures the triumphant energy of a movement that swept through American letters with hurricane force. Featuring: Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Gary Snyder, Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Diane Di Prima, Bob Dylan, Ken Kesey, Charles Bukowski, Michael McClure, and more.

3. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period*

SCHEDULE

March 18th, Introduction and William Wordsworth

"Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*", "Surprised by Joy"; "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"; "Crossing the Simplon Pass"

March 25th, Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake

Shelley's "A Defense of Poetry" ; "Mont Blanc"
Blake's "Songs of Innocence"

April 1st, Mary Shelley and John Keats

September 12 "Frankenstein"; "Ode to a Nightingale"; "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

April 8th, Lord Byron and an Introduction to the Beat Generation

Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage"; "Don Juan" Canto 1

April 15th, THE BEAT GENERATION, and an intro to Allen Ginsberg

October 8 Texts: "Introduction" to the *Beat Writers at Work*; "Variations on a Generation" and "The Best Minds of a Generation" in *Portable Beat Reader*

Allen Ginsberg in *Beat Writers at Work*, *The Portable Beat Reader*, "Howl", "Footnote to Howl", "A Supermarket in California", "Sunflower Sutra", "America", "Kaddish".