Syllabus

WRTG 3020: Language of War
MWF 12-12:50
Ramley N1B31

Instructor: Shari Beck
sharon.beck@colorado.edu or beckshari@gmail.com
Office hours: Mondays 1–3 and by appointment
Office: ENVD 1B27H

Language of War:
This is a writing course based on the culture of war, with a focus on the rhetorical strategies and language used by all sides of the issue (civilians, combatants, governments). Our primary concern is to consider how war is represented in various forms, including literature, film, and historical records. We will discuss how those forms make sense of the twentieth century's mass wars, how wars are remembered and forgotten, and how war has been adapted to the dominant aesthetic and cultural movements of the century. The bulk of our readings will center on World War II, the Vietnam War, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will also look at smaller conflicts like the Rwandan genocide. Issues of national identity, gender, and protest will be at the forefront of our inquiry. Our goal is to understand the way language shapes both conflict itself and the way we come to understand that conflict.

CCHE Criteria
This course addresses the key criteria for an upper-division core course as specified by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), as well as by the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) approved WRTG 3020 Curricular Goals:

Course Goals

Rhetorical Knowledge: The course takes a rhetorical perspective on the language of war in various media, including critical theory, literature, memoir, and film. For the development of your own rhetorical strategies as writers, we will refer the Purdue OWL website as well as the Colorado State University Writing Center and WAC Clearinghouse.

Writing Process: Writing is an ongoing dialogue between writer and the reader. As such, students will write multiple drafts throughout the semester. This includes crafting an evolving thesis that truly allows exploration of an issue and reworking the thesis as new claims and evidence are discovered. Students are also part of a writing community, and as such, much of the participation grade will be based on student interaction within the peer review groups. As an integral component in helping one’s classmates become better writers through the workshop process, students will be asked to provide constructive, yet honest, feedback. Students will also
be expected to take the comments of their peers very seriously, and to implement their suggestions in each progressive draft.

**Writing Conventions:** In this class, we will review the fundamental rules of writing, including sentence structure, use of active voice, vibrant imagery, and discovery of your own writer’s voice. Writing is a dialogue, not a monologue, not a lecture.

**Content Knowledge:** Assignments in this course are geared toward real-world audiences, including members of your own discipline. Students will extend writing practice to special rhetorical situations even as they make their work accessible to secondary audiences in other disciplines.

In this class you will also **develop your digital literacy**, analyzing multimedia pieces, including film, audio recordings, and online readings) and composing multimodal work with a variety of web-based digital tools (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.).

**Course Policies**

**Availability:** I try to be as available as possible to address any questions or concerns about course assignments. I encourage students to visit my office hours to discuss assignments, drafts, or the course in general. While I am happy to answer questions over e-mail, in order to give all students equal time, I am only able to look at extra drafts during my office hours. I also encourage you to visit the Writing Center (located in the Norlin Commons, room E111). This is a valuable resource that provides one-on-one writing consultations.

**Attendance Policy:** Because of the workshop-seminar format of the course, your attendance and active participation are essential. You can miss up to three class meetings without it affecting your participation grade. There are no distinctions between “excused” and “unexcused” absences—if you’re not here, you can’t participate. Extreme situations can be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. For each absence beyond those three, your participation grade will drop by 10%.

* If you miss more than 8 classes, you will receive an F in the course

**Tardiness:** Occasional (one or two) instances of minor lateness are understandable and will not be penalized. But repeated or extreme tardiness (more than ten minutes) will result in a lowered participation grade. The deduction for repeated or extreme tardiness will be 5% for each instance. If you have a medical reason for being late, proper documentation can excuse an extreme tardiness.

**Technology:** NO use of cell phones in class. If your cell phone is out, whether you are actively using it or not, you will receive a 5% deduction off your final participation grade. Laptops and tablets may be used, but if you are on any website (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that is not appropriate to the course, you will receive a 5% deduction off your final participation grade.
**Late Paper Policy:** Rough drafts must be turned in on time, as your paper will not be workshopped if your peers haven’t read it. Late papers will affect your grade as follows:

Smaller writing assignments (paper proposals, outlines, summaries of readings, etc.): A late assignment will result in a 10% deduction for every day the assignment is late.

Major assignments (response papers, comparative paper, final paper): A late paper will result in a 3.3% reduction for every day the paper is late.

