ENGL 110-080
War, Technology, and Writing: Representations of Violence in Contemporary America
Michael Doss

Writing about warfare, trauma, and postwar culture has long been an outlet of self-expression and a vehicle for processing the effects of warfare for soldiers and civilians alike. Today, international threats of violence are generally coupled with technologically advanced war objects. Such a combination has the complex effect of manipulating the “humanness” of traditional warfare. In this honors section of English 110, we will ask questions such as: Who is affected by war? And how does technology intersect with popular conceptions of warfare? We will be focusing on post-1945 American culture, to include focal points centered on World War II, the Vietnam War, and more contemporary threats posed by nuclear warfare. As this is a class largely about technology, we will be working with a variety of texts, from novels such Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried* (1990) and Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) to documentary films to websites that discuss the pedagogy of teaching war in a historical context, and finally to film and television. Students will be expected to write extensively in a variety of formats; a multimodal digital project that uses technological tools to reflect on representations of technology will also be required.

ENGL 110-083
*Hamilton* and the Idea of America
Délice Williams

It is no secret that Lin Manuel Miranda’s 2015 musical has won wide acclaim from audiences and critics. Even people who have not seen the production are huge fans of the soundtrack and the book. But *Hamilton* is more than just a Broadway phenomenon. It is also an argument for a particular idea of America, a vision of what this country means. Using that vision as a starting point for discussion, this course will place Miranda’s musical in conversation with other written and visual texts in order to explore how writers rhetorically construct and deploy their ideas of America. What does America mean? Where do our ideas of America come from? How are ideas of America being shaped, reshaped, and contested in writing today? How are writers and artists from various backgrounds and perspectives contributing to that reshaping? These are some of the questions that will animate our discussions. Texts for this course will include the *Hamilton* soundtrack (of course) and Miranda’s book *Hamilton: The Revolution*. We will also consider excerpts from some key historical documents, critical essays by contemporary authors, and cultural productions such as commercials and music lyrics. The major writing projects include a rhetorical analysis assignment, a video essay, and a researched argument.
ENGL 110-084
Creating Musical Taste
Ray Peters

This course will explore the connection between writing about music and creating musical taste. Thanks to the cloud, we have easy access to an almost limitless range of music. How do we decide what to listen to? Why is “bad music” for some “good music” for others? Are there good reasons for thinking some music is better than other music? How do we develop musical taste? Why do some musical tastes remain the same or change? How does social interaction influence musical taste? What role do recommender systems play in creating musical taste? Our primary focus will be popular musical forms (rock, pop, punk, rap, hip-hop, country, blues, etc.), but we will also consider classical, musicals, jazz, experimental, and the difficult to classify. The course will emphasize the rhetorical analysis of texts. We will read Carl Wilson’s Let’s Talk about Love: Why Other People Have Such Bad Taste, Peter Shaffer’s Amadens, Geoff Dyer’s But Beautiful: A Book about Jazz, and a number of articles about contemporary music. We will also listen to samples of the music under discussion. Students will write brief response papers, critical reviews, analytical essays, and a research paper and multimodal project examining the creative process in the work of a composer or musician of their choice.

ENGL 110-086
The Theory and Practice of Nonviolence
Jim Burns

In a world seemingly racked by war and violent conflict there exists a little regarded alternative way of settling disputes. Nonviolence has a long (and effective) history in many parts of the world. The class will explore both the secular and religious origins of Nonviolence by examining writings by authors such as Gandhi, King, Tolstoy and Chavez. We will deal with those who are committed to Nonviolence as a principle, as a tactic, and as a personal practice. We will probe the connections of Nonviolence to contemporary political movements, such as feminism. We will see how Nonviolence is implemented, including specific examples drawn from different regions of the world. The class will allow us to develop critical thinking about the nature and efficacy of both violence and nonviolence, and discover ways that nonviolence can be employed to achieve meaningful objectives. Students will write papers on the three areas of focus, cumulating with a research paper that may expand one of the three with significant research. The main text for the class will be Nonviolence in Theory and Practice by Barry Gan and Robert Holmes, along with other relevant materials from my own experience using nonviolence as a means of political change.
ENGL 110-087
The Search for Identity: Adult Themes in Young Adult Literature
Paula Persoleo

“Young Adult Literature provides a context for students to become conscious of their operating world view and to examine critically alternative ways of understanding the world and social relations.”

