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### *Fall 2007 Course Descriptions*

After two programs (January 1999 and January 2000), during which we took your suggestions for the "best of the century" booklist, here it is. While a few 19th century titles have slipped in here ...

### *Listeners' Favorite Books of the 20th Century*

There wasn't a movie titled *The Reprobates*, so we go with what's available – *The Misfits*. Which, after extensive stretching, is about the nicest term one might use to describe the fools who ...

### *The Weekend Jolt*

At four o'clock the next afternoon he is at her flat. She opens the door wearing a crumpled T-shirt, cycling shorts, slippers in the shape of comic-book gophers which he finds silly, tasteless ...

### *This Week's Book List*

There wasn't a movie titled *The Reprobates*, so we go with what's available – *The Misfits*. Which, after extensive stretching, is about the nicest term one might use to describe the fools who ...

'You always, I notice, feel the same when you are under heavy fire – not so much afraid of being hit as afraid because you don't know where you will be hit. You are wondering all the while just where the bullet will nip you, and it gives your whole body a most unpleasant sensitiveness.'

In 1936 Orwell went to Spain to report on the Civil War and instead joined the fight against the Fascists. This famous account describes the war and Orwell's experiences. Introduction by Lionel Trilling.

The volume collects together Orwell's writings on his experience of the Spanish Civil War – the chaos at the Front, the futile young deaths for what became a confused cause, the antique weapons and the disappointment many British Socialists felt on arriving in Spain to help. Orwell in Spain also includes

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the complete text of the nonfiction masterpiece *Homage to Catalonia*.

*The Road to Wigan Pier* is Orwell's 1937 study of poverty and working-class life in northern England.

"Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism as I understand it." Thus wrote Orwell following his experiences as a militiaman in the Spanish Civil War, chronicled in *Homage to Catalonia*. Here he brings to bear all the force of his humanity, passion and clarity, describing with bitter intensity the bright hopes and cynical betrayals of that chaotic episode.

*Coming Up for Air* is the seventh book by English writer George Orwell, published in June 1939 by Victor Gollancz. It was written between 1938 and 1939 while Orwell spent time recuperating from illness in French Morocco, mainly in Marrakesh. George Orwell's paean to the end of an idyllic era in British history, *Coming Up for Air* is a poignant account of one man's attempt to recapture childhood innocence as war looms on the horizon. George Bowling, forty-five, mortgaged, married with children, is an insurance salesman with an expanding waistline, a new set of false teeth - and a desperate desire to escape his dreary life. He fears modern times - since, in 1939, the Second World War is imminent - foreseeing food queues, soldiers, secret police and tyranny.

George Orwell set out 'to make political writing into an art', and to a wide extent this aim shaped the future of English literature - his descriptions of authoritarian regimes helped to form a new vocabulary that is fundamental to understanding totalitarianism. While *1984* and *Animal Farm* are amongst the most popular classic novels in the English language, this new series of Orwell's essays seeks to bring a wider selection of his writing on politics and literature to a new readership. In *Why I Write*, the first in the *Orwell's Essays* series, Orwell describes his journey to becoming a writer, and his movement from writing poems to short stories to the essays, fiction and non-fiction we remember him for. He also discusses what he sees as the 'four great motives for writing' - 'sheer egoism', 'aesthetic enthusiasm', 'historical impulse' and 'political purpose' - and considers the importance of keeping these in balance. *Why I Write* is a unique opportunity to look into Orwell's mind, and it grants the reader an entirely different vantage point from which to consider the rest of the great writer's oeuvre. 'A writer who can - and must - be rediscovered with every age.' - *Irish Times*

Ostracized as a kid, Edgar Kellogg has always yearned to be popular. A disgruntled New York corporate lawyer, he's more than ready to leave his lucrative career for the excitement and uncertainty of

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journalism. When he's offered the post of foreign correspondent in a Portuguese backwater that has sprouted a homegrown terrorist movement, Edgar recognizes the disappeared larger-than-life reporter he's been sent to replace, Barrington Soddler, as exactly the outsize character he longs to emulate. Infuriatingly, all his fellow journalists cannot stop talking about their beloved "Bear," who is no longer lighting up their work lives. Yet all is not as it appears. Os Soldados Ousados de Barba—"The Daring Soldiers of Barba"—have been blowing up the rest of the world for years in order to win independence for their dismal province. So why, with Barrington vanished, do terrorist incidents claimed by the "SOB" suddenly dry up? A droll, playful novel, *The New Republic* addresses weighty issues like terrorism with the tongue-in-cheek deftness that is vintage Shriver.

Essays by the author of 1984 on topics from "remembrances of working in a bookshop [to] recollections of fighting in the Spanish Civil War" (Publishers Weekly). George Orwell was first and foremost an essayist, producing throughout his life an extraordinary array of short nonfiction that reflected—and illuminated—the fraught times in which he lived. "As soon as he began to write something," comments George Packer in his foreword, "it was as natural for Orwell to propose, generalize, qualify, argue, judge—in short, to think—as it was for Yeats to versify or Dickens to invent." Facing Unpleasant Facts charts Orwell's development as a master of the narrative-essay form and unites such classics as "Shooting an Elephant" with lesser-known journalism and passages from his wartime diary. Whether detailing the horrors of Orwell's boyhood in an English boarding school or bringing to life the sights, sounds, and smells of the Spanish Civil War, these essays weave together the personal and the political in an unmistakable style that is at once plainspoken and brilliantly complex. "Best known for his late-career classics *Animal Farm* and 1984, George Orwell—who used his given name, Eric Blair, in the earliest pieces of this collection aimed at the aficionado as well as the general reader—was above all a polemicist of the first rank. Organized chronologically, from 1931 through the late 1940s, these in-your-face writings showcase the power of this literary form." —Publishers Weekly, starred review

George Orwell is a difficult author to summarize. He was a would-be revolutionary who went to Eton, a political writer who abhorred dogma, a socialist who thrived on his image as a loner, and a member of the Indian Civil Service who chronicled the iniquities of imperialism. Both the books in this volume were published in the 1930s, a "a low, dishonest decade," as his coeval W.H. Auden described it. Orwell's subjects in *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* are the political and social upheavals of his time. He focusses on the sense of profound injustice, incipient violence, and malign betrayal that were ubiquitous in Europe in the 1930s. Orwell's honesty, courage, and sense of decency are inextricably bound up with the quasi-colloquial style that imbues his work with its

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extraordinary power. His descriptions of working in the slums of Paris, living the life of a tramp in England, and digging for coal with miners in the Midlands make for a thoughtful, riveting account of the lives of the working poor and of one man's search for the truth. Our edition includes the following essays: Marrakech; How the Poor Die; Antisemitism in Britain; Notes on Nationalism

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