**Extensions:** You may request, if needed, one extension during the semester. This must be requested at least 24 hours in advance of the due date. This extension may only be used for a FINAL paper.

**Participation:** A good portion of your grade is based on your contribution to class discussions and workshops. This also means coming to class prepared. Many of the assignments will ask you to answer specific questions about a story or article—I strongly advise writing these questions out on a piece of paper and bringing your answers with you to class.

**Conferences:** During the course of the semester, we will meet for two individual 10-minute conferences to discuss your writing. One will be during your comparative paper and one during your final paper. I sincerely want to know how I can best help you as a writer, how I can help you achieve what is most important to you. You can help me be a better reader of your work if you prepare questions and concerns about a piece of writing ahead of our conference.

**Required Texts/Materials**

1. Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. This book details the Rwandan Genocide; we will use it to understand the way in which wars are discussed in the international community

2. Captain America, issue 1 (available at [http://marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1](http://marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1)). This comic will help us understand how propaganda can be pervasive throughout society during wartime

3. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (you must use the Stuart Woolf translation). We will address issues of memory and memorialization during and after war

4. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*. Based on Vonnegut’s war experience, this book will help us understand the role of fiction in describing and representing war

5. Max Brooks, *World War Z*. This reading will help us understand the way fears of war manifest themselves in apocalyptic and dystopian fiction
6. David Finkel, *Thank You for Your Service*. This book details the issues veterans face upon returning from war. It will help us understand the lingering effects of war and the way those effects are (or are not) addressed

**Writing Assignments**
You will be asked to complete informal in-class writings, formal essays, and a research or creative project.

**Major Assignments**
- **Comparative Paper**: (5–6 pages, double-spaced). This assignment will focus on the use of propaganda during wartime. You will choose two uses of propaganda and compare them. You might look at different time periods (e.g., Vietnam vs WWII), opposing sides (e.g., Japan vs America), forms of propaganda (e.g., written versus film) or something else. Your task is to analyze the purpose of the propaganda, the audience, and the effectiveness.

- **Response Papers** (3 pages, double spaced). For three units (memoir, literature, and film) you will write a response paper on one or more works within that unit. The paper will look at a particular element discussed in class and further the analysis of that element.

- **Final Paper**: (10–12 pages, double-spaced). This is an academic research paper in which you will research, analyze, and make an argument about a particular element concerning the language of war.

- **Annotated Bibliography**: (5 pages) An annotated bibliography is a compilation of your sources that assess them for validity and usefulness. You will use this to aid you’re your research in the final paper and will provide entries for five of your sources.

- **Group Presentation**: (Ten minutes). You and a group of three to four other students will offer an interpretation of a particular text. You will use a visual aid (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) to assist in the communication of your analysis.

**Grades**
Assignments will count as follows:
- Response Papers: 10%
- Comparative Paper: 20%
- Research Paper: 30%
- Annotated bibliography 10%
- Group Presentation 5%
- All other assignments (proposals, outlines, etc.): 15%
- Participation, including attendance and workshops: 10%
Grading Scale


“A” work is not only thought provoking and structurally polished but also completed with a high level of critical independence, fresh thinking, logical organization, and excellent mechanics and style.

“B” work is well above average; it explores difficult questions in a way that is creative, critical, and thought provoking. It is critically and organizationally sound, stylistically competent, and contains few errors.

“C” work is adequate and meets minimum requirements. The work is functional at a college level and all aspects of the assignment have been addressed. However, it may lack sufficient critical inquiry, organizational clarity, and control over mechanics and style.

“D” work is substandard at the college level. It is usually completed in haste and reflects little thought or attention to detail. A “D” indicates that major portions of the assignment are completed poorly.

“F” work is incomplete or inadequate. An “F” will also be given if plagiarism has occurred.

University Policies

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment. Examples of plagiarism include failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting from a source; failing to document distinctive ideas from a source; fabricating or inventing a source; turning in someone else’s work as your own; and copying information from electronic sources. In this course, if you hand in a piece of writing that is plagiarized in full or in part, you will receive a failing grade on that assignment and the F will be factored into your final course grade.

The Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at
Disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

Religious Observances: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, I ask that you contact me at least one week ahead of the date(s) that you will be absent so that we can discuss any assignments/class material that you will miss.

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh.

