373 573-01 War and Peace in American Literature

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Ancestry of the Course:
Although this is a new course, its origins go back to the 1980s and the beginning of Xavier’s Peace Studies Minor, which an interdisciplinary group of faculty created in response to escalating tensions in the Cold War and the looming possibility of a nuclear holocaust. The course began as “Literature and War” but eventually evolved into occasional seminars on “Images of Peace in American Literature” and a regular offering, “War and Peace in World Literature.” In my final full-time semester, this course attempts to combine elements from all these courses with several new ones and provide a historical approach to the treatment of war and peace in American literature, with an emphasis on works written since the Civil War.

Scope of the Course:
The quest for peace and justice in American literature dates back to colonial times with the securing of religious toleration by Roger Williams in Rhode Island and William Penn in Pennsylvania in the seventeenth century and the reflections and activities of John Woolman, Quaker merchant and preacher in the eighteenth. Woolman preached resistance to the French and Indian War and was an early abolitionist. In 1838 Ralph Waldo Emerson, apolitical by temperament, wrote a letter to President Martin Van Buren protesting the federal government’s removal of the Cherokee from their ancestral lands in the Southeast. Besides the overwhelming issue of slavery, women’s rights became an important issue in the 1830s and ‘40s; but after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, women active in both movements agreed to put their own issues on hold because of the urgency of abolition. John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry brought the slavery issue to a head and elicited defenses of Brown from Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Because Xavier’s course in American Renaissance: 1830-65 focuses so much on the slavery debate, we won’t spend much time on it here, but it was certainly the dominant question of peace and justice in the first half of the nineteenth century in America, and abolitionists themselves debated the best strategies for eliminating it. After a brief look at the first half of the nineteenth century in America, this course will study two novels that look back on the Civil War and then examine literary representations of later American wars and peace activities.

Premises:
A principle of peace studies is that peace is not a static condition or the absence or avoidance of conflict and war but a dynamic process that includes the positive quest for justice and the successful resolution of conflict. This process may include compromise but is usually much more complex and recognizes that conflict is often a source of growth and that not all conflicts can or should be resolved at least by compromise.

A premise from the cultural studies approach to literature is that literary works are not written or read in a vacuum but in history and that aesthetic concerns cannot be completely separated from social and political issues.
A premise from reader response criticism is that our responses to literature reveal much about ourselves and are therefore themselves texts worthy of study.

Students should also realize that philosophical, theological, and literary visions of peace are diverse and offer no easy orthodoxy. They often disagree with each other and unsettle us with their questions and ambiguities as they examine the problems and possibilities of peacemaking. There are many paths to peace, and this course aims to help you identify, develop, and articulate your own.

**Desired Outcomes:**
Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- Analyze literary texts from a wide range of periods in American literature;
- Understand the portrayals of war and peace in these works;
- Formulate their own interpretations and evaluations of these portrayals and of issues relating to war and peace;
- Research this topic by finding and evaluating primary and secondary sources in American literature and related fields such as philosophy, theology, and the social sciences;
- Make connections with texts and issues in earlier courses in the E/R&S Focus;
- Communicate their research and analysis effectively in class discussions and various kinds of written assignments, including a research paper.

ENGL 373 fulfills the literature requirement in the core curriculum. As an upper-level literature course it contributes to the fulfillment of all the goals (except those referring specifically to mathematics, science, and foreign language) of the core curriculum and shares their student learning outcomes. A list of these goals and learning outcomes is available from the instructor upon request.

**Requirements ENGL 373 Fulfills:**
For all undergraduate students ENGL 373 fulfills the literature requirement.

For English majors and minors and students seeking Licensure in Language Arts, ENGL 373 counts as the American literature elective.

For Peace Studies minors ENGL 373 is an approved elective if combined with approved electives from two other fields.

Because ENGL 373 is organized around the interaction of ethical, social, and sometimes religious issues, it will be under consideration for E/R&S elective designation for all undergrads, but that issue has not yet been decided.

**Prerequisites:**
ENGL 101 or 115 or an approved substitute.
It is also strongly recommended that students who are not English majors or minors or in one of the honors programs take a “Studies in...” course and ENGL 205 Literature and Moral Imagination before signing up for any upper-level English course.

English majors ordinarily should have completed ENGL 205 Literature and Moral Imagination, 221 Poetry, and a course in literary criticism or theory before signing up for an upper-level literature course. Minors should have completed 205 and 221. However, sometimes students, especially transfer and honors students, take one of these foundational courses concurrently with upper-level classes.

**Format:**
This course will follow a discussion format, often involving group work. Students should come to class prepared for thoughtful discussion of the readings. Asking good questions is an important contribution to discussion. Especially when we discuss reflection papers, I will feel free to call on you even if you don’t volunteer to answer a question.

**Assignments and Grading for ENGL 373:**
One critical essay (four pages) on an assigned topic counts **10%**.

Eight reflection papers count **40%**. Topics will be assigned.

Class work, a combination of daily participation and the tie-in, counts **15%**. Class participation assumes attendance; unexcused absence from even one portion of a class may hurt your grade for class work. I don’t expect you to come to class if you’re sick or have a genuine emergency, but absences are excused only for legitimate reasons and may require documentation.

