

HL 2015 War in Literature and Film

(AY 2018/2019, Semester 2)

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang
michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg

Class meets	Thursday	11.30am – 2.30pm	HSS Seminar Room 7
Office hours	Tuesday	2.30pm – 3.30pm	HSS 03-57
	Thursday	2.30pm – 3.30pm	HSS 03-57

Course Description and Objectives

HL 2015 examines representations of war in literature and film, with a focus on twentieth and twenty-first century literary texts. Kate McLoughlin (2012) notes that “[t]here is something counterintuitive about ‘the literature of war’” in that even as it foregrounds the devastating consequences of “pursuing armed conflict, exposes its atrocities, and argues for peace,” war literature is a double-edged sword that might simultaneously “perpetuate war, glorify violence, and obscure suffering” (*The Literature of War* xi). Such paradoxes are at the heart of our examination in this course as we begin with the Greek tragedies, and examine how contemporary playwrights and filmmakers have refashioned such classical texts for the contemporary audience. The first half of the semester focuses on texts from a variety of mediums, including poetry, prose, plays, and films to examine a range of issues relating to genre, fictionality, aesthetics, ethics, ecocriticism, and representations of women, amongst others. In the second half of the semester, we focus on the Second World War and examine the diverse representations of this historical event from a range of identity positions, with an eye to formal and thematic issues, including ways in which humor, romance, and trauma shape such representations. We will also consider issues of historical transposition and adaptation to understand how literature and film shape our understanding of war.

Assessment

<i>Essay</i>	30%
<i>Quizzes</i>	15%
<i>Class presentation + participation</i>	15%
<i>Final Exam</i>	40%

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity is the foundation of scholarship. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will result in automatic failure of the course. For NTU’s policy on academic integrity, please consult: <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx>

Late Policy

All graded assignments are due in hard *and* soft copy by the start of class on the due dates. Late work will be accepted within twenty-four hours for a reduced grade, but will receive no instructor comments.

Attendance Policy

Your prepared and active participation is crucial to your success in the course. Three or more unexcused absences are subject to an overall grade reduction at the instructor's discretion.

Technology Policy

I welcome students to actively use technology to facilitate learning in the classroom, so long as it is being used on task. All quizzes and exams are closed-book, unless otherwise stated; please ensure all electronic devices including cellphones, tablets, computers, etc. are put away into your bags at that point.

Note: This preliminary syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

*

Texts

Bracht, Mary Lynn. *White Chrysanthemum*. Vintage Publishing, 2018.

Carr, Marina. *Plays 3: Sixteen Possible Glimpses; Phaedra Backwards; The Map of Argentina; Hecuba; Indigo*. Faber & Faber, 2015.

Euripedes. *Hecuba*.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. 1981. Anchor Books/Doubleday, 2009.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian*. 1985. Vintage International, 2007.

McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*. 2001. Anchor, 2003.

Films

Atonement (2007). Dir. Joe Wright.

Grave of the Fireflies (1988). Dir. Isao Takahata.

Life is Beautiful (1997). Dir. Roberto Benigni.

The English Patient (1996). Dir. Anthony Minghella.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001). Dir. Peter Jackson.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002). Dir. Peter Jackson.

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003). Dir. Peter Jackson.

*

Schedule

- Week 01 – 17 Jan Introduction
- Week 02 – 24 Jan Women and Greek tragedy (I)
- Poetry selection
 - W. B. Yeats, “When Helen Lived” (1914)
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=12885>
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36865/36865-h/36865-h.htm#page39>
 - W. B. Yeats, “No Second Troy” (1916)
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49772/no-second-troy>
 - W. B. Yeats, “Leda and the Swan” (1923)
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/leda-and-swan>
 - Rosario Castellanos, “Hecuba’s Testament” (trans. 1964) (NTU Learn)
 - Wisława Szymborska, “Soliloquy for Cassandra” (1967) (NTU Learn)
 - Eleanor Wilner, “Iphigenia, Setting the Record Straight” (1979) (NTU Learn)
 - Euripedes’ *Hecuba* (circa 424 BCE)
<http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/hecuba.pl.txt>
- Week 03 – 31 Jan Women and Greek tragedy (II)
- Marina Carr, *Hecuba* (2015)
- Week 04 – 07 Feb Aesthetics and Ethics (I)
- Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)
- Week 05 – 14 Feb Aesthetics and Ethics (II)
- Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)
- Week 06 – 21 Feb War and Fantasy (I): Ecocriticism and Animal Studies
- (Film) *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001)
 - (Film) *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002)
- Week 07 – 28 Feb War and Fantasy (II): Genre and Fictionality
- (Film) *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)
 - Assignment prompt: final essay

—07 Mar—RECESS—

- Week 09 – 14 Mar Love and Laughter: Cinematic Discourses
- (Film) *Life is Beautiful* (1997)
 - (Film) *The English Patient* (1996)
- Week 10 – 21 Mar Medium, Adaptation, and Representation
- (Film) *Atonement* (2007)
 - Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (2001)
- Week 11 – 28 Mar Historical Representation and Witness Literature
- Mary Lynn Bracht, *White Chrysanthemum* (2018) (up to p.155)
 - In-class writing session
- Week 12 – 04 Apr Focalizing WWII through Asia
- Mary Lynn Bracht, *White Chrysanthemum* (2018)
 - Final essays due
- Week 13 – 11 Apr Childhood and Trauma
- Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (1981)
 - (Film) *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988)
- Week 14 – 18 Apr Exam Review