NEW YORK UNIVERSITY AT LA PIETRA

THE TWO WORLD WARS IN LITERATURE
COLIT-UA 9190 002
PROF. DOROTHEA BARRETT
Thursdays 10.30 – 1.15
SYLLABUS
PROFESSOR: DOROTHEA BARRETT (cell phone 3487295602; e-mail addresses: dorothea.barrett@nyu.edu and dlbarret@svr.fl.it) Ph.D. Cambridge University 1987. Dorothea Barrett has taught at Beijing Normal University (China), Glasgow University (Scotland), and the University of Florence. She is the author of Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines and various articles; she has edited works by George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, E. M. Forster, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, and others.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course focuses on literary representations of WWI and WWII. On the Blackboard site, you will find examples of the political and military rhetoric to which Montale and Hemingway objected, historical essays and images (war photographs, recruitment posters, etc.), and the shorter texts we are studying. Central themes in the course are the concepts of political literature and historical fiction and the contrasting approaches and theoretical premises of classical realism and modernism. Among the supplementary sources available in the Villa Ulivi library are two good cultural histories on the subject: James Shehan Where Have All the Soldiers Gone and Mark Mazower Dark Continent. Other recurring issues will be gender, sexuality, religion, class politics, kitsch, psychoanalysis, rhetoric, and power.

THE BOOKS WE’LL BE READING THIS SEMESTER

The books are available at Feltrinelli International, Via Cavour 12r (phone: 055 292 196; fax: +39 055 282183; e-mail: firenze.international@lafeltrinelli.it). Other readings are in the electronic course pack on the Blackboard site.
Sebastian Faulks, Birdsong
Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms
Pat Barker, Regeneration
Christopher Isherwood, The Berlin Stories
Kazuo Ishiguru, The Remains of the Day
Primo Levi, If This is a Man
Ian McEwan, Atonement
Irène Némirovsky, Suite Française
Wladyslaw Szpilman, The Pianist
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS: the following films are available in the Villa Ulivi library or from me (those marked with an asterisk): *Oh What a Lovely War!, Das Boot, Cabaret* (based on Isherwood's *The Berlin Stories*), *The Pianist, The Remains of the Day*, *Behind the Lines* (based on Pat Barker's *Regeneration*), Atonement, The Tin Drum, The Reader, Schindler's List, Miracle of St Anna, Life is Beautiful.

WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS: two tests and a term project.

Tests: Each test will consist of a series of quotations from texts we have read. Identify all the passages, naming the author and the text and giving the date of publication. Then choose four passages and write a paragraph of commentary on each. Test 2 will only deal with texts read since Test 1. Your comments do not have to be original, but they must be detailed, accurate, and show a good grasp of the deeper issues raised in each passage as they relate to the text as a whole.

Term project: WE'VE GONE GREEN; PLEASE SUBMIT ESSAYS AND PRESENTATION OUTLINES AS WORD DOCUMENTS ATTACHED TO E-MAILS. Your term project will count for 40% of your final course grade. You can either do a class presentation or an essay. The presentation involves running the seminar for half an hour, presenting an original interpretative idea on one of the texts we are reading or some aspect of the historical background. You should send me one page of notes and the Power Point (if you use one) the day before you give the presentation. The essay (2500 words max) can be on any of the authors we have studied, and the subject is entirely up to you, but it is a good idea to send me your title and thesis statement before you begin to write, so that I can warn you of likely problems. Essays can be as broad or as narrow as you wish. For example, you can write about one idea or image that runs through *The Remains of the Day*, analyze one scene or character from the novel, or compare and contrast the novel and the film.

Grading: When marking essays, I reserve A-range grades for work that is interesting, analytical, original, complex, convincing, and written in good English. When marking presentations, I use the same criteria as for essays, except that in place of the last criterion you will be evaluated on the quality of your delivery. I only give Fs in cases of plagiarism or failure to submit. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Test 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Class Participation (ACP)</td>
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ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION: Attendance is mandatory. I'll give you one absence for free, but any absence after the first that is not excused by illness (with a doctor's note the following week), religious holiday (in a religion of which you are a practicing member), or an e-mail to me from the Office of Academic Support will entail a dock of one letter from your ACP grade. For example, if your class participation is excellent but you are absent twice, you will receive a B for attendance and class participation.

