

Carleton University
Fall 2013
Department of English

ENG 2906A: Culture and Society
T/Th: 2:30-4:00
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs, 4 pm – 5 pm
Office: 1815 Dunton Tower
Professor Brenda Vellino
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Topic: Conflict Zone Literature

This year's topic for Culture and Society will focus on literature's capacity to bring us alternative news from war, crisis, and conflict zones. More specifically, this course will look at conflict zones, as we think of them in conventional terms (war, genocide, settler colonialism) and unconventional terms (gender wars or the war on the environment). We will consider how so much of our experience as contemporary global citizens is shaped by the antagonistic history of our world at war, from the "war to end all wars" (WW I) to the war on terror to the war on those who are positioned as "the other" of the dominant narratives of history. We will ask how literature can be read as a performative medium undertaking (counter)memory work and alternative critical imaginings, as well as contributing to the complex work of redress and possible reconciliation. This course will consider more conventional literary forms (poetry, fiction, drama) and a popular culture genre (the graphic novel) to explore the ways that cultural texts may function to give us alternative news of the worlds we try to make sense of.

Course Reading List

**All books will be available at Octopus Books @ Bank and Third Avenue in The Glebe.

Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Wars:

WWI: Shell Shock and Total War: World War One Poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon – poetry handout and on-line

Readings from *The Vietnam War in American Stories, Songs, and Poems*: Yusef Komunyakaa, John Baliban, and Tim O'Brien

**Falkoff, Mark, ed. *Poems From Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak* (2007).

Wars on "Surplus Humanity":

*Nuclear Holocaust: Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*, vol. 1 (2004)

*Jewish Holocaust: Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus* (2003)

*Occupation in Israel/Palestine: Joe Sacco, *Palestine* (2001)

*E-Trash and Genetic Modification: Rita Wong, *Forage* (2007)

Redress and Reconciliation?

*Indian Residential Schools Redress? Thompson Highway, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1999)

*After Genocide: Colleen Wagner: *The Monument* (1999).

Assignments

Attendance/Participation (informal writing):	10%
3 short group discussion papers (750 words): Due	10% each
Note: You must be in class on the assigned date to meet with your group to get credit for this assignment unless you have a medical or other emergency.	
Essay (2000 words) – Due Nov. 28:	40%
Alternative Final Exam: Course response paper (1000 words) :	20%

Course Calendar

Week 1

Thurs. Sept. 5: No class due to Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah)

Week 2

Sept. 10: Course Expectations and Course Themes Intro.

Sept. 12: Course Themes Continued

Week 3

Sept. 17: Total War and Combat Trauma: World War One Trench Poetry: Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon poems (handout): “Dulce et Decorum Est”

Sept. 19: World War One Trench Poetry Working Group Assignment 1 due in Class:

Group 1: Wilfred Owen, “Mental Cases”; Group 2: Wilfred Owen, “Disabled”; Group 3: Siegfried Sassoon, “Survivors”; Group 4: Siegfried Sassoon, “Repression of War Experience.”

Week 4

Sept. 24: The Vietnam War Short Story: “Tim O’Brien, “The Man I Killed” (Available for photocopying from *The Vietnam War* anthology in library) – Please bring your story copy to class!

Sept. 26: Vietnam War Poetry: John Baliban, “After Our War”; Yusef Komunyakaa, “Starlight Scope Myopia”; Bruce Wiegman, “Burning Shit at An Khe”; Thich Nhat Hanh “A Prayer for Peace” (from Google Books, *Call Me By My True Names* - on-line): Other poems available on-line or for copying from *The Vietnam War* anthology (on reserve in library). Please bring your poem copies to class!

Week 5

Oct. 1: War on Terror, Illegal Combatants and Just War?

Poems from Guantanamo: the Detainees Speak

Oct. 3: *Poems from Guantanamo*

Week 6: War on “Surplus Humanity”: The Graphic Novel

Oct. 8: Nuclear Holocaust: Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*, vol. 1 (2004)

Oct. 10: *Barefoot Gen*

Week 7

Oct. 15: Jewish Holocaust/Graphic Novel: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*

Oct. 17: Jewish Holocaust/Graphic Novel: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*

Working Groups Assignment 2 Due in Class! Topics TBA.

