

Writing-Based Inquiry Seminar (WBIS 188) Fall 2017

Remembering the Holocaust: Representing Genocide in Memoir, Fiction, and Film

Course Description & Objectives

University Studies Program, Quest, and WBIS

Writing Based Inquiry Seminar (WBIS) courses are part of the University Studies Program (USP) and a key component of both Quest I & II, in which first-year students address a topic related to two of the three "Signature Questions" that are central to a UW Oshkosh education:

- Civic Learning: How do people understand and engage in community life?
- Sustainability: How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?
- Intercultural Knowledge and Competence: How do people understand and bridge cultural difference?

Beginning with Quest I, the USP is designed "to build intellectual curiosity and to lay the foundation for lifelong intellectual development and global citizenship." In addition to Quest, USP courses will also provide an opportunity for students to **Explore** the different disciplinary ways of knowing and eventually to **Connect** by synthesizing ideas related to all three of the Signature Questions. Early in the semester, we will have the opportunity to review the broader goals of the USP and their relation to our specific WBIS course (described on the **Liberal Education / USP Learning Outcomes page**). Further information about UW Oshkosh's innovative, integrated approach to general education can be found on the [University Studies Program website](#).

Civic Learning: How do people understand and engage in community life?

Although we will also touch on the other two Signature Questions, our WBIS section will explore issues related primarily to Civic Learning. According to the University Studies Program, "**Civic knowledge** consists of an awareness and understanding of the various political and social processes that impact the nature and quality of life in local, state, national, or global communities. It also encompasses the cultivation of skills which may be useful in public life, like effective communication and ethical reasoning. Civic engagement means having an appreciation for and applying the values gained from civic knowledge in real world settings, directed at improving the quality of life in the communities of which one is a part. Civic knowledge and civic engagement emphasize learning, reflection, and action in order to create better communities." Over the duration of our course, you should expect to make significant progress toward the following objectives: **Civic Learning Outcomes**.

WBIS Course Theme: "Remembering the Holocaust: Representing Genocide in Memoir, Fiction, and Film"

The last century (including the beginning of the 21st) has been referred to as the century of genocide: more people have been killed in planned, systematic attacks simply because of their "membership" in a racial, ethnical, or religious group than ever before in human history. We will confront this dire reality by probing the following questions: How do we remember such atrocities? Is it possible to convey through documentaries, memoirs, and literary texts and films those events that so dramatically exceed normal human experience? Moreover, are some ways of remembering more authentic, more compelling, or more conducive to preventing future genocides than others? We will examine these questions and more by reading a variety of textual materials (historical accounts, memoirs, and fictional narratives) and by viewing film representations (documentaries and feature films—fictional and non-fictional).

Over the course of the semester, students should expect to undertake or achieve the following:

- Increase historical knowledge, expand global awareness, and improve understanding of important contemporary world events and issues;
- Practice complex engagement with and analysis of different types of textual and visual narratives;
- Develop information literacy, including using Polk Library and technology resources productively and efficiently for university-level work, and begin the process of creating an ePortfolio;
- Write clearly, cleanly, and effectively in a variety of rhetorical situations, with an awareness of purpose, audience, and context;
- Acquire the ability to engage one of the most important human concerns in a substantive way in the hope that we can, in some small way, help to prevent further genocides in the 21st century, as a result of having developed greater understanding of other cultures, the skills to examine a variety of worldviews, and broader perspectives regarding cultural difference and conflict.

The above *desiderata* converge with **WBIS Program goals**:

The mission of WBIS is to equip students with critical writing, reading, and thinking skills as a foundation for their liberal education and their meaningful participation in academic and public communities.

We aim to achieve this mission through:

Written Communication – Students will learn strategies for effectively transmitting their ideas through the written word. They will learn to organize and connect their ideas clearly in writing. They will build their awareness of conventions of genre, style, mechanics, and grammar, remaining conscious of how these conventions may vary depending on context.

Writing Process Strategies – Students will receive guidance throughout their writing process. They will practice generating productive research questions and effective thesis statements. As they compose, revise, and edit their drafts, they will engage in critical reflections on their work and their own writing process.

Critical Thinking – Students will build strategies for understanding and interpreting written texts, as well as for critically evaluating these texts' clarity, form, reliability, and rhetorical effectiveness. In the process, they will build awareness of how audience, genre, content, and purpose affect writing decisions. They will apply critical analysis to class readings and to their own and their peers' in-progress writing.

