

HL 2015 War in Literature and Film (AY 2019/2020, Semester 2)

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang
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Class meets **Wednesday** **9.30am – 12.30pm** **HSS Seminar Room 8
(School of Humanities)**

Office hours Tuesday 12.30pm – 1.30pm SHHK 03-57
 Wednesday 12.30pm – 1.30pm SHHK 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.

Note: Given the nature of the subject matter, the reading material assigned in this class is visceral and emotionally difficult, including extensive passages that detail rape, corporeal desecration, and other forms of abuse and extreme violence. This is something you will likely wish to factor into your decision to continue with the class or to choose a different course during the Add/Drop period.

Assessment

<i>Continuous Assessment</i>	50%
<i>Final Exam</i>	50%

Academic Integrity Policy

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU’s shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to [the academic integrity website \(https://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx\)](https://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Late Work 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. You may only do a make-up quiz/test for reasons that relate to an excused absence, with proper documentation such as a medical certificate, etc. Please note that it is your responsibility to get in touch with the instructor within five days of the missed class in order to arrange for a make-up.

Technology Policy

I welcome students to actively use technology to facilitate learning in the classroom, so long as it is being used on task and with one exception: no audio or video recording is allowed at any point during the lectures, seminars, and/or tutorials. 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.
- Euripides. *Hecuba*. [available online]
- McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*. 2001. Anchor, 2003.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *The Passion*. 1987. Vintage, 2014.
- [Poetry selection will be made available online and on NTU Learn.]

Films

- Atonement* (2007). Dir. Joe Wright.
- Grave of the Fireflies* (1988). Dir. Isao Takahata.
- Life is Beautiful* (1997). Dir. Roberto Benigni.
- 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.

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Schedule

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| Week 01 – 15 Jan | Introduction |
| Week 02 – 22 Jan | Women and Greek tragedy (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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) • Euripides’ <i>Hecuba</i> (circa 424 BCE)
 http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/hecuba.pl.txt |

Week 03 – <i>date TBA</i>	Narrating the Contemporary talk
Week 03 – 29 Jan	Women and Greek tragedy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marina Carr, <i>Hecuba</i> (2015)
Week 04 – 05 Feb	Aesthetics and Ethics (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeanette Winterson, <i>The Passion</i> (1987) (up to end of part 2)
Week 05 – 12 Feb	Aesthetics and Ethics (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeanette Winterson, <i>The Passion</i> (1987)
Week 06 – 19 Feb	War and Fantasy (I): Ecocriticism and Animal Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring</i> (2001) • (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers</i> (2002)
Week 07 – 26 Feb	War and Fantasy (II): Genre and Fictionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> (2003) • Assignment prompt: final essay <p style="text-align: center;">—04 Mar—RECESS—</p>
Week 08 – 11 Mar	Medium, Adaptation, and Representation I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001)
Week 09 – 18 Mar	Medium, Adaptation, and Representation II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001) • (Film) <i>Atonement</i> (2007)
Week 10 – 25 Mar	Historical Representation and Witness Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018) (up to p.155) • In-class writing session
Week 11 – 01 Apr	Focalizing WWII through Asia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018) • Final essays due
Week 12 – 08 Apr	Childhood and Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Film) <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (1997) • (Film) <i>Grave of the Fireflies</i> (1988)
Week 13 – 15 Apr	Exam Review