Course Schedule

*Unless otherwise specified, all readings are on D2L.

* Most assignments will be turned in via D2L. HOWEVER, some assignments will be brought to class in hard copy form while others will be submitted via e-mail. The schedule below indicates the method of submission for each assignment. Please check it before turning your homework in. Homework not turned in correctly will not be graded.
*We will be meeting in a computer lab on many days to conduct in-class work. On such days, you will need to have any notes, research, and drafts available for use during the class period. Failure to come equipped for such classes will result in a lowered participation grade. And you’ll miss out on valuable research time!*

Jan 12

- Introduction to course / review of syllabus and course expectations

**Assignment—Due Jan 14**

1. Read "Can Language Influence Our Perception of Reality?" Available in Course Content.) Think about how the discussion in this article might apply to war and the way in which language affects our thoughts about the topic.

2. Wayne Booth once said that "the only real alternative to war is rhetoric." Keeping in mind that Booth is referring to rhetoric in its pure definition--as an art that involves both listening and argument--what do you think he meant by this statement?

Jan 14

- War and language

**Assignment—Due Jan 16**

1. Read the excerpt from Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address and "What the Axis of Evil Did to Iran," both available in course content. Consider both the effect of the phrase on Iran but also why the phrase might have been used. What might the intent have been in using it and what historical associations does the phrase evoke?

Jan 16

- Axis of Evil Address
- How governments talk about war

**Assignment—Due Jan 21**

1. Read “UN Meeting on a Letter from Ukraine to the Security Council”
Consider the language used in this meeting—what are the differences in the ways each country frames the issue, and what rhetorical strategies are used?

2. Watch *In the Loop* (available on Netflix streaming or to rent on Amazon). Consider the following
   
a. This is, of course, a satire. What all is it lampooning?
b. What role does the media play in general and specifically in the framing of information?
c. Consider the way language is used and abused, particularly the way the same language is interpreted and used by different factions.
d. Consider the exchange between Ukraine and Russia in the meeting minutes you read. How is the dialogue between parties in the film similar to the dialogue in that meeting?

Jan 21

- Discussion of UN meetings
- Discussion of *In the Loop*

**Assignment—Due Jan 23**

1. Read chapters 1–5 of *We Wish to Inform You*.

Jan 23

- Discussion of *We Wish to Inform You*

**Assignment—Due Jan 26**

1. Read chapters 6–13 of *We Wish to Inform You*. On the discussion board, write a paragraph about the way the UN and other Western nations responded to the genocide, focusing in particular on the language they used to discuss it.

Jan 26

- Discussion of *We Wish to Inform You*
Assignment—Due Jan 28

1. Read chapters 14–17 of *We Wish to Inform You*

Jan 28

- Discussion of *We Wish to Inform You*

Assignment—Due Jan 30

1. Read “What Is Propaganda,” "War Propaganda," and "Inside Putin's Information War" available on D2L. Consider how these articles interact: How does war propaganda use the ideas of propaganda in general, and how does Russia's propaganda fit with the ideas in the other two articles?

Jan 30

- Discussion of propaganda

Assignment—Due Feb 2

1. Read “On the Use of Propaganda,” excerpted from *Mein Kampf*
2. Watch *Triumph of the Will*, available on YouTube, and consider why the film is seen as the paragon of propaganda. What might have made it so effective? Do you see any of Hitler’s statements on propaganda being used in the film?

Feb 2

- Discussion of *Triumph of the Will*
- Nazi propaganda posters

Assignment—Due Feb 4

1. Watch *Why We Fight* Part 1 (Prelude to War). Consider it both in its own right and in comparison to *Triumph of the Will*. How are its strategies similar or different? Do you find one more effective than the other? If so, which one and why?
Feb 4

- Discussion of Why We Fight

**Assignment—Due Feb 6**

1. Read *Captain America* (you must purchase the issue from the Marvel website ([http://marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1](http://marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1)).
2. On the discussion board, write two to three paragraphs that considers any of the following: how the comic represented a form of propaganda, whether you thought it was effective, and how it compared to the Nazi propaganda posters.

Feb 6

- Discussion of *Captain America*
- Introduction to comparative paper

**Assignment—Due Feb 9**

1. Decide what you would like to focus on in your paper and conduct preliminary research. Come to class with at least one example of propaganda on each side.

