



*English 707 Writing World War Two*

# English 707 Writing World War Two Course Outline

Seminar: Thursday 11 am–2 pm

Convenor:

Dr Eluned Summers-Bremner

Department of English

Room 604, Arts 1 Building

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SI Office Hours: Thursday 3–4 pm, Week 2 to Week 12, in teaching weeks

I research and write at home when not teaching, in the UK, the Library or at meetings and do not normally work in my University office. You can reach me almost any time by email. Please be aware that my office hours get booked up early and quickly so if you think you will require my help it is best to email me ASAP. If you are unable to make my office hours please email to arrange an alternative meeting time. This is not always possible but I'll do my best!

Course description:

Why did the Second World War not produce a specific literature, as did the First? The course will explore possible answers to this question. It will also consider to what extent World War II, due to its scale and the variety of its forms of mass suffering and death, continues to shape the experience of, and writing about, later wars in which Britain, Europe and their former colonies have been involved.

The theme of terror--and of literature produced at the outer limits of human expression and capability--will be our focus as will its cause: bombing or the threat and fear of the bomb's effects. Beginning at mid-century we will look first at the literature of the London Blitz, and at how the work of late modernist, 1940s writers (Bowen, Sansom, Green) is challenged by, and responds to, the new bomb-wrought prospect of mass civilian death. In these authors' works terror and flame are exhilarating as well as destructive, with unexpected follow-on effects. The war's ending with a larger terror-bomb and the continuity of suffering wrought by the advent of the Atomic Bomb will be explored through Muriel Spark's darkly comic *Memento Mori* (1959).

The third section of the course addresses World War II as an event that is still being historically processed through writing. The assiduous sifting of layers of meaning generated by the Holocaust and an attention to the architecture and logistics of combat in Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) is one such response to the war's ongoing history. The tracking of the legacies of empire in Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992) is another. Reading A. L. Kennedy's *Day* (2007), we will consider how a novel that interrogates the role of film in the formation of war memories represents the communality of bombing and the bonds formed between men by the war event.

Course aims and outcomes:

The **main aim** of this course is to develop our understanding of the complexity and intrinsic interest of the relation between war and writing. The **main outcomes** will be that you will have

demonstrated the ability to read demanding texts closely, write about them articulately, and pursue the resulting insights in new and stimulating directions by means of your own research.

### Texts/Reading:

The following books, except for \*William Sansom, *Fireman Flower* are available at the University Book Shop:

Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (1948)

\*William Sansom, *Stories from Fireman Flower and Other Stories* (1944)

Henry Green, *Caught* (1943)

Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* (1959)

W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (2001)

A. L. Kennedy, *Day* (2007)

Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (1992)

\*Copies of three stories by William Sansom, from *Fireman Flower and Other Stories*, are contained in the Course Reader, which also contains supplementary readings that will be of use to you on the course (most are listed below in the class schedule under Further reading). You can purchase this from UBS.

Class format: Normally I will give a lecture of sorts for the first hour to 1.5 hours of the class, when we will have a 5- to 10-minute break. In the second part of the class we will often do close textual work, sometimes in smaller groups. After the mid-semester break, the second half of the class will also consist of student presentations on research essay material, consisting of 10 minutes talking/Power Point presentations, and 10 minutes questions and group discussion. These presentations are not marked, and are expected to assist you in your research—both in terms of the focus required for the presentation itself and the questions and comments from other class members you will receive.

### Class schedule:

## *Writing the Blitz*

Unless otherwise indicated, Further reading is contained in the Course Reader

### Week 1

#### **Thursday 1 March**

**Text:** Introduction and Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (1948)

**Further reading:** Norman Davies, extracts from *Europe at War, 1939-1945: No Simple Victory* (London: Macmillan, 2006)

Mark Rawlinson, *Conclusion of British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)

Preface and Introduction to Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II In Our Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

There is some further General reading at the front of the Course Reader that you may wish to read or consult at other points during the course, including:

Hans Askenasy, 'Hiroshima, Mon Amour?' in *The Genocidal Temptation: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda, and Beyond*, ed. Robert S. Frey (Lanham, MD: University Press of America)  
A. C. Grayling, extracts and 'Judgement,' Chapter 8 of *Among the Dead Cities: The History and Moral Legacy of the WWII Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan* (New York: Walker and Co., 2006)  
Laurence Freedman and Saki Dockrill, 'Hiroshima: A Strategy of Shock' [1994] in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004)  
See also Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (New York: New Press, 2001), **Short Loans**