--Jacqueline N. Glasgow, “Teaching Social Justice through Young Adult Literature”

Young Adult (YA) literature is often considered a genre exclusive to adolescent readers despite its widespread appeal. However, the universal themes typically found in YA fiction correspond with the need for readers to find a place in culture, in society, in the world, a need that is attributed to (if not exclusive to) adolescents. This course will challenge common classifications of YA literature by delving into its larger themes of the individual’s search for any number of identities, including race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Texts will include S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*, Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, Eric Gansworth’s *If I Ever Get Out of Here*, and Nic Stone’s *Dear Martin*. Students will also read and discuss relevant essays, short fiction, and poems that consider issues of identity and the process of the protagonist’s self-discovery. Assignments will include short essays that respond to, critique, and analyze the “adult” themes inherent in YA literature. A research project, including a 10-page essay, will demonstrate students’ consideration of the genre’s stylistic and thematic evolution with respect to its changing readership. A group project will offer students the chance to present and critique how YA films use visual rhetoric to depict the protagonist’s journey of identity and self-discovery.

ENGL 110-088
This Is a Bestseller
Frank Hillson

What makes a bestseller? Why do some bestsellers become classics while others have only a meteoric rise and are then consigned to the dustbins of history? What is the relationship between popularity and literary merit? Is there a formula for a bestseller? And perhaps the most important query: what do chart-toppers say about the zeitgeist of the people who read them? Thus, this course will explore these and other questions by examining selected American bestsellers from colonial times to modern. We will begin our readings with one of America’s first bestsellers: the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson (1682). Our journey will continue with other bestsellers, including Ann Petry’s *The Street* (1946), the first book by an African American woman to sell over a million copies. We will then discuss a recent *New York Times* bestseller: Georgia Hunter’s *We Were the Lucky Ones* (2018). Our last reading assignment will be a current bestseller—voted on by the class. The course will require several short essays, quizzes, participation, and a presentation. The capstone of the course will be a researched argument (9-10 pages) where you will pick an American bestseller, analyze its bestselling features, decipher what appeal your text has on the American public, and what it reflects about our society.
FAKE NEWS! Sad: Researching Responsibly Amid Misinformation
Jenna Bradley

With more and more discussions of “alternative facts,” “post-truths,” and “fake news” in recent years, identifying credible information has become increasingly difficult. So what exactly is “fake news” and how can we, as readers and responsible citizens, spot “fake news”? This section of English 110 investigates the concept of “fake news” in order to become more skilled readers and writers, and more responsible, well-informed citizens. Reading assignments will include selections from Frankfurt’s *On Bull*****, and McComiskey’s *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, articles from *The Onion*, and clips from *Saturday Night Live’s “Weekend Update”* segments. We will divide the semester into three units. In the first unit, we will practice assessing a source’s credibility, developing research skills by learning to track down a text’s sources and spot misleading information. Unit 2 will focus on different uses of the term “fake news,” including parody, political propaganda, and discrediting unfavorable publicity, and false information presented as news that aims to mislead and persuade. Finally, in unit 3 students will apply their research skills by investigating a popular misconception about a topic of their choice, and write an argumentative essay supported by research to dispel that misinformation. At the end of the semester, students will have learned strategies for testing source credibility, conducting research, and discrediting misinformation.

Great Adaptations: How One Thing Becomes another While Remaining Itself
Kevin Burke

Adaptations are everywhere: books become movies, movies become video games; songs, books, films, graphic novels, games, advertising, fashion, and robust markets for various forms of accoutrements and paraphernalia generate new versions of fictional and historical characters’ careers and evolve multiple variations on familiar narratives. This course will examine the complex process of adaptation from a variety of perspectives. How does a book or video game become a film? What happens when a film becomes a video game? How do the genres of graphic novel and film influence each other? Why do people transform a beloved novel, comic book, or game into a different form? Why are some characters and story lines apparently infinite in their ability to be adapted? What are the ideological and economic aspects of adaptation? What is the status of the original? Is there an original? Students should expect to write several response papers, an extended review of an adapted work, and a research paper focusing on an adaptation project of the student’s choice. The basic text for the course will be Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation*. Works to be considered may include the *Assassin’s Creed* series of video games and the recent film based on them; the various adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (zombie and otherwise); the new movie and BBC versions of Sherlock Holmes; and the Amazon TV series adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s *Man in the High Castle*.

