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Office Hours: T/Th 9-10 and by appointment

English 151: Critical Thinking and Writing
Fighting Words: Narrating American Wars
T/TH 11-12:15; Clough 100

A Brief Course Description

In this course, we will look closely at both World War II and the Vietnam War, and discuss how these two particular wars have shaped and continue to shape American cultural consciousness. As a class, we will investigate the myriad ways these two wars are represented not only in historical accounts, but also in literary works, pieces of journalism, films, documentaries, photographic images, and memorials. We will ask how an understanding of war is shaped through these mediums and how, in turn, cultural consciousness is shaped through our understanding of a particular war. In other words, what “work” do these representations do? Do they re-write certain wars as part of a nation-building exercise or, conversely, do they work as a piece of protest? How do these texts work to complicate and dismantle previous assumptions regarding a particular war? By addressing these questions and many more, we will begin to form an understanding of how and why wars are scripted and remembered in very particular ways.

This class is designed to develop your ability to write clear and effective argumentative prose. We will approach writing not as a product, but as a process that involves recognizing, developing, and effectively expressing our most interesting questions as compelling arguments. Requiring the analysis of not only assigned readings, but also each other's writing, this class emphasizes revision as an indispensable part of the critical-thinking process.

Required Texts

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried* (1990)
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughter House – Five: or the Children's Crusade, A Duty Dance with Death* (1969)

Grading

10% - Participation
10% - Workshop
15% - Paper 1
20% - Paper 2
45% - Final Research Project

Course Requirements

Attendance

Attendance is required. **You are allowed three absences.** Each absence beyond those three will result in a one-tier grade reduction of your final grade. Hence, a B- becomes a C+. **If you miss eight classes, you will automatically fail the course.** Sorry. In addition, as tardiness is an ever-growing problem, you will be penalized for coming to class late. For every three times you are late to class, I will mark down one absence.

Note: There is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence so please plan accordingly.

Participation

Each student's participation is vital to the overall disposition and accomplishment of the group. Your participation grade is based on the regularity and quality of your contributions to discussion. Comments that help advance the discussion and that enable all class members to contribute are highly valued. These kinds of comments are only possible when you have come to class fully prepared, and have completed all of the required reading. Thus, over the course of the semester I will randomly give five quizzes to make sure that you are, in fact, keeping up with the reading/viewing requirements. If you pass every quiz, then I will raise your final grade one-tier. However, for each quiz that you fail, you will receive one absence.

Workshop

Submitting drafts: Your drafts are due via e-mail the class before we workshop them. For example, if we are workshopping drafts in class on a Thursday, then your draft is due by class-time on the preceding Tuesday. **Due to the nature of the workshop process, late drafts will not be accepted.**

Commenting on drafts: On the day of workshops, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss your work and the work of your classmates.

Grading: I will not grade your rough drafts, but I will be grading you on your participation in the workshop process. I will take into consideration your contributions, or lack thereof, to this process. For instance, I will note the thoroughness of comments and the timeliness of submissions. I will also note how well developed or how poorly developed your drafts are. Yes, these are rough drafts, but they should also be well thought out pieces of writing that are on their way to becoming clear and articulate essays.

Below you will find the value of each workshop. The points will be equally divided between your draft and your peer-review comments.

Paper 2 Workshops: 40 Points

Final Paper Workshops: 60 Points

Paper 2 Workshops: Rough Draft

You will sign up for one of two workshop dates, which will determine the due date of your draft. As a class, we will discuss the strengths and weakness of a rough draft of your second paper, and offer detailed revision suggestions. Drafts should be a minimum of 3 pages in length.

Final Paper Workshop: Rough Draft

You will sign up for one of three workshop dates, which again will determine the due date of your draft. Drafts should be a minimum of 5 pages in length.

Workshops and Due Dates: I will post a sign-up sheet outside my office door several weeks prior to each round of workshops.

Paper 2 Workshops

Workshop on 10/7; Draft Due 10/5

Workshop on 10/12; Draft Due on 10/7

Final Paper Workshops

Workshop on 11/16; Draft Due 11/11

Workshop on 11/18; Draft Due on 11/16

Workshop on 11/23; Draft Due on 11/18

Letters: Along with your drafts, you will also be required to submit a number of letters during the workshops for your second and final paper.

Along with your workshop draft, you will also submit a self-review letter of no less than 150 words. This letter is a chance for you to explain to your reader what your primary goals are for this paper and how well you think you have been able to reach those goals thus far. You will also need to include any concerns or questions you have that you would like the readers to address as they review your work.

You are also required to comment on the drafts of your peers. You will type a letter of no less than 100 words to the author of each of the drafts we are workshopping in class. In this letter, you should address that draft's strengths and weaknesses and offer suggestions for improvement. I also encourage you to make in-text comments on printouts of each paper as well. You should come to class with both letters and printouts of each draft in-hand. Bring two copies of your letters with you to class: one copy for the student whose work you are commenting on and one to turn in at the end of class. Please staple all of the letters you type up for a given workshop day together and hand them in as a packet.