### Week 2

**Thursday 8 March**

Text: Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (1948)

#### Further reading:

Allan Hepburn, 'Collaborations: Love and War in *The Heat of the Day*,' Chapter 6 of *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)

### Week 3

**Thursday 15 March**

Text: Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (1948)

### Week 4

**Thursday 22 March**

Text: Henry Green, *Caught* (1943)

#### Further reading:

Lyndsey Stonebridge, 'Bombs and Roses: The Writing of Anxiety in Henry Green's *Caught*,' Chapter 3 of *The Writing of Anxiety: Imagining War in Mid-Century British Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007)  
Adam Piette, extract from *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry, 1939-1945* (London: Papermac, 1995)

### Week 5

**Thursday 29 March**

Text: Henry Green, *Caught* (1943)

(b) (i) Short essay 1 due Thursday 29 March, by 4 pm  
(a) (i) Proposal & Bibliography due Thursday 29 March, by 4 pm

## Semester Break (Friday 30 March-Friday 13 April)

### Week 6

**Thursday 19 April**

Text: \*William Sansom, 'The Witnesses,' 'The Wall,' and 'Fireman Flower,' in *Fireman Flower and Other Stories* (London: Hogarth Press, 1944)

\* In Course Reader

#### Further reading:

Rod Mengham, 'Broken Glass,' in *The Fiction of the 1940s: Stories of Survival*, ed. Rod Mengham and N. H. Reeve (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)

## *Intermezzo: The Cold War*

### Week 7

Thursday 26 April

Text: Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* (1959)

#### Further reading:

Rod Mengham, 'The Cold War Way of Death: Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*,' in *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century*, ed. Lyndsey Stonebridge and Marina MacKay (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007)

## *Revisiting WW2/ Writing History*

### Week 8

Thursday 3 May

Text: Text: W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (2001)

#### Further reading:

Amir Eshel, 'Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*,' *New German Critique* 88 (Winter 2003), pp. 71-96

Todd Samuel Presner, extract from Chapter 7 of *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)

Deane Blackler, extract from *Reading W. G. Sebald: Adventure and Disobedience* (New York: Camden House, 2007)

Also consult Chapter 5 of Mark McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), **Short Loans**

(b) (ii) Short essay 2 due Thursday 3 May, by 4 pm

### Week 9

Thursday 10 May

Text: W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (2001)

(a) (ii) Part-draft of research essay due Thursday 10 May, by 4 pm

### Week 10

Thursday 17 May

Text: A. L. Kennedy, *Day* (2007)

#### Further reading:

Adam Piette, extract from *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry, 1939-1945* (London: Papermac, 1995)

### Week 11

Thursday 24 May

Text: Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (1992)

Further reading: Alice Brittan, 'War and the Book: The Diarist, the Cryptographer, and *The English Patient*.' *PMLA* 121. 1 (2006), pp. 200-13.

Josef Pesch, 'Post-Apocalyptic War Histories: Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*.' *ARIEL* 28. 2 (April 1997), pp. 117-39.

### Week 12

Thursday 31 May

Text: Conclusions

- (a) (iii) Research essay due Thursday 31 May, by 4 pm
- (b) (ii) Research essay due Thursday 31 May, by 4 pm

## *ASSIGNMENTS information & other general matters*

### *Assessment*

There is no examination for this course. The course is fully internally assessed and its assessment externally reviewed.

Coursework totalling 8 -10,000 words (max) will be required in one of the following two formats, depending on the individual student.

#### Either:

(a) Proposal (of around 1,000 words) and bibliography (20%), part-draft of Research essay (1,000-3,000 words) (20%), Research essay of 6,000-8,000 words (60%)

#### or:

(b) 2 Short essays of 2,000 words (25% each), Research essay of 4,000-6,000 words (50%)

If you tended to make grades in English of B+ or higher in your final undergraduate year, you should feel confident to take **option (a)**. If your grades tended to be B or lower, you will probably do best with **option (b)**. If you are not sure which stream you belong in feel free to get in touch with me to discuss it.

Once you have chosen stream (a) or (b) you must stay in it for the duration of the course. You may not mix the course requirements across streams. Both options require you to produce a substantial research essay by the end of the course.