From Black Power to Black Lives Matter
Sean Lovitt
When protests broke out in Ferguson, Missouri after the death of Mike Brown, the news media was flooded with images of the events. In addition to news stories, the protests inspired poetry, music, and a variety of other art. This course will explore the representations of Black Lives Matter protests and link them to earlier imagery found in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 70s. While Black Lives Matter is often considered a new Civil Rights Movement, this class will look to the later developments made by Black Power activists and artists to draw different connections and conclusions. We will use the semester to explore several questions: what does Black Lives Matter take from the aesthetics of Black Power? What do the aesthetics of these representations teach us about social movements? What is the role of art and literature in these movements? We will attempt to answer these questions by carefully considering representations of bodies, spaces, and actions in relationship to concepts of identity. We will begin our investigation by looking at a play by James Baldwin, Blues for Mister Charlie, which anticipates the Black Power era. Along with this classic literary source, we will examine newspapers (Black Panther), autobiographies (Malcolm X), film (The Spook Who Sat by the Door), and art (AfriCOBRA). Our study of post-Ferguson protest culture will bring us into contact with an even wider set of media, including social media posts, YouTube clips, adaptations like Luke Cage and Hip Hop remixes. In keeping with the class’ emphasis on representation, students will write responses that they will present in different media. Likewise, students will update or “remix” a Black Power document, making it relevant to today. In addition to these multimodal assignments, students will write a research paper that traces a connection between a Black Power group and a contemporary manifestation.

ENGL110-092
Writing and Social Class
Joe Harris

Pundits tell us that working-class voters are angry. But who are these people, and what exactly are they angry about? These seem important questions to consider as we approach the 2018 elections. As one way to do so, this course will look at recent attempts to represent social class in writing, both fiction and nonfiction. We will begin with two brief novels—Stewart O’Nan’s Last Night at the Lobster, which focuses on a group of people trying to get by in jobs at a rundown shopping-mall restaurant, and Susan Coll’s Acceptance, which centers around one of the defining rites of passage into the middle-class, applying to college. We’ll then look at three nonfiction books on class: Hillbilly Elegy, in which J. D. Vance offers a conservative critique of his own rural, working-class upbringing; Strangers in Their Own Land, in which the sociologist Arlie Hochschild tries to better understand Tea Party voters; and The Future of the Race, in which Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates look at the intersections of race and class in African American culture. In addition to writing brief responses to these books, you will be asked to identify and analyze some aspect of how social class gets discussed by the media in weeks before the 2018 midterm elections, and also to compose an autobiographical piece in which you describe and think about your own class position.
As one of the defining issues of the 21st century, our changing climate is a dire challenge to the current generation of college students. This course will investigate how writing can suggest new ways for representing and thinking through this challenge. We will consider the following questions: How and why does writing matter in the context of climate change? How is climate change changing culture and thus the way we write? And how might we write about climate change in order to meaningfully shape the conversation about this subject? We will study a wide range of literary, theoretical, and popular texts, including traditional nature writing, mass media, science fiction, “cli-fi” (climate fiction and film), and environmental justice writing. Course texts include Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction; Everything Change: An Anthology of Climate Fiction, and an array of articles, posts, and tweets by various authors. We will also watch films such as Beasts of the Southern Wild and To the Ends of the Earth. Moreover, we will explore our own roles as writers of climate change by composing in multiple genres. Ultimately, this course focuses on developing the necessary tools and skills for thinking, speaking, and writing about both climate change and writing.

We’re persuaded constantly—by advertisements, by friends and family, by religious doctrine, by professors and bosses and political leaders. But what happens when persuasion goes dark? This course dives into the persuasion of four infamous American groups—Charles Manson’s Family, Jim Jones’s Peoples Temple, Warren Jeffs’ FLDS Church, and L. Ron Hubbard’s Scientology—in an attempt to understand how these leaders persuaded their followers with promises of identification, community, and belonging. In the first half of the semester, we’ll explore the doctrines and beliefs of these historical groups, along with scholarship on cults, persuasion, and belief. During this part of the semester, students will write short responses (2 pages) analyzing the rhetoric and persuasive techniques of the four leaders. Readings will include excerpts from Helter Skelter, The Road to Jonestown, Under the Banner of Heaven, and Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief, along with documentaries, podcasts, news clips, and the writings, court proceedings, and speeches of the four leaders themselves. In the second half of the semester, students will turn to a group of their choosing (preferably one not covered) to investigate the persuasive techniques that have gone—or could go—dark, and in so doing, students will analyze the (potential) societal and individual consequences when rhetoric is used for nefarious ends. This research will culminate with a multimodal piece in which students present a compelling, engaging, and critical story of the group, along with an interactive presentation to the class. (Note: some readings portray graphic and upsetting descriptions of crimes).