

Studies in Form: The Writings of Women at War

CRW 5368/ CRN

January 20/ March 6th 2020

I. Professor's Information

Professor: Sylvia Aguilar-Zéleny, MFA

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Office Hours: 10:00-12:00 pm, Tuesday and Thursday and by appointment

Skype: sylviruk

II. Texts & Materials

Required bibliography:

- Alexievich, Svetlana. *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II*. Random House, 2018.
- Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*. Harry N. Abrams, 2018.
- Kristoff, Agota. *The Notebook, The Proof, The Third Lie: Three Novels*. Grove Press, 1997. (We will read only *The Notebook*).
- Oswald, Alice. *Memorial. W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.*
- Salazar, Claudia. *Blood of the Dawn*. Bryer, Elizabeth, Trans. Deep Vellum, 2016.
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon, 2004.
- Uribe, Sara. *Antígona González*. Pluecker, John, Trans. Les Figues Press, 2016.

III. Course Description

During the 18th century, women accompanied armies handling roles such as cooking and laundry. Nursing became a major role starting in the middle 19th century. Then, during World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) women were employed in munitions factories, farming, and other roles to replace men drafted for the army; in Russia, women became pilots, snipers, machine gunners, tank crew members, and partisans. The experiences of women in war, then, have been diverse; if historically, women have played a major role in the homefront, how is it that then that war narratives are dominated by men?

In 2014, war veteran and novelist Cara Hoffman published an op-ed in *The New York Times* about this issue. From the Greek classics to modern story collections, Hoffman wrote, these tales focus exclusively on the male experience of battle, and of return; the stories of

women at war, on the other hand, are “nearly absent from our culture.” This course will analyze works of non-fiction, fiction, graphic novel, film, and poetry written by women.

We will discuss authors who have addressed war as a theme—either metaphorical or literally, directly or indirectly—and whose books provide a powerful account of the trauma war inflicts not only on those fighting but also on those attempting to care for them. Our course will travel in multigenre lands as we will read and discuss works in nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and graphic novel.

IV. Course Requirements

1. Discussion Boards. I will post questions based on our weekly readings, it is expected that you create a post that offers your analysis of the book in question and engage in a conversation with your classmates.

2. Critical Responses. We will read at least two books on each genre, you will choose one of each and write three critical responses. Instructions and format of such responses are included at the end of this document.

3. Creative piece. You will write one short-story, one long poem or a personal essay. This should reflect war as an idea and/or a phenomenon that affects human condition. To secure the quality of your work, you will first submit a proposal, then a draft of your story for workshop with your classmates, and later on you will submit the final revised version for your professor’s evaluation. Make sure you read the final project instructions included at the end of this document before you start drafting.

4. Quizzes. To make sure you are all reading each of the works of the course, you will have four quizzes, a calendar will be available on Blackboard.

5. Workshops. You are required to provide a summary with your general comments to the author, visible to the rest of the group, as well as in-text comments on the margin of the story using the Review tool of Word.

Grading Breakdown:

Your grades will be determined by your completion of:

- 20% -- Discussion boards
- 20% -- Quizzes
- 30% -- Creative piece
- 30% -- Critical Responses

V. Course Instructions

Grading, Assignments, & Deadlines: All assignments, announcements, and posts will be **sent and received via Blackboard**; it is your responsibility to check the page regularly. Also, it is the responsibility of each student to turn in all assignments by the due dates. Late work is not accepted.

Preparing for Class: Students should at least work on their course 3 to 4 hours a week for. This means logging on to read the instructions for the module/week, participate on discussion boards, read the material, and submit work. Instructions or formats for discussion boards, exercises, workshops and final projects will be posted in the Guidelines folder in Blackboard.

Email Protocol, Office Hours & Online Contact:

UTEP email is the best possible way to contact me (8am-4pm, M-F) and has the added bonus of recording our conversations, but please first read the module instructions or this syllabus, sometimes the answers to your questions are already there. When emailing me, please consider it a formal communication: include your name, your course, your question/comment.

If you have an extended question or dilemma that cannot be answered by our online communication, we can schedule a phone appointment to be held during my office hours.