### Option (a):

Proposal and bibliography (of around 1,000 words), (20%), part-draft of Research essay (1,000-3,000 words) (20%), Research essay of 6,000-8,000 words (60%)

- (i) Proposal and bibliography 20% of final grade  
Length: around 1,000 words, excluding Bibliography word count  
Due date: Thursday 29 March, 4 pm (Week 5)
- (ii) Part-draft of Research essay 20% of final grade  
Length: 1,000-3,000 words  
Due date: Thursday 10 May, 4 pm (Week 9)
- (iii) Research essay 60% of final grade  
Length: 6,000-8,000 words  
Due date: Thursday 31 May, 4 pm (Week 12)

These three assignments, (i) Proposal and bibliography, (ii) Part-draft of Research essay (iii) Research essay, are intrinsically linked. If you have the grades and would like to take this option feel free to email me with ideas. You will also have the opportunity to develop these ideas further by presenting them to your classmates in informal fashion as the course proceeds.

You should not attempt to write on more than two texts or the project may become unmanageable.

#### (i) Proposal and bibliography (20%)

##### Proposal

The research proposal should introduce your chosen text/s and indicate what you would like to find out about it/them and how you are going to go about it.

If you wish to write on a text that is not taught on the course please discuss this with me as soon as possible. Permission to do this is not always granted and depends on the reading workload of the convenor. At least one of your chosen texts must take the form of writing, and you must ensure the angle you take pertains to World War II. To ensure your research goes into depth without losing focus, you should not attempt to write on more than two major texts.

Documents to assist with crafting a research proposal will be provided on Canvas--exemplars of other proposals for 707 research essays / successful external grants; and indications of what all good proposals should cover (What (What exactly do you want to find out about?), Where (Which part of the world forms the focus?), When (Which time period?), Why (Why is it important to find answers to the questions you'll pursue?) and How (How exactly will you find the answers you want to find?)).

##### Bibliography

The bibliography will present the initial results of a Library search for materials that will support your project.

The Proposal and bibliography will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Clarity of presentation, accuracy of referencing and the viability of the proposal as a research project. Note however that the research essay itself will not be penalised if it should depart

somewhat from the earlier proposal, as such changes are a normal and natural part of the research process.

(ii) Part-draft of Research essay (20%)

The part-draft of the research essay will present the preliminary results of your research in essay form. The draft may constitute the opening 1,000-3,000 words of the finished essay, although it does not have to. As the draft will be marked according to the same criteria as the finished essay (albeit applied to this shorter, intrinsically less complete form), the writing should be as clear as you can make it.

The draft will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Clarity of presentation and organisation, originality, demonstration of research skills.

(iii) Research essay (60%)

The research essay will present the results of your research in essay form, within the required word count and appropriately referenced. You will have opportunities prior to the due date to present aspects of your research to fellow class members and to receive constructive feedback from them and from me.

The essay will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Clarity of presentation and organisation, originality, demonstration of research skills.

Option (b):

2 x Short essays of 2,000 words (25% each), Research essay of 4,000-6,000 words (50%)

(i) Short essays x 2 (25% each) 50% of final grade

Length: 2,000 words each

Due dates: Thursday 29 March & Thursday 3 May, 4 pm (Weeks 5 & 8)

(ii) Research essay 50% of final grade

Length: 4,000-6,000 words

Due date: Thursday 31 May, 4 pm (Week 12)

(i) Short essays x 2 (25% each)

The short essays are designed to assist you in producing the longer research essay. They require you to demonstrate your skill at reading literary texts closely and objectively, and to present the results of this reading in short, readable essay form. The skills required are similar to those we will use to work on Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* in early classes, and on other texts in subsequent classes.

Choose one of the set texts on which to write each short essay. You will need to provide your own theme or thesis statement, and since the essays are relatively short you are advised to make the focus of each as narrow as possible (e.g., silence in *The Heat of the Day*: Avoid choosing a topic that features in every paragraph of the book!). Examples of well-focused topics will be provided in the first weeks of classes.



Both essays should include a brief introduction to the text/s in question and a brief conclusion.

The short essays will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Clarity of presentation and organisation, accuracy of referencing and demonstration of insight into the text/s discussed.

(ii) Research essay (50%)

The research essay within option (b) must be written on at least one of the course's core text/s. You must not write on the same text/s on which you wrote either of your short essays. To ensure your research goes into depth without losing focus, you should not attempt to write on more than two major texts in total.

The angle or line of argument you wish to pursue in relation to the text/s is for you to decide. The essay will present the results of your research in essay form, within the required word count and appropriately referenced. You will have opportunities prior to the due date to present aspects of your research to fellow class members and to receive constructive feedback from them and from me.

