

## **Violence in Twentieth-Century World Literature** **JWST/CMPL 375, Fall 2012**

Class Meetings: Weds 06:30-08:30, Peter 129

Prof. Ari Ofengenden

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Office Hours: Monday 12-1 and Wednesday 4:30-5:30 or by appointment

Seminar Description: Violence has great authority in 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction, it is strangely both eminently meaningful and beyond sense, it arouses our fascination, disgust, shadenfreu, guilt and shame. Representations of violence create identities of heroes, victimizers and victims, they legitimize authority while sometimes undermining it.

Twentieth century literature has had a special relationship with violence. Modernism, twentieth century main literary current has stressed power as constitutive of the individual and society, a belief which often translated to an affirmation of the role of violence in revolutionizing language, society and humanity. The course will begin with matrix of literature and violence in the Russian revolution and Futurism. We will then take a theoretical step back and examine theoretical issues including: violence in fantasy and trauma (Freud) the relationship of violence to authority (Schmidt) and various aspects of structural violence and power (Foucault) and positive notions of violence as transgression and positive expenditure (Bataille). Modernist affirmations of violence have been radically altered by the holocaust which has fundamentally changed the cultural perception of violence and shifted much of the discussion on violence from the paradigm of insurrection, heroic resistance to the paradigm of victimhood and trauma. We will read key works of holocaust writing and post-holocaust writing and discuss their effects both moral and aesthetic. We will then move to late-modernist and post-modernist representations of violence which often occur seemingly “outside” the process of history, in a vacuum of the contemporary landscape. Finally we will finish with how violence toward non-humans is narrated and articulated.

**Seminar Requirement and Grading:**

**Attendance, Reading and Participation**

Coming prepared to class and reading the relevant material which will be noted. If something prevents you from coming to class or doing the assignments please see me.

### **Presentation**

You will be responsible to engage the class for an half an hour with the reading assignment. Persuasiveness and insight are highly desirable. This presentation will be graded according to the way it succeeds in creating a fruitful engagement with the text for the class.

### **Blackboard Assignments and Informational Postings**

This course will have a blackboard web site. An updated syllabus will be posted there and much of the course materials.

### **Weekly Assignments**

You will be required to write 1-2 page single space responses on the weekly readings. Essays are due on black board discussion section and in my email by 3:00 a day before class.

### **Final research Paper**

You will have to send me a research proposal (with a list of at least 7 new sources) which we will meet and discuss. A 15 page research paper will be due on 20/12, 12am. You will send the paper to my email. If you have not received verification from me within two days please write another email or contact me immediately at 440-935-6069.

**Plagiarism and the Honor Code:** Plagiarism is an ethical violation as well as a criminal waste of educational resources. For the Oberlin honor code see:

<http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/2011-2012/11-Policies-Honor.pdf>

### **Disabilities:**

Please see me at the beginning of the course if you have any disabilities which would require special academic accommodation.

### **Grading**

Weekly written and oral assignment 30%

Presentation 10%

15 page research paper 60%

**Required Books for Purchase/ Available at Oberlin Bookstore:**

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

Primo Levi, *Survival at Auschwitz*

Ka-Tzetnik 135633, *House of Dolls*

Ka-Tzentik 135633, *Shvitti: A vision*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and II*

Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*

J.G Ballard, *Crash*

Orly Castle-Bloom, *Dolly City*

Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*

**5/9 Introduction: Meaning and Interpretation of Violence in the Twentieth Century Literature**

**12/9 Modernism and Revolutionary Violence**

Alan Badiou, *The Century*, selections

Issac Babel, *My First Goose*

Trotsky, *Revolutionary and Socialist Art*

F.T Marinetti, *The Founding Manifesto of Futurism*

Mayakovsky, *Cloud in Trousers*

Mayakovsky, *A Slap in the Face*

**19/9 Psychology of Violence in the Early Twentieth Century**

Freud, *Rat Man* Selections, *A Child is Being Beaten*

Freud, *Creative Writing and Day Dreaming*

**26/9 Yom Kippur –No Classes**

**3/10 Structural Violence and Punishment**

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, *The Penal Colony*

Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, *Method*

Anonymous, *Prisoner Report from Abu Ghraib*

**10/10 Georges Bataille: Transgression, Expenditure, Sacrifice**

Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*, selections

Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, selections

Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, selections

**17/10 The Purges and the Gulag**

Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into Whirlwind*, selections

Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, selections

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, selections

**24/10 Fall Recess**

**31/10 Germany and the Second World War: A view from the Right and from the Left**

Ernst Jünger, *The Paris Diaries: 1941-1944*, selections

Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage*

Carl Schmitt, *Definition of Sovereignty*

**7/11 The Holocaust**

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Ka-Tzetnik 135633, *House of Dolls*

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Remnants of Auschwitz*, selections

### **14/11 Post Trauma I**

Ka-Tzetnik 135633, *Shvitti: A vision*

Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I and II*

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, selections

### **21/11 Post-Modern Violence I**

Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*

Orly Castle-Bloom, *Dolly City*

### **28/11 Post –Modern Violence II**

J.G Ballard, *Crash*

Jean Baudrillard, *Ballard's Crash*

### **5/12 Violence and Terror**

David Grossman *Death as a Way of Life*, selections

Etgar Keret, *Cocked and Locked*

Joe Sacco, *Palestine*

Ruth Stein, *For the Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism*, selections

**12/12 Narratives of Shame and Violence toward Non-Humans**

John Safron Feuer, *Eating Animals*