VI. Policies

Academic Dishonesty: Dishonesty in any form is not tolerated in this course. Even one instance will result, at the least, in a failing grade for the assignment. Academic dishonesty is taken very seriously and may result in failure of the course and suspension. The following are brief descriptions of certain types of academic dishonesty. If you have further questions, please speak to the instructor for clarification.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is submitting or using someone else's writing as your own. This is not tolerated. You may wish to use a short quote from another source as part of an essay. You may do this only if the source is properly documented.

Collusion: Collusion is unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing your written work. You may be asked to work with a partner on a specific assignment. Except for those instances, all work must be your own. Getting others to do your work for you is not tolerated.

Students with Disabilities: To promote academic success, UTEP offers a variety of services to persons with documented sensory, mental, physical or temporary disabling conditions. If you have a disability and believe you may need services, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities to discuss your needs with a counselor. All discussions and documentations are kept confidential.

VII. Critical Responses

A critical response is an analysis of and a commentary on a piece of writing. It is expected that you focus on form, techniques, as well as on content. See this assignment as an argumentative essay; you have two missions, to summarize the source's main idea and to respond to such ideas based on your point of view and analysis.

All critical responses include the following basic elements: Introduction, Thesis statement, body and conclusions. Your response must provide valid and relevant arguments, feel free to rely on excerpts of the text to develop your ideas.

You will submit three critical responses, each one of them should be between 400-700 words (1-2 pages).

VIII. Creative Pieces

War has always been in our lives, it is in our History as a civilization, or because we have experienced its effects on the personal level, grandparents who fought in World War I or II, parents who were deployed to Korea or Vietnam, friends or relatives who have enlisted; 9/11 was, in the end, a result and a reason of war. The history of human nature is also, a history of violence.

The works of the authors we are reading for this course know this, so it is now your turn to address this issue. Choose the genre and form that you feel most comfortable with (or exactly the one you feel most uncomfortable with) and write a long piece. Fictional or not, your piece should be a reflection of war as an idea and/or a phenomenon that affects us all.

Your piece should be between 5-10 pages and will be workshopped in class before submitting your final version.

IX. Format

All written assignments should follow this format:

- Arial or Times 12 pts., double-space, justified text. Include page numbers.
- Submit as a word. doc (Blackboard will convert as pdf automatically, but for my feedback I need it in word)
- Name your documents with the first letter of your name and your last name, then the number of story, example: **saguilar_criticalresponse1.doc**
- Review rubric before submitting your assignment.

X. Calendar

Week 1	<p>Introduction to Course Discussion Board 0: Introduce Yourself HW. Start reading <i>The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II</i> by Svetlana Alexievich and <i>The Best We Could Do</i> by Thi Bui.</p>
Week 2	<p>Non Fiction Disc. Board 1: War Correspondent H.W. <i>Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood</i> by Marjane Satrapi</p>
Week 3	<p>Graphic Novel Quiz 1 Disc. Board 2: Images of War Critical Response 1: Choose Alexievich, Bui, or Satrapi H.W. <i>Antígona González</i> by Sara Uribe and <i>Memorial</i> by Alice Oswald</p>
Week 4	<p>Poetry DB3: If Metaphors are Bullets Present proposal for final project Quiz 2: Uribe and Oswald H.W. <i>Blood of the Dawn</i> by Claudia Salazar and <i>The Notebook</i> by Agosta Kristoff.</p>
Week 5	<p>Fiction DB4: Must Novelists be Snippers? Critical Response 2: Choose Uribe or Oswald. H.W. Work on first draft of final project.</p>
Week 6	<p>Workshop Quiz 3: Uribe and Oswald. Submit draft of final Project for Workshop</p>
Week 7	<p>DB5: The perks of (writing about) war Critical Response 3: Choose Kristoff or Salazar Submit Final project</p>

More women writers, more books of war:

- Barker, Pat. *The Regeneration Trilogy*. Plume, 2013.
- Boianjiu, Shani. *The People of Forever are Not Afraid*. Hogarth, 2013
- Brenner, Marie. *A Private War: Marie Colvin and Other Tales of Heroes, Scoundrels, and Renegades*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- Oksanen, Sofi. *Purge*. Grove Press, 2010.
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon, 2004.

- Soli, Tatjana. *The Lotus Eaters*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2010.
- Thuy, Kim. *Ru: A Novel*. Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Weiss, Helga. *Helga's Diary: A Young Girl's Account of Life in a Concentration Camp*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*,