How is it, in the words of neurologist Antonio Damasio, that "consciousness may be produced within the three pounds of flesh we call brain?" At its most basic, consciousness is the awareness of self. Novelists experimented with crafting language and narrative to represent this awareness long before neurobiology could hope to explain its origins or mechanisms. In this course, we will examine literary and cinematic depictions of the human mind in dialogue with contemporary theories of consciousness emerging from neurobiology, philosophy, and literary criticism. Course texts include novels by Henry James, William Faulkner, and David Lodge; memoirs by David B. and Jean-Dominique Bauby; films by Darren Aronofsky, Richard Linklater, and Luis Buñuel; and theories of consciousness by William James, Antonio Damasio, Daniel Dennett, Oliver Sacks, and Rita Carter. Each student will author a course blog, reflecting on literary and critical texts we read and experimenting with writing creative nonfiction and fiction. In addition, students will develop their formal research projects into a student-authored web site on the course topic.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Sandra Aamodt and Sam Wang, Welcome to Your Brain (Bloomsbury USA)
David B, Epileptic (Pantheon)
Rita Carter, Exploring Consciousness (University of California Press)
Antonio Damasio, The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion, and Consciousness (Harvest Books)
Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (W.W. Norton)
David Lodge, Thinks . . . (Penguin)
Oliver Sacks, Anthropologist on Mars (Vintage)

REQUIREMENTS
Oral Presentations 20%
Web Project (including revised review) 40%
Blogs 30%
Class Participation 10%

BLOGS
For the duration of the semester, you will keep a blog—responding to course readings and sharing writing experiments with classmates. Each student will post one entry per week (see Calendar for assignments) and a minimum of two comments on others’ entries per week. (Feel free post more!) The blogs are intended to give you a place to write informally, communicate with an audience in mind, experiment with ideas and styles of writing, and digest ideas we explore in the course. Experiment. Have
fun. When I evaluate your blogs, I will be looking for sincere effort and critical engagement, not polish, structure, or mechanics.

**BLACKBOARD**

On our Blackboard site, you will find handouts, essay assignments, models of student essays, and a list of useful links. You will also submit some of your assignments on Blackboard. (See http://lmsprod.cuny.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp; log in using your CUNY Portal Username and password.)

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance and participation are necessary in order for us to form a productive classroom community, where we all learn from each other. I understand that life will make an occasional absence necessary. Whenever possible, please inform me in advance if you will be absent. In general, plan to attend every class meeting and to arrive on time. Keep in mind also that attendance and participation will comprise a significant portion of your course grade.

**ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

Every student will participate in two group presentations (see Calendar) over the course of the semester. Grades for these presentations will be assigned separately for each individual and will be based on both content and performance.

**WRITING GUIDELINES & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All your formal writing should be typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins. Please proofread carefully, so that your essay is polished and free of typographical errors. Give every piece of writing a title and include your name as well as the course name and number. Be sure to include a list of works cited with formal writing (essay, published web projects, etc.). Use MLA guidelines (see link on Blackboard) for citing sources and constructing your works cited list. We will discuss my expectations in class, but in general I expect your writing to contain serious thought, analysis, and reflection, not simply summary or description.

A student’s work should be his or her own. But a student’s ideas should also engage the ideas of other thinkers and writers. Communication gives ideas meaning and creates a community of thinkers. This is where citation and plagiarism can become tricky. Plagiarism is, of course, a serious issue. It is important that you establish your own point of view, make it clear what ideas are yours and which come from your sources, and respond to your sources critically. Be sure also to cite all sources appropriately, using MLA style. Finally, if you’re struggling with your ideas, your writing, or your sources, be sure to talk to me. Plagiarism sometimes arises from confusion and sometimes from desperation. I can help you work through problems before they escalate.

See Blog Tutorial on “Respecting Copyright while Blogging” (http://blogs.qc.cuny.edu/blogs/blogtutorials/2005/01/understanding_copyright.html) for a discussion of copyright and citation online.

**CALENDAR**

January 28
- Introduction: consciousness and writing; *Thinks* . . .
- Blog assignment 1: stream of consciousness (modeled on that of Ralph Messenger)
February 4
- Reading: *Thinks . . .*; Lodge interview (handout); *Welcome to Your Brain*, Chapters 1 – 3; Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” & Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”
- Blog assignment 2: Write one of Helen Reed’s creative writing assignments

February 11
- Carter, Introduction & Chapter 1; *Welcome to Your Brain*, Chapter 6
- Viewing: *Requiem for a Dream* (see it in advance)
- Blog assignment 3: Consciousness on Film (include at least one link, image, or embedded video)

February 18
- Reading: Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*
- Blog Assignment 4: Close reading of a passage from Damasio
- Blogs evaluated

February 25
- Reading: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*; *Welcome to Your Brain*, Chapters 10, 11, & 16
- Blog Assignment 5: Write about a recent experience in the voice of Henry James

March 4
- Reading: *The Sound and the Fury*
- Blog assignment 6: Describe an interesting moment of consciousness

March 11
- Blog assignment 7: Critical response to your assigned theorist

March 18
- Blog assignment 8: Critical response to your assigned novelist

March 25
- Session in the Educational Technologies Lab
- Listening: Radiolab, “Who Am I” and “Sleep”
- Viewing: Rutgers University Writers House “Visual Essays”
- Blog assignment 9: Exploring ideas for your web project

April 1
- Reading: *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (selected cases)
- Video screening: Jill Bolte Taylor
- Reading: Carter, Chapter 8: Fractured Consciousness; Hacker, “Research Sources” (93-101) & “MLA Papers” (read 105-118; use 122-140 as reference); Blog Tutorial on “Respecting Copyright while Blogging” ([http://blogs.qc.cuny.edu/blogs/blogtutorials/2005/01/understanding_copyright.html](http://blogs.qc.cuny.edu/blogs/blogtutorials/2005/01/understanding_copyright.html))
- Blog assignment 10: Explore the subjective experience of a single form of “fractured consciousness”
- Blogs evaluated
April 8 & 15: No class (spring break)

April 22
• Session in the Educational Technologies Lab
• Blog assignment 11: The development of your web project

April 29
• Hartmann, “The Nature of Dreaming”; Hobson, “The Neurodynamics of Dreaming”
• Screening: Un Chien Andalou; listening: musical representations of dreaming
• Blog assignment 12: An account of a dream
• Drafts of Essay #3 due, via e-mail, by 3 pm

May 6
• Reading: Epileptic
• Blog assignment 13: Comment on visual representations of consciousness (including at least one image or embedded video)
• Drafts of web projects due

May 13
• Film screening: Waking Life
• Blog assignment 14: Describe your own theory of consciousness or discuss an interesting aspect of consciousness

May 26 (no class meeting)
• Web projects due (on our course site)