

Carleton University
Winter 2019
ENGL 5610W (Studies in Contemporary Lit)
/CLMD 6102W (Issues in Transnationalism)
Monday: 2:35-5:25
Location: 201D St Patrick's Building
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
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Office: 1814 Dunton Tower, Phone: x1773
Office Hours: Th Noon-2 p.m., and by appointment

CULTURE IN CRISIS: WAR, MIGRATION, 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.

Books

Lynsey Addario, *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War* (2015)
Dave Eggers, *What is the What* (2006)
Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)
Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* (2014)
Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)

Film/Video

Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, *Trouble the Waters* (2008)
Childish Gambino, "This is America" (2018)
Tim Hetherington, "Diary" (2010)
Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts, Act II* (2006)
Renzo Martens, *Enjoy Poverty* (2009)
Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (2004)

Secondary Sources

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable* (2009)
Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014)
Wendy Kozol, *Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing* (2014)

Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (2012)
Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)
Nikhil Singh, *Race and America's Long War* (2017)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and books and films will be on reserve at the library. Relevant chapters from secondary sources, marked with a * on the syllabus, will be available on ARES.

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

You will keep a journal in which you make at least two entries each week—one in response to the week's reading/viewing, 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. In your journal, feel free to write informally, and to explore and test ideas that are not yet fully formed. Please bring your journal with you to class, and plan to hand it in at the end of the semester.

Essays

You will write three essays: a short comment (1-2 pages, circulated to the class) that presents a particular author or artist's commentary on his/her work; a 4-5 page essay on imaging climate change, due in class on February 11; a 10-12 page research essay or project that is due on the last day of class. We will discuss these assignments in more detail once the term begins.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on class participation (35%); journal (15%); essays (50%).

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 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.

January

7

Introduction

Spike Lee, “When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts, Act II”

14

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, and

*"In Plato's Cave," in *On Photography* (1977)
Jeff Wall, "Dead Troops Talk"

21

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room*

*Susie Linfield, "Photojournalism and Human Rights: The Calamity of the Kodak," in *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (pp. 32-62, notes, 268-72)

*Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Grievable Life," in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (pp. 1-32)

28

Lynsey Addario, *It's What I Do*

Tim Hetherington, "Diary"

<https://vimeo.com/18497543>

*Wendy Kozol, "Human Rights, Visual Rhetoric: Photojournalism and the War in Afghanistan," in *Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing* (pp. 61-94, notes, 216-18)

February

4

National Art Gallery, "Anthropocene"

<https://www.gallery.ca>

11

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "Global Warming of 1.5° C (2018)

http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/special-reports/sr15/sr15_spm_final.pdf

Carolyn Korman, "The Dire Warnings of the United Nations' Latest Climate-Change Report" (2018)

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-dire-warnings-of-the-united-nations-latest-climate-change-report>

Elizabeth Kolbert, "How to Write About a Vanishing World" (2018)

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/15/how-to-write-about-a-vanishing-world>

*Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence* (pp. 1-44, notes, 284-91)

First Essay (4-5 pages) due in class

Winter Break

25

Dave Eggers, *What is the What*

March

4

Eggers, "It Was Just Boys Walking"

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>

Renzo Martens, "Enjoy Poverty" (watch in class)

11

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

Childish Gambino, "This is America"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY>

*Nikhil Singh, "The Long War" introduction to *Race and America's Long War* (pp. 1-34, notes, 194-203)

18

Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, "Trouble the Waters"

Richard Mosse, selected images and interviews, tbd

25

Ben Lerner, *10:04*

April

1

Finish *10:04*

Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Thing with Feathers" (2014)

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

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/23/jonathan-franzen-goes-to-antarctica>

8

Last Class

Final Essay or project due in class