Week 8

Oct. 22: Jewish Holocaust/Graphic Novel: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*

Oct. 24: Occupied Territories/Graphic Novel: Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Essay Topics and Expectations

October 28 – Nov. 1 – No Classes – Fall Break

Week 9

Nov. 5: Occupied Territories/Graphic Novel: Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Working Groups Assignment 3: Due in Class! Topics TBA

Nov. 7: Occupied Territories/Graphic Novel: Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Week 10: E-Trash and Genetic Modification

Nov. 12: Rita Wong, *Forage*

Nov. 14: Rita Wong *Forage*

Week 11: Indian Residential Schools TRC

Nov. 19: Thompson Highway, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Nov. 21: *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Week 12:

Nov. 26: *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Nov. 28: *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Term Essay Due in Class!

Week 13

Dec. 3: Genocides of the 1990s/Contemporary Transnational Theatre of Redress:
Coleen Wagner, *The Monument*

Dec. 5: *The Monument*

Alternative Final Exam/Course Response Paper Due in Final Exam Period: TBA

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Participation: class works when you do, so you will get marks for being in class. Active participation is essential. I define class participation as both physical and mental presence in class, shown by preparedness, engagement, and willingness to take risks. Please come to class prepared to speak not only with me, but also your fellow students about the reading for each day. I will also assign informal writing assignment topics at the beginning of some classes to be taken up as an indicator that you are present and have read and as a way of calibrating your participation grade. **Please bring books or photocopies to class for discussion!** Also, please extend me the courtesy of letting me know when you will need to be absent. Life is unpredictable, so if you do have a difficulty of any kind this term, please keep me in the loop and let me know how I may be of help. Students often make the mistake of not talking to Profs. when issues come up. **Students missing more than 50% of classes will not pass the course.**

Assignment Policy: In order to pass this course, you must complete ALL assignments and hand them in on time. I do not accept email submissions unless there are extenuating circumstances. Extensions must be arranged with me for (difficult circumstances only) in advance of the due date. Assignments handed in late without prior arrangement will be docked two points per day with a weekend counting as one day. Essays handed in more than one week late without prior notification may not be accepted.

Assignments

Working Group Discussion Papers

This small group work requires out of class preparation and allows students to develop their close reading and analysis skills while benefiting from the insights of their peers. Early in the term, I will divide students into 4 working groups. I will post working group topics on aspects of the text under discussion for each group on CU-Learn one week before they are due and announce them in class.

****Note: You must be in class on each assigned group meeting date to meet in your group to get credit for this assignment unless you have a medical or other emergency.**

Step-1: For each of the three working group classes, you will prepare two questions that you believe are central to understanding the poem or chapter. Questions could link some aspect of the context of the text (author's back-story, political commitments; historical/political contexts; artistic traditions) with the text to be discussed. For each of your questions, you will prepare a two - three paragraph answer. These answers will be in short essay form with a topic sentence and detailed discussion of specific passages in the text (using direct quotation). **The average length of this assignment should be 3 pages, double-spaced, typed (approx 750 words).**

****Note: If you consult any external resources, including from the internet, including Wikipedia, you MUST be meticulous in citing them on a Works Cited and Consulted page.**

Step-2: For the in-class small group discussion, **bring your Discussion Papers to class.** You will meet with your working group to discuss your questions and insights. Each member of the group should ask one of his or her questions, getting feedback from the group and taking notes on new ideas from group members. He or she should also share his own answer when everyone has had a turn. When the discussion winds down, move onto the next person and their question. Make sure everyone in the group has a chance to present at least one question. The discussion should be as free and creative as possible, allowing room for tangents and respectful differences of opinion. Each student will take notes on the discussion; one student should be prepared to report group insights to the larger class if time permits. **Discussion Papers must be submitted with your class notes at the end of each working group class.**

ESSAY GUIDELINES

Essay Topics will be posted on CU-learn and discussed in the Oct. 25th class.

Format: Essays should be 2000 words, typed and double-spaced, with one-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides. **No title pages or plastic binders please.**

*Every discipline has its own essay style. Please use the English essay style, which is current Modern Language Association (MLA) format for the first page heading, title, and Parenthetical Citation with Works Cited. **No Endnotes or Footnotes please!**

Writing Process/Rough Drafts: Your essay should be enclosed in a folder with pre-writing notes and rough drafts. This is to ensure that you take the writing through the stages of the writing process. Not essay will be accepted without pre-writing notes (either typed or hand-written) and at least one hand-edited essay draft in your writing folder.