Feb 9

- Academic writing: conventions and expectations
- Using library databases
- Workshop of paper ideas

**Assignment—Due Feb 11**

1. Perform research on your paper. I want you to have at least one or two sources to go off of when we meet in the computer lab.

Feb 11

***We will be meeting in the computer lab, Duane G116***

- In-class work on papers and conferences
Assignment--Due Feb 13

1. Read the introduction (pp. 1-18) from "Identity, Reality, and Truth in Memoirs," available here http://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=etd, and consider issues of truth (both public and personal), trauma, and identity in the writing of memoirs.

2. Complete an outline for your paper. You need the fully written introduction and what you plan to include in each subsequent paragraph. Bring a paper copy to class and post an electronic copy to the dropbox on D2L.

Feb 13

***We will be meeting in the computer lab, Duane G116***

- In-class work on papers and conferences

Assignment--Due Feb 16

1. Complete your rough draft. Bring a paper copy to class and submit an electronic copy to the dropbox on D2L

Feb 16

- Workshop of drafts

Assignment--Due Feb 18

1. Read "How to Tell a True War Story" and "Messages from Hiroshima," available on D2L. Consider these especially in terms of Martin's introduction:

In O'Brien, where do you see questions of fact, fiction, and truth coming into play? In "Messages," where do you see issues of trauma? For both, what can we learn about war from the writing? What is our role in reading?

Feb 18

- Discussion of "How to Tell a True War Story"

Assignment--Due Feb 20
1. Complete your propaganda paper final draft. **Due by midnight on D2L**

---

**Feb 20**

- In-class video—interview with Ishmael Beah

**Assignment--Due Feb 23**

1. Read *Survival in Auschwitz*, chapters 1-9
2. On the discussion board, write one to two paragraphs with your initial thoughts on the book. You might consider ideas of identity (both personal and the identities formed by others), language, or knowledge and understanding.

---

**Feb 23**

- Discussion of *Survival*

**Assignment--Due Feb 25**

1. Read *Survival* chapters 10-15

---

**Feb 25**

- Discussion of *Survival*

**Assignment--Due Feb 27**

1. Finish *Survival* (including the conversation with Philip Roth)
2. On the discussion board, write one to two paragraphs detailing your final impression of the book

---

**Feb 27**

- Discussion of *Survival*

**Assignment--Due Mar 2**
1. Read the excerpts from the milblogs available in course content. Consider the fact that these are not memoirs in the sense of memories; these are written as the action occurs. How does this change the stories told? How does it affect the issues of truth and identity?

Mar 2

- Discussion of Milblogs
- Response papers—conventions and expectations

Assignment—Due Mar 4
1. Complete your response paper rough draft. **Bring a paper copy to class and post an electronic copy on D2L**

Mar 4

- Workshop of response papers
- From memoir to fiction

Assignment—Due Mar 6
1. Read *Slaughterhouse-Five*, chapters 1–3
2. Complete your response paper final draft. **Post an electronic copy to D2L**

Mar 6

- Discussion of *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Assignment—Due Mar 9
1. Finish *Slaughterhouse-Five*.
2. On the discussion board, write one to two paragraphs detailing your thoughts of the end and of the book as a whole. What do you feel fiction can “teach” us about war? With fiction, we love to analyze, attempting to determine meaning or morals from the information presented. Do you feel this impacts the way we understand the war? Do you feel this violates the principles of telling a war story that O’Brien laid out in “How to Tell a True War Story”?

Mar 9
• Discussion of *Slaughterhouse-Five*

**Assignment—Due Mar 11**

1. Read “Two Shores.” Consider the following: how Fuentes “reinterrogates” the event, the role of the narrator—who he is and how he describes things—and how this reading differs from *Slaughterhouse*, thinking about cultural and temporal differences.

---

Mar 11

• Discussion of “Two Shores”

**Assignment—Due Mar 13**

1. Read “Exorcism.” This was the first short story collection written by a woman who served in Vietnam. Why do you think the author chose fiction rather than a memoir to illustrate her experiences?

---

Mar 13

• Discussion of “Exorcism”

• Introduction to film

**Assignment—Due Mar 16**

1. Complete your response paper rough draft. **Bring a paper copy to class and post an electronic copy on D2L.**

2. Watch *Platoon*, available on D2L. What does film allow for that both fiction and memoir do not? What are the shortcomings of film? We’ve read a number of stories and works on Vietnam. How does this film depict it in ways that are similar or different?

