

The Rhetoric of Survival

Writing and Rhetoric Honors Seminar 300

Three Credits

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The Honors Program

Dr. Maureen Shanahan, Director

Course Description: Rhetoric is the art of language use. In *The Rhetoric of Survival* we will examine language use in human-induced trauma. We will examine how language both reflects the intentions and shapes the perceptions of human predators, human victims, human resistance, human survivors, and human assistants. This seminar will accommodate 20 students. We will read, view, and discuss books, articles, and videos. We will listen to and interact with speakers. We will take a field trip. While I have chosen to use the Holocaust as the framework of *The Rhetoric of Survival*, we will examine multiple human-induced threats to human survival including cancer, domestic abuse, and war. You will have the opportunity through your creative project and research paper to explore other areas of interest.

Texts, required but not limited to:

Night by Elie Wiesel

Promiscuities by Naomi Wolf

Resistance During the Holocaust United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

The Genocidal Mentality by Robert Lifton and Eric Markusen

The Holocaust Chronicle. Publications International

Syllabus

Date	Topic
Part 1: The Rhetoric of Predators	
Week 1	“What does it mean to be a predator?” “The Roots of Evil: Zealots, Monsters, and Tyrants” Newsweek handout The Holocaust Chronicle “Roots of the Holocaust”
Week 2	<i>The Genocidal Mentality</i> “Confronting Nuclear Entrapment,” a sociological perspective of the rhetoric of predation <i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> : “The Nazi State Begins,” “Steps Toward Destruction,” and “Euthanasia and Operation T-4” “Some Things Psychologists Think They Know about Aggression and Violence” by Clark McCauley, <i>HFG Review</i> , spring 2000, vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 39 - 44
Week 3	<i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> “Machinery of Hatred” and “Mass Murder” <i>The Genocidal Mentality</i> “Professionals” <i>Promiscuities</i> “Introduction: First Person Sexual” Recap: “What does it mean to be a predator?”
Part 2: The Rhetoric of Victims	
Week 4	“What does it mean to be a victim?” JMU’s Women’s Resource Center: a psychological perspective of the rhetoric of victims <i>Promiscuities</i> “Cheap or Precious?” and “Adults”

	<i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> "The Final Solution"
Week 5	How predators see victims: stages of dehumanization Elie Wiesel's <i>Night</i> <i>Night and Fog</i> video <i>The Genocidal Mentality</i> "Victims"
Week 6	<i>Smoke and Ashes</i> film and discussion <i>Night</i> discussion <i>Promiscuities</i> "Activity into Passivity: Blanking Out" Recap: "What does it mean to be a victim?"
Part 3: The Rhetoric of Survivors	
Week 7	"What does it mean to be a survivor?" Domestic abuse: a domestic abuse survivor and a Catholic social worker present Primo Levey <i>The Memory of the Offense</i> video Primo Levey <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> excerpts
Week 8	<i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> "The Pursuit of Justice," an anthropological perspective of the rhetoric of survivors <i>Night</i> discussion Mark Strauss, an Auschwitz Survivor and artist, will speak with us
Week 9	Eastern Mennonite University: Stress and Trauma Healing in Conflict Transformation Howard Zehr from EMU presents "Restorative Justice" Recap: "What does it mean to be a survivor?"
Part 4: The Rhetoric of Resistance	
Week 10	"What does it mean to resist?" <i>Resistance During the Holocaust</i> <i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> "Death and Resistance" and "Desperate Act," a physical perspective of the rhetoric of resistance <i>Promiscuities</i> "The Technically White Dress"
Week 11	<i>Escape from Sobibor</i> video: A true story of successful resistance during the Holocaust Thomas Blatt, who is Toivi in Sobibor, will visit us from Santa Barbara to discuss "Witness as a Form of Resistance" Creative Project presentations
Week 12	Testimony from three cancer survivors: "Being Your Own Advocate in the Medicine" Creative Project presentations Recap: "What does it mean to resist?"
Week 13	Trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Part 5: The Rhetoric of Assistance	
Week 14	"What does it mean to assist?" JMU's Safe Zone presentation: "Assistance for the Smallest Minority: GLBTQ" 1-in-4 JMU Men's Group: "Men helping Victims of Sexual Assault" Creative Project presentations
Week 15	Medical Training and Trauma: a medical perspective of the rhetoric of assistance <i>The Holocaust Chronicle</i> "Liberation and Rebuilding" and "The Aftermath" Recap: "What does it mean to assist?" Course Conclusion: discussion of the five areas, how they interrelate, and how our understanding of the rhetoric of survival can inform us

Evaluation

The definition of a seminar is a small group of students engaged in intensive study and original research under the guidance of a professor. Thus, evaluation will come from preparation for class

(30%), a research paper (30%), a creative project (20%), and a reflective journal (20%).

We will use the university grading scale:

A = 95 - 100

A- = 91 - 94

B+ = 87 - 90

B = 83 - 86

B- = 79 - 82

C+ = 75 - 78

C = 71 - 74

C- = 67 - 70

D = 63 - 66

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