Collaborative Work – Students will engage in productive discussions and collaborative activities that allow them to practice critical thinking and problem solving. Students may collaborate on a variety of tasks, such as discussions of class readings or potential paper topics, activities for learning documentation and writing skills, or reviews of one another's paper plans or drafts.

Source Use and Information Literacy – Students will develop skills in retrieving, evaluating, and utilizing sources appropriately and ethically in college-level writing. They will practice incorporating effective and correctly documented summary, paraphrase, and quotation into their writing. They will build their ability to synthesize multiple viewpoints and enhance their understanding of how writers use citation practices to engage in academic conversation.

Course Information & Policies

Instructor Information

Cary Henson

Office: Radford 307

Office Hours: MWF 2-3 & by appt

www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/henson/

www.uwosh.edu/english/

Fall 2017

Sections 016, 017, 018

Times: MWF 9:10, 10:20, 12:40

Room: Swart 2

E-Mail: henson@uwosh.edu

Books / Films / Articles

Required Texts

- Lunsford, Andrea A. *Easy Writer*, 6th ed. Bedford, 2016.
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Random House, 1992. 2 vols.
- Totten, Samuel, and William S. Parsons, editors. *Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, 4th ed. Routledge, 2013.

Films

- *The Armenian Genocide*
- *The Ghosts of Rwanda*
- *Hotel Rwanda* (must be viewed on your own)

Additional (D2L)

- Celan, Paul. "Death Fugue."
 - Snyder, Timothy. "The Holocaust: The Ignored Reality."
 - Akpan, Uwem. "My Parents' Bedroom."
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Grading

(also see the **Keys to Success** and **Responding to Grades** pages on the **Course Resources** page that provide a variety of recommendations for maximizing your performance)

Your grade will be determined as follows:

- Class Preparation and Participation 15%
- Other Work 15% (approx. 3,000 words)
- Celan Short Essay 7.5% (approx. 1,000 words)
- *Maus* Scholarship Overview 7.5% (approx. 1,000 words)
- Mid-Term Project 15% (final version approx. 2,000 words)
- Group Project 15% (outline and peer assessment approx. 1,000 words)
- Final Project Initial Draft 5% (separate from the 2nd, complete draft)
- Final Project 20% (final version approx. 4,000 words)

*The **Other Work page** (see link on main menu at the top) specifies all the different assignments and activities that go in this category. Almost all of that work involves steps and stages toward producing the major assignments listed above.

Any informal exercises or reflective writing that I assign on an ad hoc basis in class will count toward your class participation grade. These are not assessed individually, but you must be present in class to do them and must complete them meaningfully.

Each of the grade categories above will receive a letter grade (not a point total). The letter-to-point conversion follows the standard university scale: A = 4.0; A- = 3.67; B+ = 3.33; B = 3.0; B- = 2.67; C+ = 2.33; C = 2.0; C- = 1.67; D+ = 1.33; D = 1.0; D- = .67; F = 0. Each result is multiplied by its weight, with the total rounded to the nearest letter equivalent. So, for example, an overall course total of 3.40 would receive a B+. In D2L, you will simply see the letter grades. The way D2L displays the calculation confuses students, but I will be happy to show you how I calculate the actual grades in my Excel spreadsheet. See the **Other Work page** to see how those point totals will be converted into a letter at semester's end.

University grade expectations will be discussed in class (i.e., "What's a B?")

Specific guidelines for all assignments and projects are or will be made available online and will be reviewed and discussed several times in class.

Students should consult the **Late, Draft, and Submission Policies Web Page** regarding those important issues.

n.b. **Students must complete all** formal assignments, essays, and projects to pass the course. You cannot have a "0" for any major work and pass, regardless of your grade average. In addition, students should be prepared to submit electronic copies of all assignments upon request.

Students should also familiarize themselves with the **Plagiarism Policies and Procedures**, which will be reviewed in class. Please note that Information Literacy is an important outcome of the course. In addition to the instruction provided in our course, Ted Mulvey, Polk Library's Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes: ext. 7329 / mulveyt@uwosh.edu.

Early Alert

Getting off to a good start is one of the Keys to Success. To provide you with early feedback on your performance, we will have a graded short assignment near the end of the second week (see the course schedule). In addition, first-year USP courses participate in the university's Early Alert program by providing you with an Early Grade Report. Per the university, "Early Grade Reports will indicate if you have academic performance or attendance issues and specific steps you can take and resources available to help you improve. It is common for students to be unaware of or over-estimate their academic performance in classes so this will help you be aware early on of your progress and provide strategies for success in the classroom. You will receive an email during the 5th week of classes. It is important to read the entire email carefully." Should you receive an Early Alert, it is imperative that you make arrangements to meet with me to develop an action plan.

