

**Carleton University
Fall 2016
Department of English**

**ENGL 5610F (Studies in Contemporary Lit)
/CLMD 6104 (Issues in Cultural Politics)**

**Wednesday: 11:25-2:25
Location: 201 St Patrick's Building
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
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Office: 1814 Dunton Tower, Phone: x1773
Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5, 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.

TEXTS

Literary

Lynsey Addario, *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War* (2015)

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

Dave Eggers, *What is the What* (2007)

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)

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

Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1855)

Visual (film, video, photography)

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

Tim Hetherington, "Sleeping Soldiers" (2008) and *Diary* (2010)

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

Richard Mosse, *The Enclave* (2014)

Renzo Martens, *Enjoy Poverty* (2009)

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room* (2004)

Jeff Wall, "Dead Troops Talk," (1992)

Secondary

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004)

James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity* (2007)

Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (2012)

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

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

T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (2013)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and on reserve at the library. Readings marked with a * will be in a course reader, also available from *Haven Books*. Texts marked with ** will be posted or linked to 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

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.

Essays

This semester, you will each write three essays. The first will be a five-page research essay that you circulate to the class, and will deal with one of the texts from our syllabus. It is due by 5 o'clock on the Monday before we meet to discuss the text that you are writing about. Late essays will not be accepted. The second essay, due on November 30, will apply one of the secondary works that we read to a photograph that attempts in some way to image climate change. You will each present your image and summarize your essay at our class meeting that day. The third essay, due at the end of the term, will be an expansion of one of these essays.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on class participation (35%); journal (15%); two essays (40%); essay expansion(10%).

Policies:

Device-Free Classroom

In order to enable concentration and collaboration, most weeks that we meet our classroom will be device free. That means: no laptops, e-readers, or cell phones. The only students allowed to use laptops in the classroom will be those with special permission from the Paul Menton Centre.

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.

SEPTEMBER

7

Introduction

14

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Jeff Wall, "Dead Troops Talk"

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

21

Richard Mosse, "Enclave"

Tim Hetherington, "Sleeping Soldiers" and "Diary"

*T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image* (selected chapters)

28

Lynsey Addario, *It's What I Do*

Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room*

OCTOBER

5

Dave Eggers, *What is the What*

12

finish *What*

**Dave Eggers, "It Was Just Boys Walking"

*James Dawes, *That the World May Know* (selected chapters)

19

Spike Lee, "When the Levees Broke, Act I"

Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, "Trouble the Waters"

*Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (selected chapters)

FALL BREAK

NOVEMBER

2

Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

*Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence* (selected chapters)

9

finish Boo

**Slow Violence* (selected chapters)

Renzo Martens, "Enjoy Poverty" (2009)

16

no class

23

Ben Lerner, *10:04*

*Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

30

Our archive of climate-related photographs

Second Essay Due in Class

DECEMBER

7

*Elizabeth Kolbert, *Notes on a Catastrophe* (selected essays)

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