

**Carleton University**  
**Fall 2016**  
**Department of English**  
**ENGL 4709A: Studies in American Lit. II**  
**DOCUMENTARY STORYTELLING**  
*Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing in Honours English*  
**Monday: 2:35-5:25**  
**Location: TBA**  
**Instructor: Franny Nudelman**  
**e-mail: franny\_nudelman@carleton.ca**  
**Office: 1814 Dunton Tower, Phone: x1773**  
**Office Hours: Wednesday 11-1, and by appointment**

PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR CLASSROOM WILL BE DEVICE FREE: NO LAPTOPS, E-READERS, OR CELL PHONES ALLOWED. IF YOU THINK THIS WILL BOTHER YOU DO NOT ENROLL FOR THIS COURSE.

**Course Description:** This course explores the coming-of-age of documentary storytelling in the United States after WWII. We will read narrative journalism that employs fictional technique as a method of reporting; novels rooted in historical event; memoirs that blur the boundary between recollection and invention; speculative documentary that attempts to accurately depict our collective future. Aware that the realities of contemporary experience often outstrip imagination, the authors we will read innovate in order to make reality credible.

**Trigger Warning:** Most of the books that we will read this semester contain graphic descriptions of violence. Certainly, these will be upsetting to read; indeed, many of these writers aim to upset their readers in order to raise awareness and provoke reflection. If you take this course, it is important that you be ready to encounter such material, and to discuss the representation of violence.

**Reading:**

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and on reserve at the library. Because ours is a device free classroom, you will need to buy the books or plan to read them at the library. Readings marked with a \* will be in a course reader, also available from *Haven Books*.

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

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1965)

John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946)

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)

Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts* (2007)

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)

Claudia Rankin, *Citizen* (2014)

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (1980)

### **Evaluation and Assignments:**

Your final grade will be based on class participation (30%); two essays (40%); journal (20%); research presentation (10%).

### **Class Participation**

Class participation will make up a significant portion of your grade. This grade will reflect not only your contribution to our conversations, but also your ability to listen and respond to the ideas of others in the class, and your attendance record. You can each miss one class with no penalty. With each additional absence, your class participation grade will be lowered one letter grade.

### **Journal**

You will keep a journal in which you make at least three entries each week—one in response to the week's reading, one in response to papers circulated on CU Learn in advance of class, and one in response to class discussion. This assignment is meant to give you a chance to work through your ideas, and to keep a record of our class discussions. These entries should be substantial—between 1 and 2 typed pages. In your journal, feel free to write spontaneously, and to explore and test ideas that are not yet fully formed. Please bring your journal with you to our class meetings, and plan to hand it in at the end of the term.

### **Essays**

Over the course of the semester, you will write two linked essays that develop research into one of the texts that we read this term. You will sign up early on for the text that you want to work on. On the Friday before we meet to discuss your text, you will submit a five-page research paper to the class. These essays will be submitted on CU Learn and will not be accepted after 5pm on Friday. As we will discuss these essays in class, it is mandatory that everyone read them carefully before our Monday meeting.

This short essay will provide the basis for a longer research essay that is due at the end of the term.

### **Research Presentation**

During the last week of the semester, each of you will give a presentation in which you summarize your research and use it to reflect on the work we have done during the term.

### **Policies:**

#### **Laptops and Cell Phones**

Please note that our classroom will be device-free. Each week one student will volunteer to take notes (on a laptop) for the entire group. These notes will be posted on CU Learn. Otherwise, the only students allowed to use laptops in the classroom will be those with special permission from the Paul Menton Centre. Likewise, students will not be allowed to use cell phones or other devices for any purpose during class.

## **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 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.

**Class Schedule:**

SEPTEMBER

12

Introduction

19

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

\*Mary McCarthy, "A Letter to the Editor of *politics*" (1946) and "The Fact in Fiction" (1960)

\*Philip Roth, "Writing American Fiction" (1961)

26

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

OCTOBER

3

Finish *In Cold Blood*

\*Joan Didion, "The White Album" (1979)

THANKSGIVING

17

Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts*

FALL BREAK

31

Art Spiegelman, *Maus*

NOVEMBER

7

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

14

Claudine Rankin, *Citizen*

21

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

28

Ben Lerner, *10:04*

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

DECEMBER

5

Presentations

9

Presentations