HL 2015  War in Literature and Film
(AY 2018/2019, Semester 2)

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang
michelle.wang@ntu.edu.sg

Class meets  Thursday  11.30am – 2.30pm  HSS Seminar Room 7
Office hours  Tuesday  2.30pm – 3.30pm  HSS 03-57
Thursday  2.30pm – 3.30pm  HSS 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.

Assessment
Essay  30%
Quizzes  15%
Class presentation + participation  15%
Final Exam  40%

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic integrity is the foundation of scholarship. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will result in automatic failure of the course. For NTU’s policy on academic integrity, please consult: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx

Late 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. Three or more unexcused absences are subject to an overall grade reduction at the instructor’s discretion.

Technology Policy
I welcome students to actively use technology to facilitate learning in the classroom, so long as it is being used on task. 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

Films

* 

Schedule
Week 01 – 17 Jan  Introduction
• Assignment prompts

Week 02 – 24 Jan  Women and Greek tragedy (I)
• Extracts from Euripedes’ *The Trojan Women* (NTU Learn)
• *The Trojan Women* (1971/2004)
• Poems by W. B. Yeats (“Leda and the Swan”; “No Second Troy”) (NTU Learn)
Week 03 – 31 Jan  Women and Greek tragedy (II)
   • Extracts from Homer’s *Iliad* and Euripides’ *Hecuba* (NTU Learn)
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

Week 04 – 07 Feb  Aesthetics and Ethics (I)
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

Week 05 – 14 Feb  Aesthetics and Ethics (II)
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

Week 06 – 21 Feb  War and Fantasy (I): Ecocriticism and Animal Studies
   • *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001)
   • *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002)

Week 07 – 28 Feb  War and Fantasy (II): Genre and Fictionality
   • *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

—— 07 Mar —— RECESS ——

Week 09 – 14 Mar  Love and Laughter: Cinematic Discourses
   • WWII (film - Holocaust) *Life is Beautiful* (1997)
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

Week 10 – 21 Mar  Medium, Adaptation, and Representation
   • WWII (film) *Atonement* (2007)
   • WWII (English) Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (2001)

Week 11 – 28 Mar  Historical Representation and Witness Literature
   • In-class writing session

Week 12 – 04 Apr  Focalizing WWII through Asia
   • Supplementary essays on NTU Learn

Week 13 – 11 Apr  Childhood and Trauma
   • WWII (animation) *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988)

Week 14 – 18 Apr  War and Documentary
   • Rohingya crisis