

**Carleton University**  
**Summer 2018**  
**ENGL 4115 (Culture and the Text)/ENGL 5900 (Selected Topics)**  
**Tu/Th: 11:35-2:25**  
**Location: TBD**  
**Instructor: Franny Nudelman**  
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**Office: 1814 Dunton Tower, Phone: x1773**

### **CULTURE IN CRISIS: WAR, POVERTY, CLIMATE**

In this course, we will consider writers, photographers, and filmmakers who have responded to the urgent and interrelated contemporary crises of war, poverty, forced migration, and climate change. What role does literary and visual culture play in making disruptive change real, and helping us to comprehend conditions that are still in the process of unfolding? How do artists address the political and ethical dimensions of new social realities? The figures that we will study innovate, developing immersive creative practices in an effort to capture the extreme experiences of their subjects. At the same time, they often question and subvert the very rhetoric of emergency that characterizes our mediascape as well as a great deal of scholarship on socially-engaged contemporary culture.

#### **TEXTS**

##### **Literary**

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012)

TJ Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (2016)

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)

##### **Visual** (film, video, photography)

Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, *Trouble the Waters* (2008)

Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts* (Act I, 2006)

Richard Mosse, *The Enclave* (2013)

Renzo Martens, *Enjoy Poverty* (2009)

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (2004)

Jeff Wall, "Dead Troops Talk" (1992)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and books and films will be on reserve at the library. Readings/viewings marked with a \* will be posted on ARES or CU Learn.

#### **Attendance**

Please do not miss class for anything short of an emergency. If you miss more than one class your grade will be lowered one half-grade for each class (in excess of one) that you miss.

### **Assignments**

#### **Journal/Blog**

You will write at least three substantive entries each week for your journal or blog that address both the texts that we are studying and the conversations that we have about them. Through this assignment, you will create a record of our work in the class and have a chance to explore your ideas as they develop. In your journal/blog, feel free to write informally, and to test ideas that are not yet fully formed.

#### **Research Project**

At the end of the term, you will submit a research project that focuses on one of the authors or artists that we have studied. This project may take the form of a research or biographical essay, an online exhibit, an annotated syllabus. We will discuss the assignment, and the various forms it might take, in much more detail throughout the course of the semester.

#### **Research Presentation**

You will give a brief research presentation (10-15 minutes) based on your research project.

### **Evaluation**

Your final grade will be based on class participation (35%); journal/blog (20%); research project (30%); research presentation (15%).

### **Policies:**

#### **Request For Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

#### **Pregnancy obligation**

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

#### **Religious obligation**

Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

#### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities,

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the [PMC website](#) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

### Plagiarism

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else” without giving proper credit and documentation or submitting the same assignment in more than one class. This means using someone else’s ideas in any format, printed or online (whether from a scholarly essay, a student essay, a website, or even just a blog commentary). If you find yourself tempted to use someone else’s ideas or words because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to make sure you to do work of the highest integrity. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, ranging from a disciplinary meeting with the Associate Dean of the faculty, failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the university. 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 with documentation.

### **MAY**

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Introduction

Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts* (Act I, 2006)  
(watch in class)

10

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*  
Jeff Wall, "Dead Troops Talk"

15

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room*

\*Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chs. 1 and 2)

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\*Richard Mosse, selected images, interviews, videos

\*Teju Cole, "Natives on the Boat," from *Known and Strange Things* (2016)

22

Renzo Martens, *Enjoy Poverty*

TJ Demos, \*"The Haunting: Renzo Martens's *Enjoy Poverty*," from *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (2013) and Introduction to *Decolonizing Nature*

24

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

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Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

\*Rob Nixon, Introduction to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)

31

Ben Lerner, *10:04*

TJ Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, Chs. 1, 2

## **JUNE**

5

*10:04*

*Decolonizing Nature*, Chs. 5, 6

7

Finish *Decolonizing Nature*

\*Jonathan Franzen, "The End of the End of the World" (2016)

12

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

14

*Citizen*

Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, *Trouble the Waters* (2008)

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Last Class

Research Projects Due