

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Sém. Ang. II/TC : Literature and War (2AN2129)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5
Pilier secondaire M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

Equipe enseignante

Patrick Vincent

Contenu

War, as novelist Elizabeth Bowen writes, reminds us that we are 'creatures of history,' and that even our most private selves cannot be completely insulated from what is happening around us. As one of the most extreme forms of experience, war often brings out intense and often contradictory feelings: awe and horror, love and hatred, kindness and brutality, camaraderie and solitude, courage and fear, elation and numbness. As such, war has always fascinated writers, and, since the Iliad, has played a particularly prominent role in Western literature, first as a source of epic, dramatic, lyric and satirical poetry, then as the subject of naturalistic, journalistic, and even absurdist prose.

As the war in Ukraine approaches its third year, this course aims to explore the relation between literature and war, focusing mainly on British and American fiction produced in the last two centuries, interspersed with some poetry, non-fictional prose and film. Although the course material is organized historically, beginning briefly with the Napoleonic wars, the course's approach will be more formal than historical. How do writers imagine war? What literary forms do they use to represent it, and why? What does it mean to experience war at a distance? How does one represent the 'un-representable', i.e. suffering and trauma, but also sublime violence? How does one combine stories of individuals with large-scale historical events, love and war? Do men and women imagine war differently? Has the literary representation of war changed over time?

By seeking answers to these and many other questions, I hope the course will provide insight into what it means to experience war, whether as a soldier or as a civilian, on the frontline or in the rear, during but also after the events take place. I hope it will also enable us to better understand the importance of literature in making sense of a senseless experience. Or so it goes.

Forme de l'évaluation

Regular participation, essay (+6000 words) to hand back after the end of the semester.

Modalités de rattrapage

In case of a failed grade, students have one opportunity to revise the essay.

Documentation

books to buy (available at Payot):

Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms
Elizabeth Bowen, The Heat of the Day
Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse Five
Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried

Other course material will be provided on Moodle

Pré-requis

None

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar, with active student participation and weekly reading (approx. 100 pages per week)

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In case of a sanitary crisis, teaching will be moved online.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Identify formal features
- Synthesise ideas and interpretations in a critical essay
- Discuss classic literary texts
- Interpret key passages
- Relate the texts to contemporary events and experiences

Compétences transférables

- Communicate your ideas with your peers
- Write a long essay
- Interpret sometimes complex material