

CANG 9106/9206 _ C1+ _

Representing Contemporary War in Text and Image

Level: **C1+**

Instructor: Rachel Kyne, Ph.D.

This class is an advanced (C1+) course in English based on consistent, active discussion.

This interdisciplinary course examines the ways in which writers, artists, and photographers of the 20th and 21st century have grappled with representing arguably the most damaging activity humankind can engage in—war. Examining culture through the lens of war enables us to address questions of memory and transmission, of geopolitics, empire, and nationalism, of gender, human rights and democracy, and of the relationship between the individual and history at large.

We will read and discuss texts like Art Spiegelman's bande dessinée *Maus*, Michael Herr's Vietnam War journalism, Ray Bradbury's Cold War science fiction, poetry by Yusef Komunyakaa, Czeslaw Milosz, and Wislawa Szymborska, writings by Guantanamo prisoners, and legal texts of the War on Terror. We will also consider paradigmatic images of war, ranging from Robert Capa's famous photographs of the Spanish Civil War to Ron Haviv's photographs of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. The chronological span of our class stretches from the post-World War II period to the current moment of algorithmic and drone warfare, with all of its ethical and legal challenges.

The current war in Ukraine will not be directly evoked in the texts of the class, nor will there be gratuitous representations or images of violence. However, students may, if they choose, examine questions related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine in their written work.

Assignments will include an oral presentation, a written paper, an in-class peer project, and a vocabulary list. No prior literary or art history background is required—our texts are simply starting points for active language usage. Small-group discussion is prioritized in this class as a means of increasing students' comfort in spontaneous expression in English. Though our topics are serious and our texts often challenging, our class prioritizes collegiality, respect, and yes, often humour.