

ENGLISH 384: LITERARY RESPONSES TO WAR AND PEACE

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231 LHH (331-8573)
Office hours: MW 10:00-12:00 or by appt.
<http://secondaryworlds.com>

Required Texts

Brittain, Vera. *Testament of Youth*
Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*
Litoff, Judy, and David Smith. *Since You Went Away*
O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I and Maus II*
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five*
Ward, Candace. *World War One British Poets*
One war film of your choice for film circle

Course Description

This course seeks to introduce you to a range of literary texts concerned with war and its aftermath, while giving you the interpretative skills broadly applicable to other literary works. Through large and small group discussion, writing assignments, and other means, we will examine how war is represented in a range of genres and from a variety of perspectives, discover unifying themes across time and place, and explore how language both limits and expands our understanding of human conflict and bloodshed. The texts we read will be drawn from wars of the twentieth century, but will be situated in an unavoidably contemporary context, as we make deliberate connections to current global events.

Teaching Philosophy and Classroom Policies

I believe that a student-centered classroom is the most effective learning environment. This means our class will depend on your ideas and input, in group discussions and other collaborative activities. Consequently, your attendance, preparation, and participation are especially important. While I encourage you to attend every class, you may miss two without penalty. Additional absences will harm your grade, except when circumstances are beyond your control, as in family tragedy or serious illness. Missing three or more meetings may result in failing this class. Please submit all work electronically to rozemar@gvsu.edu. Late work will not receive full credit.

If there is any student in this class who has special needs because of a learning, physical or other disability, please contact Disability Support Services (200 Student Services Building) at 331-2490.

The Meijer Writing Center (Lake Ontario Hall 120, 331-2922) can help you with your academic writing. Its large staff is dedicated to assisting you as you brainstorm topics, organize content, complete research, polish a draft, or document sources. Please take advantage of this service.

9-1 T Introduction

9-3 R World War One—Poetry

World War One British Poets: Brooke, Owen, and Sassoon

Create Wordpress Blog and Google Reader account

Email Wordpress URL to RR

9-10 R World War One—Poetry

World War One British Poets

Remainder

Blog: First post due

9-15 T World War One—Memoir

Testament of Youth: Oxford Versus War (94-134)

9-17 R World War One—Memoir

Testament of Youth: Learning Versus Life

(135-204)

Blog: Second post due

9-22 T World War One—Memoir

Testament of Youth: Camberwell Versus Death (205-236)

9-24 R

Testament of Youth: When the Vision Dies

(237-289)

Blog: Third post due

9-29 T World War One—Drama

The Ghosts May Laugh (online) Act I

Introduce midterm exam

10-1 R World War One—Drama

The Ghosts May Laugh (online) Act II

Blog: Fourth post due

10-6 T World War Two—Documentary Film

Alfred Hitchcock Documentary

10-8 R World War Two—Documentary Film

Nuremberg Trial Film

Blog: Fifth post due

10-13 T Midterm

Midterm exam due (email)

Introduce graphic novel

10-17 R World War Two—Graphic Novel

Maus I: My Father Bleeds History

10-20 T World War Two—Graphic Novel

Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began

Blog: Sixth post due

10-22 R World War Two—Memoir

Survival in Auschwitz Ch. 1-4

10-27 T World War Two—Memoir

Survival in Auschwitz Ch. 5-12

10-29 R World War Two—Memoir

Survival in Auschwitz Ch. 13-17

Blog: Seventh post due

11-3 T World War Two—Letters

Since You Went Away Ch. 1-5

11-5 R World War Two—Letters

Since You Went Away Ch. 6-9

Blog: Eighth post due

11-10 T World War Two—Novel

Slaughterhouse Five Ch. 1-3

11-12 R World War Two—Novel

Slaughterhouse Five Ch. 4-6

Blog: Ninth post due

11-17 T World War Two—Novel

Slaughterhouse Five Ch. 7-10

11-19 R

Class Cancelled

11-24 T The Vietnam War—Short Stories

The Things They Carried (1-66)

Blog: Tenth post due

12-1 T The Vietnam War—Short Stories

The Things They Carried (67-123)

12-3 R The Vietnam War—Short Stories

The Things They Carried (124-246)

12-8 T Film Circle

12-10 R Workshop/Conference

12-15 T 4:00

Final exam due

1. Blog (25%)

If the first Gulf War was known as the CNN war, today's conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan might be called web wars. Much of our information about these conflicts comes from blogs, Youtube, podcasts, Twitter, and other online sources. This coverage is often more current, more honest, and more varied than the mainstream media's broadcast news. Military blogs written by active soldiers, for example, give us first-hand accounts of daily life in a war zone.

Throughout this semester, you will keep your own blog, posting a total of ten 300-500 word entries. Your blog will be more than a paper journal moved to the web, however. You will use another tool called an RSS aggregator (or feed reader) to locate and read current articles about a current war of your own choice. These articles, drawn from major newspapers, media outlets, military blogs, and podcasts, will help you connect course readings to the current global conflicts. Each of your posts will make specific links between the material we read in class and the articles you find with your feed reader.

The main idea of this assignment is for you to recognize similarities in the themes and language of wartime texts—even when those texts are digital and published to the web. You should also post ten comments of 200 words each to your classmates' blogs. Please see the course calendar for due dates. More details will follow.

2. Small Group Discussions (10%)

This course aims to help you become critical, engaged, and self-sufficient readers of literary texts. To this end, you will meet from time to time in small groups to discuss course readings and films. I'll be observing these conversations and occasionally participating in them from time to time. At the end of the semester, your small group will meet to discuss a war movie of your choice. This final conversation, in addition to your periodic discussions, will determine your grade in this category.

3. Midterm Exam (25%)

The midterm exam (take home) will ask you to write a comparative analysis of two course readings: Your task will be to put these texts into conversation with each other, discussing each carefully in a 3-5 page response. More details will follow.

4. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam (take home) will ask you to analyze text(s) that you have not previously read, using the interpretive skills you have developed throughout the semester. You will be expected to draw on your knowledge of war themes and genre conventions to produce a convincing close reading of the text(s). More details will follow.

5. Attendance and Participation (10%)

You will receive full credit if you miss no more than two classes and participate in large group discussions.