

Writing Seminar I: The Cultural Impacts of World War II
Gallatin -- Fall 2008
M/W 3:30 – 4:45

Professor: Kimberly Lewis

Office Hours: Monday 2:15 – 3:15, 715 Bway, Room 431

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Course Description:

More than any other war, World War II represented a breakdown and a turning point in our concept of Western civilization; thus, representations of the war have abounded in our literature, TV, film, newspapers. What about this particular war led artists to question not just the nature of violence, but also our notions of progress, rational thought, human-ity, and even language, literature, and representation? How has this war been represented through the years, beginning with journalistic reports from the front? Why do so many films and books continue to re-evaluate and re-write it? Finally, what tropes, clichés, and assumptions about this war continue to influence our ways of thinking and speaking about it?

This course will focus on writing as a process, helping you to discover yourself as a writer and encouraging you to envision writing as a skill to learn and a craft to be improved upon. We will explore various stages of the writing process, including free writing, multiple drafting, revising, editing, and polishing. This course will also include an introduction to the library and to research skills and techniques. Finally, there will be a workshop component to this course as well, in which we will discuss, critique, and edit each other's written work.

Readings and Films:

All of the readings and films deal with the events and the impact of World War II. We begin with journalistic works on the actual events of the war, and then move on to study different themes: 1. Ideology and resistance 2. Fiction, language, and the role of literature after the war 3. Writing the camps 4. The bomb.

Course Requirements and Grades:

PARTICIPATION

It is crucial that you attend all class sections, and that you come prepared with the written responses, drafts, readings, and other materials that will be discussed each day. If you must be absent, please inform me *ahead of time* and please submit all written work that is due *before* the class begins if you are not able to attend. In addition, you are *required* to participate in class discussions! The participation of each student is vital to the success of the class as a whole, and excessive absences (more than 2) may jeopardize your grade.

READING RESPONSES

You will have a response to your reading due almost every class. Sometimes I will distribute a topic for you to focus on in these responses, and other times you will be free to write on any topic of your choosing. You should bring a hard copy to class for discussion, and the responses should be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ page (and it will often be longer). Remember that these early responses will help you both to participate in our discussions and to write your paper later, so they are an important part of your writing and thinking process. You should keep them all together, as an ongoing discourse with yourself about the themes of the course. Late responses will not be accepted.

PAPERS

There will be four longer written assignments in this course. You will be required to bring your writing to class at various stages of completion, so please pay close attention to due dates written on the syllabus and to future due dates that will be posted on Blackboard! The last two of these papers will have a research component. You will be able to revise the first three papers, but you must turn in your revisions no more than 1 week after receiving your graded paper.

PRESENTATION:

Each student will be required to give a 10 minute mini-presentation (with a partner if you wish) on the background and importance of one of the authors we study in this course.

GRADE

Your grade will be based on both the quality of your written work and on the quality of your participation in class discussion and writing workshops activities.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a grave offense, and will be treated as such in this course. Any case of plagiarism will result in an F in this course, and further disciplinary action in accordance with Gallatin policies. If you have any doubts about how or when to cite the work of another scholar, ASK!

Required Texts:

1. Course Packet
2. Günter Grass, *Cat and Mouse*
3. W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*
4. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*
5. Imre Kertész, *Liquidation*

In addition, we will be watching several films. They will be placed on reserve during the entire week before our class discussion, and you will be responsible for watching the film on your own.

Sept 3	Introduction	
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Sept 8	Discussion of perspectives: Flanner, "December 15..." and Sebald, "On the Natural History of Destruction"	Read: Flanner, "December 15", "May 11" and Sebald, "On the Natural History of Destruction" pp. 3 - 32 Write: Free write on WWII
Sept 10	--Continuation of discussion Sebald, "On the Natural History of Destruction" -- Discussion of narrative essay	Read: Finish Sebald, "On the Natural History of Destruction" Write: Response to Sebald (personal response to new perspective)
Ideology, Resistance		
Sept 15	-- Discussion of ideology and Arendt, "Ideology and Terror" -- Discussion of strategies for reading difficult essays	***Narrative Essay Due*** Read: Arendt, "Ideology and Terror" (on JSTOR and linked from Blackboard) Write: Questions and confusions raised by Arendt article
Sept 17	-- Camus, "The Rebel" -- Discussion of Essay 2	Read: Camus, "The Rebel" Write: Response to Camus and ideology discussion
Sept 22	-- Calvino: "One of the Three..."	Read: Calvino "One of the Three" Write: Response to Calvino (on fiction and expressing ideology)
Sept 24	-- Discussion of FILM: "Army of Shadows"	Watch: "Army of Shadows" Write: Response to Film
Sept 29	Writing Workshop, Essay 2	Write: Draft of Essay 2 (bring to class)
War Experience and Fiction		
Oct 1	-- Discussion and comparison of Sartre: "Presentation..." and Adorno, "Commitment..."	Read: Sartre: "Presentation...", Adorno: "Commitment" Write: Comparative response to Adorno and Sartre

Oct 6	-- Continuation of Sartre and Adorno -- discussion of critical essay	Essay 2 Due
Oct 8	Visit to library	***Bring a potential research topic***
Oct 15	-- Grass: <i>Cat and Mouse</i>	Read: Grass through pp. 100 Write: Response to Grass
Oct 20	-- Continue discussion of <i>Cat and Mouse</i> -- Discussion of Essay 3: Finding a topic	Read: Finish reading Grass Write: Response to Grass
Oct 22	-- Vonnegut: <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i>	Read: Vonnegut Write: Response to Vonnegut
Oct 27	-- Continuing discussion of Vonnegut -- Discussion of Paul Fussell	Read: Fussell Write: Response to Vonnegut based on Fussell Due: Paper Topics, essay 3
Oct 29	Writing Workshop, Essay 3	Write: Drafts Essay 3 (bring to class)
Nov 3	Orwell: "Politics and the English Language" -- discussion of argument essay	Read: Orwell: "Politics..." (online) http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm Write: Response to Orwell
Telling of the Camps		
Nov 5	Intro discussion, Gellhorn	Essay 3 Due Read: Gellhorn, "Dachau" Write: Response to Gellhorn
Nov 10	Robert Antelme: "The Road"	Read: Antelme: "The Road"

		Write: Questions and confusions about Antelme
Nov 12	-- Antelme (continue discussion) -- Discussion of final research paper	Write: Response to Antelme
Nov 17	-- Discussion of Celan's "Deathfuge" -- Discussion of research techniques	Read: Celan, "Deathfuge" http://humwww.ucsc.edu/jewishstudies/celanconf/deathfuge.html Write: Findings of mini-research assignment on Celan
Nov 19	Kertész, <i>Liquidation</i>	Read: Kertész pp. 1 – 81 Write: General response to Kertész
Nov 24	Kertész, <i>Liquidation</i>	Read: Finish Kertész Write: Response to Kertész (on the difficulty of telling)
Nov 26	Kertész, <i>Liquidation</i>	
Dec 1	Discussion of film: "Fatelessness"	Watch: "Fatelessness" Write: Response to "Fatelessness"
Dec 3	Writing Workshop	Write: Drafts of Final Paper (bring to class)
Dec 8	Discussion of film: "Black Rain" and excerpts from <i>Hiroshima</i> (to be distributed)	Watch: "Black Rain" Read: excerpts from Hiroshima (to be distributed) Write: Response to "Black Rain"
Dec. 10	Wrap ups, evals	