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Ten Years of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize  
Class Materials

Accords: Peace, War, and the Arts

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Spring 2015

### Sample Syllabus for ENG 4460: The Literature of Conflict

Andrew Strombeck

*Wright State University - Main Campus*, [andrew.strombeck@wright.edu](mailto:andrew.strombeck@wright.edu)

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## ENG 4460: The Literature of Conflict

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| Professor Andrew Strombeck<br>Oelman 302<br>2:30 pm - 3:25 pm<br>Spring 2015 | Office: 487 Millet<br>Office Hours: MW 12-1 and by appointment on<br>Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 24 hours in<br>advance<br>Phone: (937) 775-3396<br>Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.strombeck@wright.edu">andrew.strombeck@wright.edu</a> |
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Since 2005, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize has been awarded to works of literary fiction and nonfiction that recognize "the power of the written word to promote peace." Each year, two fiction and two nonfiction works are chosen. In conjunction with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the prize, this course will examine seven winners and ask how their words "promote peace"—which is probably a more vexing question than it first seems. We will read these works alongside critical essays that provide frameworks for thinking through how literature narrates atrocity, creates connections between different groups, fosters ways of thinking that avoid conflict, and so on.

In October, Wright State University will host a conference on the prize, *Ten Years of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize*. Material from this course will be featured in this conference, as part of an ongoing effort to showcase the work of Wright State undergraduates and graduate students.

### Required texts:

Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2008 winner)  
Chang Rae Lee, *The Surrendered* (2011 winner)  
Maaza Mengiste, *Beneath the Lion's Gaze* (2011 runner-up)  
Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (2010 winner)  
Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (2013 runner-up)  
Richard Bausch *Peace* (2009 winner)  
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2010 runner-up)

### Format

Classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion. Lectures will offer background on the literature's historical context, the author's larger body of work, and the sociological (gender, race, consumer culture) elements invoked by the work.

### Assignments

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| Poster project (P)  | 20%  |
| Reader's guide contribution (RG)                            | 20%  |
| Class participation (CP)                                    | 15%  |
| Reading quizzes (Q)   | 5%   |
| Passage analyses (PA) (Total of 5, choose 4/6 after Bausch) | 20%  |
| Paper (P)   | 20%  |
|   | 100% |

Each assignment will be assigned a letter grade (with pluses and minuses). I calculate your final grade by the following formula:

$$Total = (P*.20)+(RG*.20)+(CP*.15)+(Q*.05)+(PA*.20)+(P*.20)$$

Total = 90 or greater = A  
Total = 80 or greater = B  
Total = 70 or greater = C  
Total = 60 or greater = D

## **Attendance**

Attendance: This course meets thrice a week, approximately 45 times across the term. Excessive absences will affect your grade. While all absences lower your class participation grade, the course also has the following upper limits: more than 6 absences = maximum course grade of C; More than 7 absences = maximum course grade of D; more than 8 absences = fail course. Please do not ask me to go over the material you missed; review missed material with a classmate. I may make exceptions to this policy in cases of medical problems; these need to be documented on a timely basis.

In terms of all other class behavior (leaving the classroom, using electronic devices, and so on), I simply encourage you to be courteous of everyone else here, including me. You'll get more out of the course if you give it your full attention, and everyone here expects fifty-five minutes of focus on course material. If you're not being courteous, I reserve the right to speak to you either during or after class and/or ask you to leave.

## **Reading quizzes**

There are five of these scattered throughout the semester. These consist of five multiple-choice questions on the day's assigned reading, designed to determine whether you have read the assigned work. To calculate your total grade, your four highest grades on these will be averaged (in other words, the lowest grade will be dropped). These cannot be made up.

## **Class participation**

I expect you to read and think about the material before you come to class. In addition to attendance, your class participation grade measures both quantity and quality of contributions. Contributions that do not reflect thoughtful reading of the work under discussion will be weighted less than contributions that reflect careful consideration of the work's details. In other words, an observation about how Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* reminds you of a movie does keep discussion going, but it will not get you the same credit as making an observation about Diaz's characterization of the Dominican Republic civil war, a pattern of imagery, interaction with another novel or critical essay from the course, and so on.

I call on students during class, but only after I've given you a chance to write down your thoughts. Having said that, if you convey to me that you are disconnected from the class, by answering in ways that reflect a lack of preparedness, or staring into a laptop during classtime, I will assume that you are accepting a D for class participation and stop calling on you.

## **Paper**

One paper is due for the class. This paper is 1750-2000 words and should evolve out of one of your passage analyses. I will distribute a prompt for the paper in the latter half of class.

## Passage Analyses

You will also submit five passage analyses. The first passage, on Richard Bausch's *Peace*, is required of all students. For the remaining passages, you will choose four out of the six opportunities listed on the syllabus to turn these in. I will give you written comments on the first one you submit, and grade the remaining analyses with a rubric.

You will post these to the course blog, <http://literatureofconflict.blogspot.com/>

You will receive an invitation to this blog during the first week of class. Please accept this invitation. If you have problems accepting the invitation and gaining access to the blog, please let me know immediately. Technology issues are not an excuse for incomplete work.

We will discuss passage analyses in more detail during the first week of classes.

## Reader's Guide

As a class, we will be creating readers' guides for the final six works (everything except for *Peace*). You will be responsible for contributing to a reader's guide for one of these works. We will discuss the reader's guide in more detail during the second or third week of class.

## Poster Project

Each of you will be responsible for producing a research poster on one of the assigned primary works. We will discuss the poster in more detail during the second week of class.

