

# Quest for peace in literature and film | PACS 312 Fall 2016

Thurs. 2:30 pm – 5:20 pm  
Classroom: Conrad Grebel University College, Room 1208  
University of Waterloo

Professor: Reina Neufeldt  
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## THE COURSE

“A study of works of literature and film which express a resistance to war. The course examines how the desire to articulate an anti-war position has engaged the artistic sensibilities and shaped the visions and modes of expression of selected writers and filmmakers.” Course Catalogue Description

In this course, we will explore literature and film that express a resistance to war. Stories, narratives and images speak to us in ways that take us beyond arms-length analysis and possess a power to intimately engage the phenomenon and experience of violent conflict and pursuit of peace. Some of the works speak to the pain, suffering, and violence experienced in the midst of war, some offer direct anti-war statements, others reflect and engage with the themes of trauma and difficult questions of how to heal and recover as part of a very long quest for peace. We will read a wide variety of works: poems, short stories and novels; we will view short films and longer films. Each of these works will be examined in terms of the issues they raise as well as how they raise them, and how the stories, words and images affect us the reader/viewer/audience. In our discussions, we will explore themes, allusions and meanings within the works; we will also look to understand elements of the artists’ intentions, stylistic devices that are used, and our responses to the works. The format of the course will involve mini-lectures, films, presentations, group work and extensive discussions.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

After participating in this course, students should be able to:

- Understand how literature and film engage and transform audiences;
- Identify and articulate a variety of ways that literature and film can resist war and violence;
- Explore ways in which stories contribute to building peace;
- Analyze film and literature using key categories (intention, audience, context, stylistic devices)
- Participate in an exchange of ideas interpreting literature and film both orally and in writing.

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS/TEXTS

There are four required books for the course:

Elie Wiesel. *Night*. Originally published in 1958, published with a new preface and translation in 2006. New York: Hill and Wang. ISBN: 978-0374500016.

Tim O'Brien. 2006 [1990]. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Mariner Books with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN: 978-0544309760.

Thomas King. 2003. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. CBC Massey Lectures Series. Anansi. ISBN: 978-0887846960.

Sorayya Khan. 2006. *Noor*. The Publishing Laboratory. ISBN: 978-0971930872

\*All films, lectures, discussions and presentations are primary course material.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

Because of the nature and structure of the course, it is imperative that students participate regularly in class, watch all films, and complete ALL the reading for the week unless otherwise advised. The course outline below indicates required reading for each week.

Students are expected to:

- ... attend all classes;
- ... mentally prepare some questions/thoughts/provocative assertions to bring to class;
- ... participate in class discussions;
- ... refrain from using distracting technological devices in the classroom (unless it's for a presentation).

In this class we explore stories. This enterprise involves each of our interpretive skills and a willingness to openly engage to explore themes and meanings nested within the films, poetry and prose. Students are therefore expected to talk and explore the works in conversation (sometimes in small groups, sometimes as a whole group). We will do so in a respectful fashion with the understanding that each person brings particular insights and valuable differences to the context of the classroom and how we read, view and react to a work. Responding constructively to the observations and comments of peers will further enhance the quality of our seminar. All students should come to class prepared to be called upon to remark on one or more elements of the past week's readings that seemed to them to be worthy of comment, or of further elaboration or investigation.

Please turn off all cell phones prior to the start of class unless it is an emergency (and then only in silent mode) and use laptops only for notes or to access readings (unless it is for your presentation).

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

Cite ALL sources (including internet sources) consulted for written and/or orally-presented work. Because of the seriousness of plagiarism and cheating students MUST familiarize themselves with the definitions of cheating and plagiarism and the related penalties. Students at the University of Waterloo are expected to be familiar with the University's standards regarding academic honesty, and

to avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an academic offence. See further notes below (p.7).

**a. Quizzes and participation throughout the term: 20%**

Regular quizzes will be administered over the term to ensure students keep up with their reading and are prepared to participate in the course. Readings for a given week are expected to be completed before class. Quizzes will be made up of short questions (e.g. answer 10 out of 12 questions). Your quiz with the lowest grade in the term will be dropped from the final grade. No accommodation will be made for missed quizzes or for students' late arrival for quizzes, which might be administered at any time during the class.