Students taking the course for undergraduate credit must sign up for and present a tie-in, lasting four or five minutes, on a prearranged night no later than April 23. Options for the tie-in are: interviewing a veteran of war or peace activism about key issues covered in our readings and discussion or reviewing an American film or book not on the syllabus. The book may be literary or from another field but must focus on issues central to the course. You could also analyze a poem of a few pages or a group of shorter poems if they address issues of war and peace. If you do the review, no more than the first minutes should be devoted to a description of the content of the work; in the remaining three minutes you should explain how well the work addresses issues in our course, making specific connections with works on the syllabus. If you bring a film clip, you may have an extra minute or two to show it. Your topic should be approved well in advance of your presentation.

The research-based paper counts **35%**. This project asks you to connect one of the books on the syllabus and its relevant scholarship either with your own interviews with one or more veterans of war or peace activism or with at least two texts from the Veterans Book Project, available free as PDFs at [www.veteransbookproject.com](http://www.veteransbookproject.com). You’ll probably also need to do research in fields other than English, including history, psychology, philosophy, or theology. The paper should be written for a specific audience including but also larger than this class; the target might be a scholarly journal or a magazine with a general or more limited audience or a
different venue you identify. Be specific about your audience and include your own reactions
to your research. Don’t be afraid to use first person and draw on your own experience. The paper should be ten to twelve pages long and worthy of consideration by the publication you choose. As you read for this paper, I’ll be glad to help you identify your topic and to suggest research strategies. Your thesis and a one-page outline should be submitted for approval by March 12. A draft of the paper should be submitted by April 9. Presentations of five to six minutes of these projects will occur during the last two weeks of the course, April 30 and May 7, and the final version will be due during the final exam period, May 7. The final version should follow the latest MLA guidelines, using parenthetical documentation and a list of works cited. There guidelines are available online, at the reference desk of the library, and in most bookstores. You won’t need footnotes.

Assignments and Grading for ENGL 573:
Seven reflection papers count 35%. Eight reflection papers will be assigned; skip the one that covers the work on which you lead discussion.

Discussion leading counts 5%. For about twenty minutes each graduate student will lead discussion on an aspect of a book-length work on the syllabus. A conference well in advance of that class is required. Lecturing should be kept to a minimum.

Critical essay required of undergrads counts 10%.

Daily class work counts 15%. See undergrad requirements, but you are not required to do a tie-in.

The research-based paper counts 35%. Same topics, requirements, and schedule as undergrads, but grad papers should be twelve to fifteen pages.

Office Hours:
240 Hinkle Hall.
M 12:30-4:30 and 6:00-7:00, W 12:00-4:00, and by appointment other times.
Office phone: 745-3627.
Email: getz@xavier.edu.

Students should contact me when they need help. I’m willing to look over drafts of papers and make general comments. Grad students should certainly seek help with discussion leading, and all students should seek help with the research paper.

Important Notes:
1. This is an upper-division/graduate course designed for English majors and minors, Language Arts Licensure students, and graduate students. Others are welcome if they have the qualifications and willingness to work. If you aren’t sure your background is adequate, talk to me at once.
2. Papers must meet standards of English composition. Grades will be based on quality of writing as well as content.
3. If possible, buy all texts now because the bookstore may begin shipping unsold copies back in a couple of weeks.
4. You must give credit for any idea you borrow that is not generally known even if you put it into your own words. Otherwise, you’re guilty of plagiarism. See statement on academic honesty in Xavier Catalog.
5. Late policy:
   Critical essays more than twenty-four hours late may be penalized. Because reflection papers are designed to spark class discussion, they must be completed on time and printed so you can bring them to class. Late work will be accepted only in case of illness or emergency, and I reserve the right to ask for documentation.
6. To ensure an unbiased reading of all papers, please put your name only on the back of the last page of each paper.
7. Save an electronic and/or printed copy of every paper you submit.

Working Schedule

Jan. 15: The First Half of the Nineteenth Century
Looking Back at the American Revolution
   Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1819)
   Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1832)
Slavery and Abolition
   Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849)
   Frederick Douglass, “The Heroic Slave” (1852)

Jan. 22: *Reflection paper due
The Civil War (1861-65) and Its Effects
   Walt Whitman, “The Wound Dresser” (1865) (online and in anthologies)
   “Reconciliation” (1865-66) (online and in anthologies)
   Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage (1895)
   Selected materials from 4th Norton Critical Ed.

Jan. 29: *Reflection paper due
   William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (1938)

Feb. 5: *Reflection paper due
The Spanish-American War (1898) and Early Twentieth Century Peace Activity
   Mark Twain, “the War Prayer” (1905) (online and in anthologies)
   William Dean Howells, “Editha” (1905) (online and in anthologies)
   William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War” (1910) (online)
   Selections from Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull-House (1910)
Feb. 12: **World War I**  
Selections from Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1925) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) (handouts)  
Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny got His Gun* (1939)

Feb. 19: **World War II**  
Poems by Randall Jarrell and James Dickey TBA

Feb. 26: **Critical essay due**  

Mar. 12: **Prospectus for research-based paper due**  
From *World War II to the Nuclear Age*  

Mar 19: **Reflection paper due**  
*Chorus of Stones*  
Denise Levertov, “Beginners” (1982) (online)

Mar. 26: **Reflection paper due**  
From *World War II to the Vietnam War*  
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)

Apr. 2: **Reflection paper due**  
*The Face of War*, p. 221-81  

Apr. 9: **Draft of research-based paper due**  
Later Wars including *The War on Terror*  
*The Face of War*, p. 283-337  

Apr. 16: **Reflection paper due**  
The Civil Rights Movement  

Apr. 23: **Reflection paper due**  
Alternative Visions  

Apr. 30: **First round of presentations of research-based papers**  
Left *Hand of Darkness*
May 7:  *Final round of presentations of research-based papers
       *Submission of final drafts of research-based papers