

HL 2015 War in Literature and Film

(AY 2022/2023, Semester 2)

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Class meets Wednesday 9.30am – 12.20pm HSS Seminar Room 9
Office hours – please make an appointment –
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 Luccioni Centro de Arte Reina Sofia collection](https://www.museo-luccioni.com/en/obra-de-arte-reina-sofia-collection), 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, which begins with the Greek tragedies—we will 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>	35%
<i>Continuous Assessment</i>	65%
Participation (15%)	
Presentation (15%)	
Research essay (35%)	

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 NTU's Academic Integrity policy page on the Student Intranet (<https://ts.ntu.edu.sg/sites/intranet/student/dept/tlpd/ai/Page%20NTU-Academic-Integrity-Policy.aspx>) for more information.

Please be reminded that in line with clause 4.1:

- repeating the work submitted to another course (whether at NTU or another institution, in part or in whole), and/or
- reusing material taught or submitted in another course ***without properly crediting source/s***

all constitute a violation of NTU's academic integrity policy and are subject to relevant penalties.

In line with NTU's Academic Integrity Policy, please attach the "Declaration of Authorship" form when you submit written assignments (available on NTU Learn). 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. You may only do a make-up quiz/test/presentation (where applicable) for reasons relating 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 quiz/test/presentation.

Late Work Policy

All graded assignments are due in hard copy *and* soft copy (to be submitted electronically on NTU Learn through the Turnitin dropbox) 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.

Technology Policy

Students are welcome to actively use technology to facilitate learning in the classroom (e.g. ebooks), so long as it is being used on task and with one exception: no audio, video, and/or screen recording is allowed at any point during the lectures, seminars, and/or tutorials. This also applies to online classes (where applicable). 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

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Appropriate action(s) will be taken against you (including and not limited to disciplinary proceedings and/or legal action) if you are found to have committed any of the above or infringed copyright.

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

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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

[NTU Library Reserves]

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

Week 01 – 11 Jan	Introduction
Week 02 – 18 Jan	Women and Greek tragedy (I): Poetry and Plays
Week 03 – 25 Jan	Women and Greek tragedy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marina Carr, <i>Hecuba</i> (2015) <i>Assignment prompts</i>
Week 04 – 01 Feb	War and Fantasy (I) <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 05 – 08 Feb	War and Fantasy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (Film) <i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> (2003)
Week 06 – 15 Feb	History through art's prisms (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeanette Winterson, <i>The Passion</i> (1987) (up to end of part 2)
Week 07 – 22 Feb	History through art's prisms (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeanette Winterson, <i>The Passion</i> (1987) <i>Assignment prompt: final research essay</i>
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Week 08 – 08 Mar	Focalizing WWII through Asia (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018) (up to p.155) <i>Presentations</i>
Week 09 – 15 Mar	Focalizing WWII through Asia (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mary Lynn Bracht, <i>White Chrysanthemum</i> (2018) <i>Presentations</i>
Week 10 – 22 Mar	Historical Transpositions and Un/Reliability (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001) (up to end of Part II) <i>Presentations</i>
Week 11 – 29 Mar	Historical Transpositions and Un/Reliability (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ian McEwan, <i>Atonement</i> (2001)• (Film) <i>Atonement</i> (2007) <i>Presentations</i> <i>Final essays due</i>
Week 12 – 05 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) <i>Presentations</i>
Week 13 – 12 Apr	Exam Review <i>Presentations</i>