The essay will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Clarity of presentation and organisation, originality, demonstration of research skills.

Office hour consultation

Please note that it is inappropriate to ask your convenor to read a draft of your essay outside of his or her office hour. Help with essay writing and feedback on drafts must be sought from the Student Learning Centre and/or from your tutor in his or her office hour.

I will read drafts only in actual office hour appointments slots, and you must bring them to the appointment in hard copy or bring a memory stick so we can look at the draft on screen (please do not email me drafts at other times as I will not be able to read them). When there are two weeks or fewer to go before the due date of an essay, office hour appointments will be for 15 minutes each within the hour listed on your course outline (3-4 pm Thursdays, from Week 2 until Week 12, in term time only). At other times they will be for 20 minutes, or longer if you show up for a 20 minute appointment when there is no one booked in after you. When there is sufficient demand I usually make another office hour available near essay due date times and announce this in lectures.

You should book these 15- or 20-minute slots within my office hour by email ([es.bremner@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:es.bremner@auckland.ac.nz)), and they are allocated on a first come first served basis across all the courses I teach in a given semester. You do not have to have all your ideas sorted before you come and see me so please come early and/or often if you think you can use my help. My aim is to help you produce the best work you can.

Please be thoughtful towards other class members, especially near essay due date times, and send an email to cancel your appointment if you need to, so that someone else can take your place.

# *general matters*

## Announcements

Announcements and Resources for this course are regularly posted on Canvas. The University's policy is that all communication with students is via their university email address—please check your University email address regularly.

The University's general expectation is that you will spend an average of ten hours' work per week on this course, so please plan your time accordingly.

## Plagiarism

The University's policy statement on cheating (including inadvertent cheating) is:

The University of Auckland will not tolerate cheating, or assisting others to cheat, and views cheating in coursework as a serious academic offence. The work that a student submits for grading must be the student's work, reflecting his or her learning. Where work from other sources is used, it must be properly acknowledged and referenced. This requirement also applies to sources on the world-wide web. A student's assessed work may be reviewed against electronic source material using computerised detection mechanisms. Upon reasonable request, students may be required to provide an electronic version of their work for computerised review.

## Extensions

You are expected to manage your time and will not be granted an extension simply because you started work too late to complete on time. Here is English, Drama and Writing Studies policy:

English, Drama and Writing Studies requires the timely submission of all coursework. If you are unable to hand in an assignment by the due date, you must put your case for an extension preferably via a face-to-face meeting with the tutor or lecturer concerned; if an extension is granted, you must attach to your submitted essay EITHER an Extension Request Form bearing the new submission date and signature of the staff member, OR a document such as an email from the staff member. Extensions will only be granted for compelling reasons, such as illness, or other unforeseen emergencies, and a doctor's certificate (or equivalent) must be provided to the staff member concerned. An extension must be requested in advance of the due date for the assignment, unless there is a genuine cause preventing this, in which case the extension should be sought as soon as is practicable after the due date. Any work handed in late without an extension will not be marked.

## Complaint Procedures

In the first instance, students or the class representative should take any concerns they have with their course delivery or assessment to the lecturer or tutor or convenor concerned. Students or staff may approach the Student Advocacy Network at any time for assistance. In the event that the matter is not resolved satisfactorily at an informal level, students or the class representative should approach the Head of Department with a formal statement of the complaint.

For more detailed information, see the AUSA Student Advice Hub.

### Aegrotats etc

The University website explains how you can apply for aegrotat or compassionate consideration, if you are ill or injured or your performance is impaired through troubles affecting those close to you.  
<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/for/currentstudents/academiclife/aegrotatinfo.cfm>

### Procedures for return of coursework

In compliance with University policy, coursework will be returned to you within three weeks of submission.

### Requirements for presentation of essays

You must submit your essays in two forms:

One hard copy, double or 1.5 spaced and stapled, with the appropriate, signed, cover sheet, must be handed in to the essay box/es on Level 3 of the Arts 1 building. One electronic copy must also be submitted on Turnitin. Both copies must be submitted before the deadline.

It is your responsibility to retain back-up copies in paper and electronic format of each piece of assessed work you hand in to the Department (and to ALWAYS save your work regularly to a memory stick, disk or network).

### References (for notes and bibliography):

Use a recognised system such as MLA or Chicago style for the Humanities, and make sure to use the system you choose *consistently*.

### Turnitin

Turnitin submission can be done through Canvas