Attendance/Participation

Excessive absences will severely affect your ability to complete this course satisfactorily, given the complexity and breadth of the material and skills to be covered, as well as the fact that many other aspects of your grade will depend upon your being present in class (such as Study Questions, In-Class Writing, Peer Review, Group Project, etc.). Therefore, to maximize your learning, not to mention your class participation grade, you should adhere strictly to the following guidelines:

- Be prepared (read carefully and always bring the relevant texts and study questions to class);
- Participate actively and regularly (mere presence counts for little, if anything);
- Treat colleagues and the professor with respect (more below).

More specifically, if you accumulate more than 8 absences, for any reason, you will fail the course. All absences above 2 (excluding those officially excused by the University and with documentation--see the Student Handbook) will reduce your Class Participation grade by 1 letter.

To reiterate, you have **two absences** that you can accumulate over the course of the term without deduction. Those absences, however, may still cause deductions if there is an assignment due, we have a quiz, we are peer editing drafts, and so forth. In addition, it is your responsibility to make up for what you missed and to be fully prepared when you return to class.

You should be on time for each class session. In the event you must be late, please make every attempt to minimize the disruption your late arrival has on the class. Tardiness will count as 1/2 absence and, if in excess of 20 minutes, as 1 absence. I will allow you to have **one "free"** late arrival prior to the last two weeks of class, so long as a) you are not more than 5 minutes late and b) an assignment draft is not due (Celan, *Maus*, Mid-Term, Final).

In terms of classroom comportment, you are expected to behave professionally and respectfully. The classroom is

neither a dorm nor a lunch room. Further, do not engage in behavior that detracts from my ability to teach and, most importantly, your colleagues' ability to learn. If your previous educational environment(s) tolerated annoying and distracting (for me, your peers, and you), more's the pity. It is not tolerated in my classroom. If you have a question or comment, make it public and direct it to me. I relish questions (non-putrid ones, anyway), and your peers will be happy that you asked, since some of them likely had the same question.

Students with chronic or egregious inappropriate behavior (as determined by me) will be instructed to leave the classroom.

Note: the same codes of conduct for appropriate behavior and productivity also apply whenever we meet in a computer lab or in the library--class is class, regardless of venue.

Electronic Devices / Email Policies and Expectations

To avoid sabotaging your grade, **DO NOT** use your **any electronic device(s)** for anything not directly related to our class activities and do so **ONLY** when I give explicit permission to do so to access selected course materials, such as study questions or assignment guidelines. All such devices should be turned **OFF** the moment our class period has begun. Violations of this policy will be severely penalized, and if some students choose to use devices inappropriately and disrespectfully, I will be forced to ban their use entirely. It's up to you.

Note: **ALL** readings must be present in class in hard copy. There are some contexts in which e-texts are acceptable. This is not one of them.

Students are welcome to use **email** to supplement, complement, and clarify course readings and issues, but you should not use email in lieu of paying attention in class, reading the syllabus and assignment guidelines, or making a good-faith effort to answer questions on your own. Email messages must include useful subject headings, identify the context (student, course, message purpose), and be composed in such a way as to allow me to provide the most helpful, efficient response possible. You also need to allow a minimum of 24 hours response time. **I am not a 24/7 hotline.**

Late, Draft, and Submission Policies

Keep in mind that late arrival and the failure to be properly prepared for peer review / writing workshops may also be factored into other aspects of your grade, such as Class Participation, peer review, and so forth.

Late Work

- Late, submitted hard copy same day, before end of office hour on due date: one grade level (e.g., B- > C+)
- Late, submitted hard copy next class period: two grade levels (e.g., B- > C)
- Late, submitted hard copy within one week of due date: full grade (e.g., B- > C-)
- Work that is more than one week late should still be submitted (a D is better than a O), but you cannot receive more than a minimal result.

Special circumstances are handled on a case-by-case basis, but students must be proactive in communicating with me regarding their situations and be prepared to document them. After the fact excuses will not be accepted except in verifiable emergency situations.