**b. Text-based critical reading (due dates will vary) – 10% each; 2 total for 20%\***

Regularly, a few of the students in the class will explain, in a well-prepared two minutes, what s/he might have written were s/he to write a four- to six-page paper meant to explicate a particular element s/he has identified as noteworthy in one of the works among the week's readings. Noteworthy in what way? Noteworthy in the sense that a particular feature of the work under consideration might provide a window through which we can more clearly apprehend what the work seems to be saying. The student might begin like this: "Were I to write a three- to five-page essay meant to enlarge my colleagues' understanding of [a particular poem or story or suite of poems or segment of a larger text], I would explore/investigate "x" to reveal or illumine or demonstrate "y." The student's brief, coherent observation should serve to inform in particular ways the class' understanding and appreciation of a particular text. These brief presentations, for which students will sign up early in the term, will be no more than 2 minutes long. (A two-minute presentation typed, double-spaced (using a 12-point font), occupies about one page of text, so it is very brief.

Students are encouraged to use whatever notes and props they think will contribute to making their observations compelling, and are likely to stimulate others' thinking about the text in question. What they say should be precisely focused, effectively supported, rehearsed, and articulately delivered. The reporting student will hand in a brief outline of her/his remarks, with a useful title and a "thesis statement" (a one-sentence summary of his/her main argument) at the end of their presentation.

The pedagogical goal of these short presentations is to encourage students to read thoughtfully and to share their questions and insights with their peers. Students are urged to be very specific and to avoid generalizations (of every kind).

Grading for these presentations will take into account: the significance and value of the central idea identified; the clear articulation of this central idea; the structure, coherence and pacing of the piece, including a finely-crafted (albeit brief) introduction and conclusion; the effective use of concrete illustration; and, the effective delivery of the student's ideas (distinctiveness, creativity, clarity).

**c. Major Project Proposal: 10%**

A one-page Major Project Proposal, including a thoughtful and pointed statement of the central theme or argument, and, in addition, an Annotated Bibliography of research resources is due the day of the major project workshop on October 6, 2016.

The proposal consists of a thoughtfully developed statement carefully delineating the subject of the student's project and the general shape/direction the project is likely to take. Failure to submit the

Major Project Proposal on time and to participate in the Major Project Proposal Workshop will result in a grade of "0". More details about the proposal and workshop will be provided in class.

**d. Major Project: 30%**

Completed projects are due Nov. 10 at the start of class. I am willing to provide an automatic grace period up to the beginning of class, Nov. 17. The Major Project may take one of the following forms:

**ONE** A thoughtfully-focused, coherent, carefully-documented analytical research essay (of 2700-3000 words) that identifies and explicates a work of a creative writer or artist or film maker (or web-site or organization or institutional event) who/that has created or employed art to express a desire for peace. As the course demonstrates, numerous writers and artists have devoted their creative energies to the cause of peace. The texts on this course engage only a few of these. From the anti-war drawings of Goya's "Disasters of War" (ca. 1820) to Picasso's "Guernica" (1937), from Aristophanes' antiwar play *Lysistrata* (410 BC) to contemporary poets like Bejan Matur and Maram al-Masri (two female poets, one of whom is Kurdish and the other Syrian) visual and literary artists have sought to objectify and comment upon humanity's propensity to try to resolve disputes by violent means. Students are invited to use the internet or print sources to locate artistic activities in the cause of peace, and to formulate and compose a critical assessment of one such effort.

**TWO** participate in a *Short film face off*, which we'll call *SHO-PACS*. This assignment is loosely based on the CBC's short film face off. For this assignment you will identify a short film (no longer than 12 minutes running time) that thematically fits our course. You are invited to research the film and write a thoughtful and well-documented essay (2700-3000 words) that discusses the technical aspects and merits of the film as well as its relationship to the course. Note that you are not writing a film review but rather selecting and analysing a short film. You will screen the film in class. The class – your viewing audience – will vote on the best SHO-PACS film.

**THREE** Students who might be interested in preparing (alone, or in a group of two or three) a video-based project (ie, in essence, you'd be making a video of some sort rather than writing a paper) should make their wishes to pursue this option clear by week three of the term.

