

# HL 2015 War in Literature and Film

(AY 2021/2022, Semester 2)

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang  
[michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg)

<b>Class meets</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>2.30pm – 5.20pm</b>	<b>LHS-TR-56 (Hive)</b>
<b>Office hours</b>	Monday	5.30pm – 6.30pm	SHHK 03-57 (School of Humanities)
	Wednesday	12.30pm – 1.30pm	SHHK 03-57



Image credit: Pablo Picasso. *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas. [Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia collection](https://www.museo-reina-sofia.es/en/guernica), Madrid.

*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 violence. You may wish to factor this into your decision during the Add/Drop period.*

## 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 the texts we examine in this course as we begin with the Greek tragedies, and analyze how contemporary playwrights and poets have refashioned such classical texts for audiences around the world.

The first half of the semester focuses on texts ranging from poetry, prose, plays, and film to examine issues relating to genre, fictionality, aesthetics, ethics, and more. In the second half of the semester, we focus on World War II and examine diverse representations of this historical catastrophe from a range of narrative 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 cultural artifacts such as literature and film shape our understanding of war.

## Assessment

<i>Final Exam</i>	<b>35%</b>
<i>Continuous Assessment</i>	<b>65%</b>
Participation (15%)	
Presentation (15%)	
Research essay (35%)	

## Academic Integrity Policy

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

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities, understand and apply the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is intended in maintaining academic integrity is not the same as academic dishonesty. You need to acquire equipment for 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 <https://ts.ntu.edu.sg/sites/intranet/dept/tlpd/ai/Pages/NTU-Academic-Integrity-Policy.aspx> for more information on [academic integrity](#). Please be reminded that in line with clause 4.1, repeating the work submitted to another course—whether at NTU or another institution—constitutes a violation of the policy and is subject to the relevant penalties. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

## Attendance Policy

Your prepared and active participation is crucial to your success in the course.

Should you feel unwell, please ***do not*** attend class and ***seek medical advice*** instead, and follow up with the instructor via email. If a member of your household or family has acute respiratory illness and/or tests positive for COVID-19, you should stay home to reduce the risk of community transmission; the School will accept the medical certificate of your family/household member as valid documentation for missing the class/assessment/test. You may only do a make-up quiz/test/presentation (where applicable) for reasons that relate to an excused absence, with proper documentation such as a medical certificate, which needs to be submitted to the School (with a copy via email to the instructor). Please note that it is your responsibility to get in touch with the instructor within five days of the missed session in order to arrange for a make-up.

In line with university and national public health policies, this class may transition to online synchronous learning as and when necessary.

## Late Work Policy

All graded assignments are due in hard *and* soft copy via Turnitin 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. (In the event that the course unexpectedly transitions to online learning, the hard copy requirement will be waived.)

## Technology Policy

Students are welcome 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. The instructor may use photographs/screen captures for attendance and contact tracing purposes. The classroom is meant to be a space where students feel comfortable to respectfully, critically, and constructively exchange ideas about the texts discussed. All quizzes, tests, and exams (where applicable) are closed-book, unless otherwise stated; please ensure all electronic devices including cellphones, tablets, computers, smart watches, etc. are put away into your bags at that point.

### University Copyright Statement

All course materials, including but not limited to, lecture slides, handout and recordings, are for your own educational purposes only. All the contents of the materials are protected by copyright, trademark or other forms of proprietary rights.

All rights, title and interest in the materials are owned by, licensed to or controlled by the University, unless otherwise expressly stated. The materials shall not be uploaded, reproduced, distributed, republished or transmitted in any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without written approval from the University.

You are also not allowed to take any photograph, film, audio record or other means of capturing images or voice of any contents during seminars/lectures/tutorials, and reproduce, distribute and/or transmit any form or by any means, in whole or in part, without the written permission from the University.

Appropriate action will be taken against you including but not limited to disciplinary proceeding and/or legal action if you are found to have committed any of the above infringing activities or your copy right.

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

\*

### Texts

Bracht, Mary Lynn. *White Chrysanthemum*. Vintage, 2018.  
Carr, Marina. *Plays 3 (Hecuba)*. Faber & Faber, 2015.  
Euripides. *Hecuba*. [available online]  
McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*. 2001. Anchor, 2003.  
Winterson, Jeanette. *The Passion*. 1987. Vintage, 2014.  
[Poetry selection is available online and on NTU Learn.]

### Films [on hold at Library Outpost]

*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.

\*

## Schedule

Week 01 – 10 Jan	Introduction
Week 02 – 17 Jan	Women and Greek tragedy (I): Poetry and Plays <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• W. B. Yeats, “When Helen Lived” (1914) <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36865/36865-h/36865-h.htm#page39">https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36865/36865-h/36865-h.htm#page39</a></li><li>• W. B. Yeats, “No Second Troy” (1916) <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49772/no-second-troy">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49772/no-second-troy</a></li><li>• W. B. Yeats, “Leda and the Swan” (1923) <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/leda-and-swan">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/leda-and-swan</a></li><li>• Rosario Castellanos, “Hecuba’s Testament” (trans. 1964) (NTU Learn)</li><li>• Wisława Szymborska, “Soliloquy for Cassandra” (1967) (NTU Learn)</li><li>• Eleanor Wilner, “Iphigenia, Setting the Record Straight” (1979) (NTU Learn)</li><li>• Euripides’ <i>Hecuba</i> (circa 424 BCE) <a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/hecuba.pl.txt">http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/hecuba.pl.txt</a></li></ul>
Week 03 – 24 Jan	Women and Greek tragedy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marina Carr, <i>Hecuba</i> (2015)</li></ul> <i>Assignment prompts</i>
Week 04 – 31 Jan	War and Fantasy (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring</i> (2001)</li><li>• (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers</i> (2002)</li></ul>
Week 05 – 07 Feb	War and Fantasy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> (2003)</li></ul>
Week 06 – 14 Feb	History through art’s prism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jeanette Winterson, <i>Passions</i> (1987) (up to end of part 2)</li></ul>
Week 07 – 21 Feb	History through art’s prisms (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jeanette Winterson, <i>The Passion</i> (1987)</li></ul> <i>Assignment prompt: final research essay</i>
—28 Feb—RECESS—	
Week 08 – 7 Mar	Historical Transpositions and Un/Reliability (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001) (up to end of Part II)</li></ul>
Week 09 – 14 Mar	Historical Transpositions and Un/Reliability (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001)</li><li>• (Film) <i>Atonement</i> (2007)</li></ul>
Week 10 – 21 Mar	Focalizing WWII through Asia (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018) (up to p.155)</li></ul>
Week 11 – 28 Mar	Focalizing WWII through Asia (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018)</li></ul> <i>Final essays due</i>
Week 12 – 04 Apr	Childhood and Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (Film) <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (1997)</li><li>• (Film) <i>Grave of the Fireflies</i> (1988)</li></ul>
Week 13 – 11 Apr	Exam Review