Drafts: Any draft not ready for peer review ("ready" means a complete draft in person, in hard copy at the beginning of class) will receive at least one full grade reduction (B > C, or 8 > 7). To receive any grade at all, drafts must be minimally complete. I will not accept your draft as completed, and you will not be allowed to participate in peer review / workshoping, unless your draft meets the minimum expectations for the assignment. So a 2-page Celan Essay draft, for example, or a 3-page Mid-Term Project draft are not acceptable. If you are not ready on the draft days for the Celan Essay or the *Maus* Scholarship Overviews (including the Working Bibliographies), but you want to avoid receiving a

"0" for either of those drafts, you must provide me with evidence of a substantially completed draft within 24 hours of the original draft due date. For the Mid-Term and Final Project complete drafts, such evidence must be provided within 48 hours of the original draft due date and time. You are strongly encouraged to provide such evidence--a reduced grade is much preferable to no grade.

The Final Project Initial Draft cannot receive any grade at all if submitted later than December 4.

End of Term: I will not accept any work following the end of our final class period.

Submissions

Most submissions are due in hard copy, and all are due at the beginning of class. Computer/lab/printer problems are not excuses for late submissions. Wait until the proverbial last minute, and you take your chances. You make choices and live with the consequences.

Assignments that you submit to the dropbox (Revised Mid-Term Project and Revised Final Project) must be submitted as .pdf or .docx files. It is your responsibility to make sure you submit the correct and accessible file to the correct dropbox by the stated deadline. Also, only submit one file per dropbox. If you need me to delete a file, just let me know.

I will not accept electronic submission of any course work without expressed prior consent, and, as I do not read complete drafts of student work, I will not download, print, and review drafts of any work sent electronically. I will be more than happy, of course, to answer specific questions about specific issues, in class, during office hours, or via email.

Freebie

I cannot excuse, without penalty, the failure to complete substantial work on time. But things happen, and sometimes you need to prioritize other obligations. So you get one "freebie" to submit one assignment late without penalty so long as it is submitted in hard copy, in person by the beginning of the following class period (otherwise, late deductions start to apply).

For reasons that should be obvious, the "freebie" cannot be used for any aspect of the Mid-Term, Group, or Final Projects.

I also recommend that you do not exercise this option until you really need to do so. Trust me.

Work for which you have the option to submit without penalty at the beginning of the next class period after the due date include any one of the following:

- submission of the revised version of the Celan Essay or the Maus Scholarship Overview
- one study question submission
- one quiz (not including the Group Project Quiz), so long as you complete an alternative assignment outside of class (I will not schedule make-up quizzes)
- one of the in-class essays, so long as you make it up outside of class

Class Schedule

Schedule and due dates are subject to change. I will be assigning some Polk Library video tutorials. Further details forthcoming.

Week 1 (9/6)

- *Course Introduction and Overview*
- *WBIS, the USP, Liberal Education, Signature Questions*

- *Writing Diagnostic*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - *Easy Writer*, "The Top Twenty," p. 1-10
 - *Easy Writer*, "A Writer's Choices," chapter 1
 - *Easy Writer*, "Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes," chapter 14
 - *Easy Writer*, "Integrating Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism," chapter 15
 - *Easy Writer*, Grammar, review chapters 25, 26, 28, 35
 - Totten and Parsons, "Introduction" p. 1-15 (*Centuries of Genocide*)
 - Review Definitions (see file on D2L)

Week 2 (9/11)

- *Radford Teaching Lab (Monday): Introduction to the Class Web Site; D2L*
- *Writing Review: The Writing Process; Academic Writing; Notetaking; Documentation; Grammar Review*
- *Introduction to the Study of Genocide*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - *Easy Writer*, review "Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes," chapter 14
 - *Easy Writer*, "MLA Style," chapter 41
 - **Totten and Parsons SQ due Wednesday, September 20**
 - Niewyk, "The Holocaust: Jews, Gypsies, and the Handicapped" 191-247 (*Centuries of Genocide*)

Week 3 (9/18)

- *The Case of Armenia (Documentary)*
- *Armenia Documentary: Quiz and Review*
- *The Holocaust: Background and History*
- *Representing the Holocaust: Problems and Issues*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Niewyk SQ due Wednesday, September 27**
 - Holocaust Representation Overview (file is on D2L)
 - Celan, "Death Fugue" (D2L)
 - *Easy Writer*, "Exploring, Planning, and Drafting," chapter 2
 - *Easy Writer*, "Writing Across Cultures," chapter 17 (p. 103-4 only)

Week 4 (9/25)