---

Mar 16

• Discussion of *Platoon*

• Workshop of drafts

**Assignment—Due Mar 18**
1. Watch *When the Wind Blows*, available on D2L. How does the film connect World War Two with what the Bloggses experience? How do we see the events through the Bloggses’ eyes? What is the role of comedy in the film and in the way we receive the film? What is the impact of animation on the stories represented in the film?

---

Mar 18

- Discussion of *When the Wind Blows*

Assignment—Due Mar 20

1. Watch *Restrepo*, available on Netflix or on Amazon for rent. Here, consider the function of documentary. What role does it play in the way we come to understand war. Think back to our unit on memoir. Does our role as audience change? Do we receive the information differently? If so, how?

2. Complete your response paper final draft. Post an electronic copy on D2L

---

Mar 20

- Discussion of *Restrepo*

Assignment—Due after Spring Break

1. Complete a draft of your response paper. Post the draft to D2L and bring a paper copy to class

---

Spring Break

---

Mar 30

- Workshop of drafts
- Presentation criteria
- Introduction to dystopian and apocalyptic war fiction

Assignment—Due Apr 1
1. Read *World War Z* through “Blame.”
2. Prepare your presentation if you are presenting

---

**Apr 1**

- Presentation 1
- WWZ discussion

**Assignment—Due Apr 3**

1. Read WWZ through “Home Front USA”
2. Prepare your presentation if you are presenting

---

**Apr 3**

- Presentation 2
- WWZ discussion

**Assignment—Due Apr 6**

1. Read WWZ through “Around the World and Above”
2. Prepare your presentation if you are presenting
3. Complete your response paper final draft

---

**Apr 6**

- Presentation 3
- WWZ discussion

**Assignment—Due Apr 8**

1. Finish WWZ
2. Prepare your presentation if you are presenting

---

**Apr 8**

- Presentation 4
• WWZ discussion

**Assignment—Due Apr 10**

1. Watch *Dr. Strangelove*, available on D2L.

---

**Apr 10**

• Discussion of *Dr. Strangelove*
• Introduction to issues of race and gender in the military

**Assignment—Due Apr 13**

1. Read “Women in Combat: Myth vs Fact” and the excerpt from *American Daughter Gone to War.* What issues of gender do these readings raise? How does gender affect combat differently from nursing? From these readings, does it seem like things have changed from Vietnam to now?

---

**Apr 13**

• Discussion of readings

**Assignment—Due Apr 15**

1. Read “History in Context” and “Beyond Vietnam.” What was the role of race in Vietnam, both in the role and on the homefront? How did race in Vietnam intersect with the civil rights movement back in the United States? How did it intersect with the antiwar movement?

---

**Apr 15**

• Discussion of readings
• Introduction to “After the war”—issues of return

**Assignment—Due Apr 17**

1. Read *Thank You for Your Service*, chapters 1–8
2. On the discussion board, post one to two paragraphs about your initial thoughts on the book
Apr 17

- Discussion of *Thank You for Your Service*
- Introduction to final paper

Assignment—Due Mar Apr 20

1. Read *Thank You for your Service*, chapters 9–12
2. Decide on a topic for your final paper. **E-mail me your topic**

Apr 20

- Discussion of *Thank You for Your Service*
- Annotated bibliographies

Assignment—Due Apr 22

1. Complete *Thank You for Your Service*
2. On the discussion board, post your final thoughts on the book.

Apr 22

- Discussion of *Thank You for Your Service*

Assignment—Due Apr 24

1. Find three of your sources and write bibliography entries. **Bring your entries to class**

Apr 24

- Workshop of bibliography entries

Assignment—Due Apr 27

1. Complete an outline of your paper. You need your full introduction and a detailing of what you plan to include for each paragraph
Apr 27

Individual conferences

Assignment—Due Apr 29

1. Complete your annotated bibliography. Post it to D2L

Apr 29

Individual conferences

Assignment—Due Apr 30

1. Complete your final paper rough draft. Bring a paper copy to class and post an electronic copy on D2L

Apr 30

- Workshop of drafts

May 1

- Course wrap-up

Your final papers are due May 6 by midnight. There is no final for this class. Enjoy your summers!