**FOUR** Students who prefer to prepare a project that is more conventional, in a scholarly sense, are welcome to compose a research paper (which makes explicit use of at least five peer-reviewed scholarly resources) that offers a fresh reading of any of the course texts, from the perspective of literature-and-peace. The paper should be 2700-3000 words in length. Any such reading must have a clear and limited focus; general commentary of the sort one would find in reviews is not acceptable. Students are advised to explore in depth a particular aspect of a given text, paying attention to how the literary text in question addresses issues related to a quest for peace.

Students are not permitted to treat the same author, text in both a class presentation and a major project. All projects must use proper citations and be accompanied by a reference section, Chicago Manual Style of references preferred (resources on LEARN).

### **e. Final Integrative Essay (20%)**

This assignment consists of an essay for the final exam. This assignment will invite students to reflect on how the readings, films, class discussions, and their independent research have informed their own understanding of the quest for peace through the arts of literature and film. Students will be expected to comment on selected film and print course texts, as well as on any other material presented in the class. The specific topic for this essay will be made available to students several days ahead, to allow them time to integrate their thinking. The essay will be written in our final class meeting.

### **READING/CLASS SCHEDULE**

Please Note: I may need to periodically update the syllabus, e.g. to accommodate course project presentations (SHO-PACS). You will be notified of any changes at least one week in advance.

**WEEK 1** (Sept. 8) INTRODUCTION to the course.

**WEEK 2** (Sept. 15) – work from World War I +  
READ:

- Mary Borden. 1929. "Conspiracy" and "Blind" in *The Forbidden Zone*. London: W. Heinemann. pp. 117-122, 136-159. (LEARN)
- Wilfred Owen. 1917-1918. Dulce et Decorum Est; Apologia Proemate Meo; Disabled. All three poems are from The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, University of Oxford ([www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit](http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit)) and posted on LEARN.
- Frank O'Connor. 1972. "Guests of the Nation" in *Ten Modern Masters: an anthology of the short story*. 3d ed. Ed. Robert Gorham Davis. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp.410-421. (LEARN)
- Wolfgang Borchert "Four Soldiers" from *The Man Outside and Other Prose*. NY: New Directions, 1971. Pp.143-144.
- Luigi Pirandello. 1994 [1918]. "War" in *The International Story: An anthology with guidelines for reading and writing about fiction*. Ed. Ruth Spack. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp.74-77. (LEARN)
- William Saroyan. 1936. "The War" in *Inhale and Exhale*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., pp.100-107. LEARN

**WEEK 3** (Sept. 22) – WWII and genocide

READ:

- Elie Wiesel's *Night*
- Thomas Merton. 1980. A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichman. In *The Nonviolent Alternative*. Edited by Gordon Zahn. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, pp.160-162.
- Bertolt Brecht poem "When Evil-Doing Comes like Falling Rain" (LEARN) [http://www.legacy-project.org/index.php?page=lit\\_detail&litID=125](http://www.legacy-project.org/index.php?page=lit_detail&litID=125)

SCREENING: Night and Fog, 31' (1955)

**WEEK 4** (Sept. 29) – the nuclear age

READ:

- Thomas Merton 1980. "Original Bomb child: points for meditation to be scratched on the walls of a cave" In *The Nonviolent Alternative*, Edited by Gordon Zahn. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, pp.3-11. (LEARN)
- Poetry excerpts. 1994. *Atomic Ghost: Poets respond to the nuclear age*, Ed. John Bradley. Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press. (LEARN)

- Ai. 1986. "Testimony of J. Robert Oppenheimer." In *Sin: Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (LEARN)
- David Ray. "For Harry S Truman in Hell" In *Nuke Rebuke: writers & artists against nuclear energy & weapons*. Iowa City: Spirit That Moves Us Press. (LEARN)
- Denise Levertov. "Watching 'Dark Circle'" In. *Literary Nevada: Writings from the silver state*. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, pp.437-438. (LEARN)

SCREENING: If You Love This Planet, 28' (1982)

**WEEK 5** (Oct. 6) – MAJOR PROJECT WORKSHOP: details forthcoming in class

\*\*\*Major Project Proposal Due

Oct. 13 – no class (fall break means that the University is running a Tuesday schedule on this date)

**WEEK 6** (Oct. 20) – Remembering war (war the second time) – fiction of Vietnam

READ: Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*.