- *Holocaust Literature: Celan's "Death Fugue"*
- *Holocaust Literature: Introduction to Spiegelman's Maus*
- *Introduction to Maus Scholarship Overview and the Mid-Term Project*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - *Easy Writer*, "Reviewing, Revising, and Editing," chapter 4
 - **Celan Short Essay Draft due Monday, October 2**
 - **Revised Celan Short Essay due Wednesday, October 4**
 - **Maus Scholarship Working Bibliography due Friday, October 6**
 - *Maus*, Begin Volume I

Week 5 (10/2)

- *Writing Workshop: Celan Short Essay (Monday)*
- *Holocaust Literature: Maus*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - *Maus*, Conclude Volume I, Begin Volume II
 - **Maus Scholarship Revised Working Bibliography due Monday, October 9**

- **Maus Scholarship Overview Draft due Wednesday, October 11**
- **Revised Maus Scholarship Overview due Friday, October 13**

Week 6 (10/9)

- *Holocaust Literature: Maus*
- *Writing Workshop: Maus Scholarship Overviews (Wednesday)*
- *Writing Workshop: Brainstorm Mid-Term Topics*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - *Easy Writer*, "Sharing and Reflecting on Your Writing," chapter 5
 - *Maus*, Conclude Volume II
 - *Maus*: Review, Research, Write

Week 7 (10/16)

- *Holocaust Literature: Maus*
- *Writing Workshop: Effective Mid-Term Strategies*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Mid-Term Project Draft due Monday, October 23**
 - Snyder, "The Holocaust: The Ignored Reality" (D2L)
 - **Revised Mid-Term Project due Friday, October 27**

Week 8 (10/23)

- *Writing Workshop: Mid-Term Projects (Monday)*
- *Holocaust (History, Memory, Reality?): Quiz and Review (Wednesday)*
- *Introduce Group Project Guidelines & Criteria; Assign Groups (Friday)*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - Review Group Project topic chapter (*Centuries of Genocide*)
 - Caplan, "The Rwanda Genocide" 447-475 (*Centuries of Genocide*)
 - Begin Research for Group Project
 - *Easy Writer*, review "Conducting Research" and "Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes," chapters 13-14

Week 9 (10/30)

- *Library Work: Group Projects (Monday)*
- *Rwanda: Background*
- *Rwanda: History and Documentary--Ghosts of Rwanda*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Caplan SQ due Wednesday, November 8**
 - Research for Group Project

Week 10 (11/6)

- *Rwanda: History and Documentary--Ghosts of Rwanda, cont.*
- *Introduce Final Project Guidelines & Criteria*
- *Library Work: Group Projects, Final Projects (Friday)*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - View *Hotel Rwanda* (must view on your own)
 - Uwem Akpan, "My Parents' Bedroom" (D2L)
 - Research for Group and Final Projects
 - **Final Project Topic Confirmation, Monday, November 13**

Week 11 (11/13)

- *Rwanda: History and Feature Films--Hotel Rwanda*
- *Rwanda: Literature--Akan*
- *Rwanda Aftermath: Ongoing Issues*
- *Rwanda In-Class Essay (Wednesday)*
- *Library Work: Group Projects, Final Projects (Friday)*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - Research for Group and Final Projects
 - *Easy Writer*, "Creating Presentations," chapter 11
 - *Easy Writer*, "Making Design Decisions," chapter 3
 - *Easy Writer*, Review "MLA Style," chapter 41
 - **Final Project Working Bibliography due Monday, November 20**

Week 12 (11/20)

- *Review Group Project, Final Project Guidelines & Criteria*
- *Writing Workshop: Final Project Brainstorming, Source Sharing*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Final Project Initial Draft due Monday, November 27 (two copies)**
 - **Group Presentations begin Friday, December 1**

Week 13 (11/27)

- *Writing Workshop: Final Project Initial Draft (Monday)*
- *Review Group, Final Project Guidelines*
- *Group Presentations (Friday)*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Group Presentations continue Monday and Wednesday**
 - Work on Final Project Complete Draft

Week 14 (12/4)

- *Group Presentations (Mon & Wed)*
- *Group Presentations Quiz (Friday)*
- *Final Project Guidelines Review*
- **Assignment for Next Week:**
 - **Final Project Complete Draft due Monday, December 11**
 - **Group Project Peer Assessments due Wednesday, December 13**
 - **Revised Final Project, Friday, December 15**

Week 15 (12/11)

- *Writing Workshop: Final Projects (Monday)*
- *Understanding Genocide: In-Class Essay (Wednesday)*
- *Submit Group Project Peer Assessments (Wednesday)*
- *Submit Revised Final Projects (Friday)*
- *Never Again? Genocide in the 21st Century: Course Review and Assessment*