

ENGL 3301: Introduction to Literature
Dr. Jason Berger
Spring 2015

This introductory course will focus on responses to traumas stemming from modern political violence. Our reading will be structured by three historical case studies: European and American reactions to the holocaust (the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz and Paul Celan as well as Susan Griffin's long essay "Our Secret"), twentieth-century memories of slavery and the theme of haunting (Toni Morrison's *Beloved*), and twenty-first century revisionist fantasies of WWII (Quentin Tarantino's film *Inglorious Basterds*). Each unit will include a theoretical focus that will both frame our reading and provide an introduction to critical theory methodologies. When considering the holocaust, we will read linguistic/social theories related to structuralism and poststructuralism; we will use theories related to Marxism, psychoanalysis, and postcolonialism to analyze Morrison's novel; and, lastly, we will study the contemporary trend of "queer temporality" when examining Tarantino's film. Across these various texts and historical contexts, we will interrogate the way eruptions of violence operate in a dialectic of personal and international concerns. Throughout, we will consider the unique roles literature and art may have in shaping and representing social traumas. Assignments will include short written reading responses, a short essay and a longer research essay, an annotated bibliography, a group scholarly article presentation, and a final essay exam.