**WEEK 7** (Oct. 27) – Questioning amidst war (civilians) – short stories

READ:

- Chinua Achebe. 1972. "Girls at war" in *Girls at War, and Other Stories*. London : Heinemann, pp. 98-118. (LEARN)
- Saadat Hasan Manto. 2000. "Black Margins." In *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, politics and the partition of India*. Ed. Mushirul Hasan. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, .pp.287-299. (LEARN)
- Saadat Hasan Manto. 2005 [1955]. "Toba Tek Singh." Translated by Frances W. Pritchett. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/tobateksingh/index.html> (LEARN)
- Rebecca Makkai. 2015. "Everything we know about the bomber." In *Music for Wartime*. New York: Viking, pp.108-112.
- Start reading Sorayya Kahn's *Noor*. Read chapters 1 through 5.

**WEEK 8** (Nov. 3) –Silences, memory and recovery in the aftermath of war (fiction Pakistan)

READ: Sorayya Kahn, *Noor*, read the rest of the novel, chapters 6 through 13.

\*\*\*Please Note: the author will guest-skype into class today

**WEEK 9** (Nov. 10) –Silences, memory and recovery (fiction North America)

- Rebecca Makkai. 2015. "Other brands of poison (first legend)" In *Music for Wartime*. New York, Viking, pp.57-58.
- Rudy Wiebe. 1989. "Sailing to Danzig" In *Liars and Rascals: Mennonite Short Stories*. Ed. Hildi Froese Tiessen, pp.77-87.
- Lore Segal's 2008. "Making Good" *American Scholar* <http://theamericanscholar.org/making-good/>
- Barbara Kingsolver. 2005 [1989]. "Homeland" In *Homeland and Other Short Stories*. New York: Perennial, pp.1-22.

SCREENING: Clips from The Power of Forgiveness, 78' (2007)

\*\*\*\*\* Major Project \*\*\*\*\* due anytime from November 10 to November 17.

**WEEK 10** ( Nov. 17) – The long road to peace (Canada)

READ: Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*

\*\*\*\*\*Major Projects not handed in before class on November 17 will be counted as late (see note on late penalties below).

**WEEK 11** (Nov. 24) – documentary film as part of transforming conflict

SCREEN IN ADVANCE: The Imam and the Pastor 39' (2006) – the film is on reserve at ITMS, which is located in MC 1052 and the office hours are 8am to 4:30pm

READ: James Wuye and Muhammed Ashafa. 2005. "The Pastor and the Imam: The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria" in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. P. van Tongeren et al. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.226-232. Available on-line at:

<http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories/article.php?id=93&typ=theme>

SCREENING: Reserve 107 (2016)

**WEEK 12** (Dec. 1)

In-class integrative essay

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### NOTES FOR YOUR ATTENTION:

**Cross-listed course:** Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A

student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

#### **ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

#### **Departure from the Terms of the Syllabus**

There is a substantial amount of flexibility built into the structure of this course; therefore, any student's request to depart from the terms of this syllabus will be considered only if accompanied by a physician's letter, or equivalent. Failure to deliver a presentation on the date for which a student signs up will result in a grade of "0" unless the student provides formal medical documentation, or equivalent.

#### **Standard Practices with Respect to Illness**

"A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the 'University of Waterloo Verification of Illness' form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from the Health Services or at [www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/verification.htm](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/verification.htm)."

#### **Assignment Late Penalties:**

Please note that late assignments will be automatically assessed a penalty of 5% (same penalty for the first 24 hour period) with an additional 1% penalty assessed for every additional day the assignment is late. A valid medical document is required for illness as noted above. If you are concerned about an assignment, do come and talk to me in advance of the deadline.

#### **Cancellation of Classes due to Weather**

Conrad Grebel University College follows University of Waterloo's policies on cancellation of classes due to severe weather. If UW's classes are cancelled, then Grebel's are as well. Local radio stations announce cancellations. Information can also be found on the UW home page.

#### **Refreshments**

The self-serve coffee bar Common Ground is located in the College Atrium (up the stairs from the 1300 classrooms) and its hours of operation are 8 AM-9PM on Thursdays. Tea, coffee and other good things to eat are also available in the cafeteria.