introducing a new freshman writing seminar for fall 2016

LOST IN TRANSLATION? WRITING THE NEW SELF IN A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE (GER 185)

Eva Hoffmann, who emigrated from Poland to Canada at age thirteen, initially experienced the transition from Polish to English as “a dispossession of one’s self.” For her, adapting to a new language and culture requires a balancing act: “how does one bend toward another culture without falling over, how does one strike an elastic balance between rigidity and self-effacement?” This course seeks to study what it means (and has meant) for a variety of non-native speakers to write in English: from the politics of using “the language of the colonizers,” to personal journeys of self-transformation and loss of identity, to the discovery new aspects of one’s personality in another linguistic and cultural context. Readings include stories, essays, speeches and autobiographies in which authors reflect on what it means to write in English. The course also explores aspects of second language acquisition, including the privilege of the non-native speaker, as well as academic essays on the relationship between language and personal identity. In addition to studying the stylistic conventions of academic writing in English, assignments give students the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences as non-native speakers writing in English and/or their experience working with communities of non-native speakers of English.

MEETS MW 12:00-1:15. 1 CREDIT. CONTACT KARIN MAXEY WITH QUESTIONS. KAMAXEY@VASSAR.EDU