You will sign up for these during the second week of class, and present a draft of your work to the course in the twelfth week of class.

## Schedule of Work

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| <b>Monday, January 12</b><br>Introduction and expectations  | <b>Wednesday, January 14</b><br>Richard Bausch, <i>Peace</i> 1-60<br><i>Please refer to reading questions distributed over email</i> | <b>Friday, January 16</b><br><i>Peace</i> 61-93<br><i>Please refer to reading questions distributed over email</i>          |
| <b>Monday, January 19</b><br><b>Martin Luther King Day</b>  | <b>Wednesday, January 21</b><br><i>Peace</i> 94-end<br><i>Please refer to reading questions distributed over email</i>               | <b>Friday, January 23</b><br>Read Walter Benjamin "The Storyteller" (PDF available on Course Studio)<br><b>Reading quiz</b> |
| <b>Monday, January 26</b><br><b>Short assignment 1 due on <a href="http://literatureofconflict.blogspot.com/">http://literatureofconflict.blogspot.com/</a></b><br>Read <i>The Surrendered</i> 1-79 | <b>Wednesday, January 28</b><br>Read <i>The Surrendered</i> 80-177   | <b>Friday, January 28</b><br><i>The Surrendered</i> discussion, continued   |
| <b>Monday, February 2</b>   | <b>Wednesday, February 4</b>   | <b>Friday, February 6</b>   |

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| Read <i>The Surrendered</i> 178-264<br><b>Passage analysis 2 due (choose 4/6)</b>   | Read <i>The Surrendered</i> 265-327  | Read Sara Cole "Disenchantment, War, Literature" (PDF available on Course Studio)<br><b>Reading quiz</b>   |
| <b>Monday, February 9</b><br>Read <i>The Surrendered</i> 328-406  | <b>Wednesday, February 11</b><br><i>The Surrendered</i> 400-end  | <b>Friday, February 13</b><br>Read <i>Beneath the Lion's Gaze</i> 1-80   |
| <b>Monday, February 16</b><br>Read <i>Beneath the Lion's Gaze</i> 81-160<br><b>Passage analysis 3 due (choose 4/6)</b>                                    | <b>Wednesday, February 18</b><br>Read <i>Beneath the Lion's Gaze</i> 161-227   | <b>Friday, February 20</b><br>Read Sontag, Susan <i>On Regarding the Pain of Others</i> ch 1 and 2 (PDF on Course Studio)<br><b>Reading quiz</b> |
| <b>Monday, February 23</b><br>Read <i>Beneath the Lion's Gaze</i> 228-end   | <b>Wednesday, February 25</b><br>Read Adiche "Cell One," "A Private Experience"  | <b>Friday, February 27</b><br>Read Adiche "Ghosts," "Jumping Monkey Hill"  |
| <b>Monday, March 2</b><br><b>Spring Break</b>   | <b>Wednesday, March 4</b><br><b>Spring Break</b>   | <b>Friday, March 6</b><br><b>Spring Break</b>  |
| <b>Monday, March 9</b><br>Read Adiche "The American Embassy," "The Shivering," "Tomorrow is Too Far"<br><b>Passage analysis 4 due (choose 4/6)</b>        | <b>Wednesday, March 11</b><br>Read Adiche "The Headstrong Historian"   | <b>Friday, March 13</b><br>Read Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i> 1-97   |
| <b>Monday, March 16</b><br>Read Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i> 98-158<br><b>Passage analysis 5 due (choose 4/6)</b>                          | <b>Wednesday, March 18</b><br>Read Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i> 159-248   | <b>Friday, March 15</b><br>Discussion continued<br>Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i>   |
| <b>Monday, March 23</b><br>Read Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i> 251-332   | <b>Wednesday, March 25</b><br>Read Marlon James <i>The Book of Night Women</i> 333-end   | <b>Friday, March 27</b><br>Read Srinivas Aravamudan, "Introduction: Perpetual War" (PDF on Course Studio)<br><b>Reading quiz</b>                 |
| <b>Monday, March 30</b><br>Read Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 1-75<br><b>Paper drafts (optional) due over email by midnight</b> | <b>Wednesday, April 1</b><br>Read Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 76-165<br><b>Passage analysis 6 due (choose 4/6)</b> | <b>Friday, April 3</b><br><b>Class cancelled; instructor at conference</b><br><br>Read <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 166-200       |

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| <b>Monday, April 06</b><br>Read Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 201-261<br><br><b>Paper due</b> | <b>Wednesday, April 8</b><br>Read Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 262-end | <b>Friday, April 10</b><br>Read Pratt, Mary Louise, "Harm's Way: Language and the Contemporary Arts of War" (PDF on Course Studio)<br><b>Reading quiz</b> |
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| <p><b>Monday, April 13</b><br/> Read Billy Lynn's <i>Long Halftime Walk</i> 1-73<br/> <b>Passage analysis 6 due (choose 4/6)</b></p> | <p><b>Wednesday, April 15</b><br/> Read Billy Lynn's <i>Long Halftime Walk</i> 74-171</p>  | <p><b>Friday, April 17</b><br/> <b>Poster drafts due</b></p>                                       |
| <p><b>Monday, April 20</b><br/> Read Billy Lynn's <i>Long Halftime Walk</i> 172-225</p>  | <p><b>Wednesday, April 22</b><br/> Read Billy Lynn's <i>Long Halftime Walk</i> 226-end</p> | <p><b>Friday, April 24</b><br/> Readers' Guides informal presentations<br/> Readers' guide due</p> |
|  | <p><b>Wednesday, April 30</b><br/> Final poster due 5 pm over email</p>                    |  |