Secondary Sources: While your essay is not a research essay, given the context-based themes of this course, some research on historical and political or biographical context may be relevant and enriching. All secondary sources, even from the web must be credited in a Works Cited and Consulted page. Failure to do so will be considered plagiarism and could result in a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. You may also be called in to meet with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and suspended from the university.

Essay Submission: Never hand an essay in by sliding it under my office door. Always keep a backup copy of any work you submit.

****Note: I reserve the right to interview you on the content of your essays and to make your final mark contingent on that interview.**

Plagiarism

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the "Academic Regulations of the University: Instructional Offences section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as "using and passing off as one's own ideas the work of someone else without expressly giving credit to another." **This includes ideas taken from websites including Wikipedia for short and long assignments. All sources must be credited in a Works Cited and Consulted page on any writing you do for this class.** Plagiarism in its accidental forms often involves improper, sloppy or lazy documentation of sources. If you find yourself tempted to use someone else's work because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, or due to any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to create the space and means for you to do work of the highest integrity.

Grey areas of plagiarism sometimes arise from confusion about what counts as putting things in your own words or paraphrase. If you change a word or two in a critic's sentence, this is *not paraphrase*. Put altered words in brackets and put the whole sentence in quotes. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. The penalties for plagiarism are very severe, ranging from failure in the course to expulsion from the university. **See "How Not to Plagiarize: www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html**

ALTERNATIVE FINAL EXAM/FINAL COURSE RESPONSE

*This four-page short papers (1000 words) may be seen as an “alternative final exam.” You might consider this as a take home essay exam in which you write the question and prepare your answer based on what you are taking away from this course. This assignment asks you to create your own narrative of the course, by identifying one or two key patterns, themes, and connections between readings from the term that have stood out for you in the course readings, lectures, and discussions. You might also consider themes, issues or questions that the course lectures and discussion did not cover, but that you noticed in several of the texts on the course. You may refer to introductory lectures for reminders of course themes and/or you may come up with your own themes that link works on the course. Please note: these are just suggestions and your paper should not attempt to do all of them.

*Refer to at least **six specific texts** for your specific examples representing **six different weeks** of the term to support your points. The more specific you can be in a concise way, the stronger your paper will be. You may pursue several different topics or themes using two or three texts for illustration of your points and then turn to a second cluster of texts to illustrate a second topic or theme. Or you may find a theme that connects all six of the texts that you wish to discuss.

*Your last page could offer your overall response to the course, including what worked, what didn’t, what topics/themes you would like to see more or less of, and what you are taking away. You may wish to speak to favorite or least favorite writers and issues (always substantiating with specific quotes, reasons, and examples). **This is only a suggestion, not a requirement for the paper.**

*Proofread your writing for spelling, grammar, punctuation, missing words, awkward sentences, typos etc.!! Writing and presentation counts.

*As always if you consult a secondary source, including lecture notes, you must indicate your sources in both parenthetical citation and works cited.

**Part of what makes this exam scenario “alternative” is that you will bring your finished papers to the exam room (which is not shared with another class) to read aloud to an audience of your classmates. This should be seen as a culminating or capstone event in which the members of the class come together as a community to offer some final reflections on what you are taking away from this course. It allows one final opportunity for you to hear and learn from each other in an atmosphere of collaborative learning.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

For Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary *Letters of Accommodation*. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me in order to make the necessary arrangements as early in the term as possible. www.carleton.ca/pmc

For Religious Observance: Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

For Pregnancy: Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

STUDENT SERVICES

Writing Tutorial Service: If you know your writing needs improvement, do consider free tutoring with this service. Contact the Centre for Applied Language Studies, 215 Paterson Hall, 613- 520-6632. See www.carleton.ca/wts

Carleton Health and Counseling Services offers confidential consultations with medical doctors, lab testing, and emotional support for difficult times from Monday to Friday, 8:00- 4:00. They are located in the Carleton Technology Building on the east side of campus. Check out their website at www.carleton.ca/health.