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1 Here "original" does not mean that no one has ever come up with the idea before; it means that the idea was not discussed in class or found on the internet or in the recommended reading; it means, in short, that you thought of it yourself.

2 Here "convincing" does not mean that I agree with it; it means that your argument was supported with evidence from the text that an opponent would have trouble refuting.
participation; if you are absent three times, you will receive a C; if you are absent 4 times, even if the absences were the result of illness with a doctor's note, you will fail the course. Lively intelligent class participation and no more than one absence will earn you an A for ACP. Absolute silence, sleeping in class, whispering to your neighbor, reading or writing something else during lectures or seminar discussion, or making inane time-wasting remarks will result in a poor grade for class participation. Good participation is not only a matter of talking but also of listening and responding to what others have to say.

COURSE CALENDAR

There are supplementary readings in the authors' folders on the Blackboard site.

SESSION 1 (8 Sep): Introduction
At the beginning of the session, we will introduce ourselves and discuss the syllabus. I will then give a Power Point presentation on the history of WWI.

SESSION 2 (Friday 9 Sep - make-up class): We will use this session to plan your term projects for the semester, scheduling class presentations and discussing ways to make the course as interesting and stimulating as possible.

SESSION 3 (15 Sep): The British War Poets of WWI
Required reading: read Birdsong for next week; the readings for this week are in the section of the electronic course pack entitled "War Poets of WWI"; we will read them aloud in class.

SESSION 4 (22 Sep): Birdsong
Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the novel.
Required reading: Sebastian Faulks, Birdsong.

SESSION 5 (29 Sep): Rejecting Rhetoric: Hemingway and Montale
Power Point presentation on Hemingway and Montale, followed by seminar discussion of Hemingway's novel and Montale's poems.
Required reading: Hemingway's, A Farewell to Arms; Montale, selected poems.

SESSION 6 (6 Oct): Shellshock and Poetry: Pat Barker's Regeneration
Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the novel and a viewing of a scene from the film. The session will end with a review for Test 1.
Required reading: Pat Barker, Regeneration

SESSION 7 (13 Oct): TEST 1.

SESSION 8 (22 Oct): Between the Wars: Harold Acton and his Literary Circle
This is the point in the course when we turn from WWI to WWII. Power Point presentation on Acton's literary friends at Oxford and their subsequent works, followed by discussion of Isherwood's The Berlin Stories, Greene's short story "The Destructors," and extracts from Waugh's novel Brideshead Revisited.
The session will end with a tour of Harold Acton's home - the Villa La Pietra - in the last hour of class time.

**Required reading:** Graham Greene, "The Destructors"; Evelyn Waugh, excerpts from *Brideshead Revisited*; Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories*.

Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the novel and a viewing of a central scene in the film.

**Required reading:** Kazuo Ishiguru, *The Remains of the Day*

**SESSION 10 (29 Oct): Primo Levi**
Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the book.

**Required reading:** Primo Levi, *If This is a Man*

**MIDTERM BREAK**

**SESSION 11 (10 Nov): Field trip to the American Cemetery outside Florence; return to Florence city center to view the war memorial in Piazza della Unità and visit the Caffè Giubbe Rosse in Piazza della Repubblica, where Montale and other ant-Fascist poets used to meet.**

**SESSION 12 (17 Nov): Ian McEwan**
Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the novel and the viewing of a central scene from the film.

**Required reading:** Ian McEwan, *Atonement*

**SESSION 13 (24 Nov): Irène Némirovsky**
Power Point presentation followed by seminar discussion of the novel.

**Required reading:** Irene Némirovsky, *Suite Française*

**SESSION 14 (1 Dec): The Pianist: the film and the book**
A viewing of scenes from the film *The Pianist*, followed by seminar discussion of the film and the book.

The session will end with a review for the final exam.

**Required reading:** Władysław Szpilman, *The Pianist*. The session will end with a review for Test 2.

**Thursday 8 December - holiday - no classes.**

**SESSION 15 (15 Dec): TEST 2.**
**Required writing:** All term projects not yet submitted are due today.