Be **RESPECTFUL** of each student and his or her work. This is a time for you to offer each other helpful criticism, as well as learn more about the writing and revision process.

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class, whether you are there in person or not. If I do not receive papers by such time, they will be considered late. Brief extensions for good reasons (i.e. illness, family emergency) are permissible with my prior

approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized, resulting in a one-tier grade reduction for each day the assignment is late. Hence, a B- becomes a C+.

If appropriate, all essays written for this course should follow the MLA rules of style and citation. In addition, all written assignments should be typewritten in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced. Each paper you turn in should also be stapled and numbered.

Papers

I encourage everyone to visit me during my office hours to discuss his or her papers (or any aspect of the class for that matter). I am always happy to look at and comment on any early drafts. I also recommend visiting the Writing Center. For each of these assignments you will be given a handout detailing specific expectations and requirements. *Note: Unless otherwise stated, final drafts will not be accepted electronically.*

Paper 1 (5 pages ~ 1500 words): Due 9/21

Paper 2 (7 pages ~ 2100 words): Due 10/14

Final Research Project (45%)

This is a multi-faceted project, requiring a significant amount of research. Below is a brief description of each aspect of the assignment, but you will be given detailed handouts closer to the due dates of each assignment.

Research Paper Proposal (10%): Due 10/28

You are to write a 2 page (approximately 500 words) paper proposal. This proposal should be part introduction to your paper and part summary of the main points you intend to address in order to support your thesis statement. This brief piece of writing should encapsulate your overall goals for the research paper. It should also include a working bibliography, containing at least five sources that you plan to use in your final research paper.

Presentation (5%): 12/2 and 12/7

Each of you will present your research project to the class during the final weeks of the semester. Each student will have roughly 5-7 minutes to present his/her research to the class. You will be graded on your ability to synthesize your extensive writing and research into a brief, easily digestible presentation. Remember too that creativity counts. When designing this presentation think of interesting and inventive ways to hold the class's attention. A sign-up sheet for presentation dates will be posted two weeks before presentations begin.

Research Paper (20%): Due 12/10

This paper should be an extended analysis of the topic of your choosing, related to the subject matter of this course and employing a significant amount of outside research.

Paper should be 10-12 (3000 – 3600 words) pages in length.

Individual Conferences

You are required to attend an individual conference session sometime during the week of November 29th. This conference is a time for us to discuss your research paper. A sign-up sheet for these conferences will be posted outside of my office door several weeks prior to November 29th. In lieu of conferences, we will not be meeting as a class on November 30th.

Plagiarism Policy

You must complete all stages of the work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own not only prohibits you from learning the skills of academic research and writing, it is a violation of the Honor Code. Furthermore, all assignments completed for this course should be original work written specifically for this class.

Department of English Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, test, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.

Schedule of Assignments

The following schedule is subject to change; however, sufficient notice will be given before any changes are made. Always bring the appropriate books and/or handouts to class.

Week 1

8/26: Introduction; *The Greatest Generation* (handout)

Week 2

8/31: Visualizing War; In-class writing assignment

9/2: **Class Cancelled**

Week 3

9/7: *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (handout)

9/9: *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (handout)

Week 4

9/14: *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Chapters 1-3

9/16: *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Chapters 4-5

Week 5

9/21: **Paper 1 Due;** *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Chapters 6-end

9/23: *Saving Private Ryan*

Week 6

9/28: *Saving Private Ryan* (continued); film reviews

9/30: Memorializing War; *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (handout)

Week 8

10/5: War's Soundtrack

10/7: Paper 2 Workshop

Week 9

10/12: Paper 2 Workshop

10/14: **Paper 2 Due;** *The Things They Carried*, pages 1-38

Week 10

10/19: **Fall Break**

10/21: *The Things They Carried*, pages 39-116

Week 11

10/26: *The Things They Carried*, pages 117-180

10/28: *The Things They Carried*, pages 181-end

Week 12

11/2: Proposal Due

11/4: *Platoon*

Week 13

11/9: *Platoon* (continued); *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (handout)

11/11: *Tropic Thunder*

Week 14

11/16: Workshop

11/18: Workshop

Week 15

11/23: Workshop

11/25: Thanksgiving Recess

Week 16

11/30: Class Canceled (Conferences)

12/2: Presentations

Week 17

12/7: Presentations

12/10: Final Paper Due (noon)

A Few Notes:

1. Assignments should be completed by the date listed.
2. Films should be watched prior to the days we discuss them in class. I will make a copy or copies available for you to borrow. I do suggest, however, that you organize viewings with a few of your fellow classmates. These films should be easy for you to procure on your own through various sources.
3. Not all reading assignments and handouts are included in this schedule. Periodically, you will be required to read selections that accompany these assignments.
4. Handouts and reading assignments not included in the texts you purchased for this course will either be passed out in class or posted online. Reading assignments posted online should be printed out and brought to class for discussion.