

**MAFLL/ Comparative Literature 704: Seminar in Cultural Studies**  
Cultures of Resistance and Testimony: Self and Society in Literature

**Dr. Michelle Bolduc**

Curtin Hall 788

Office Hours: Monday, 1:45 to 3:00pm  
Wednesday, 10:45am to 12pm  
Thursday, 5:00 to 5:30pm

This course explores the notion of testimony as an important aspect of a literature of resistance. We explore how testimony intertwines with questions of writing and truth, and how these expressions form an attempt to posit a literature of testimony as an ethical response to cultural violence. This course will examine the theories and literature of resistance and testimony in a wide-ranging selection of time periods and cultures, from the formation of a philosophical and religious idea of testimony in antiquity from the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, to its later development in the theories of Emmanuel Levinas. We will also study the emergence of the literary notion of testimony by analyzing works of poetry, narrative, and film, with a particular focus on Jewish responses to the Shoah, and Latin American and Latino responses to political and social repression.

**Course Objectives:**

In this course, you will:

- learn the fundamental concepts, genres, and contexts of testimonial literature;
- synthesize the tradition of testimonial accounts with theoretical perspectives;
- gain facility in writing critically through critical reviews of articles and formal analytical writing;

**Requirements**

Participation and in-class work	10%
Two 3-5 page article reviews and presentations	30%
One 10-15 page paper, with annotated Bibliography	40%
Two 3-5 page mid-semester take-home essays	20%

If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

## Syllabus

Thursday, January 27 Introduction: Ancient and Medieval Testimonies  
February 3 Wiesel (Young; Rosenfeld)  
February 10 Shoah video (Ginzburg; Horowitz; Langer, "The Dominion of Death")  
February 17 Levi (Desden; Wiesel; Langer, "Language as Refuge")  
February 24 Spiegelman (Adorno; Haidu; Santner)  
March 3 Celan (Celan; Felstiner; Ezrahi)  
March 10 Levinas (Derrida, "Adieu" and "Violence")  
March 17 Levinas  
March 24 Spring Break  
March 31 Levinas  
April 7 Levinas (Eagleton)  
April 14 Argueta (Beverley "The Margin at the Center;" Nance)  
April 21 Menchu (Brittin; Lombardi; Restrepo)  
April 28 Alvarez (Bados Ciria; Bueno; Bartow)  
May 5 Rivera (De Costa; Jameson)  
May 12 Urrea (Yúdice; Denegri; Rice-Sayre)

Paper Due: May 19, 2005 at 5p.m.

*Please note: This syllabus is subject to change.*

### *Required texts*

Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Reprint edition. New York: Plume 1995. ISBN: 0452274427.

Argueta, Manilo. *One Day of Life*. New York: Vintage, 1980. ISBN 394-72216-7.

Celan, Paul. *Poems of Paul Celan: A Bilingual German/English Edition*, translated by Michael Hamburger. Revised Edition. New York: Persea Books, 2002. ISBN: 089255276X.

Levi, Primo. *Survival In Auschwitz*. Reprint edition. New York: Touchstone, 1995. ISBN: 0684826801.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise Than Being: Or Beyond Essence*. Duquesne, IA: Duquesne University Press, 1998. ISBN: 0820702994

Menchu, Rigoberta. *I... Rigoberta Menchu. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Translated by Ann Wright. New York and London: Verso, 1984. ISBN: 0860917886.

Rivera, Tomas. *...y no se lo tragó la tierra / ...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, translated by Evangelina Vigil-Pinon. Bilingual edition Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press; 1987. ISBN: 155885083X.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Boxed edition). New York: Pantheon, 1993. ISBN: 0679748407.

Urrea, Luis Alberta. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. New York: Little, Brown, 2004. ISBN: 0316746711.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Reissue edition. New York: Bantam, 1982. ISBN: 0553272535.

*Lectures, films, etc.*

Saturday 5 February: Play "Precious Stones" (Palestinian/Israeli/ Lesbian), Union Ballroom, 7 p.m.

Monday, 14 March: Rigoberta Menchu, guest lecture, Union Ballroom, 11 a.m.

Tuesday 8 March- Sunday 13 March: Women without Borders film festival

Thursday 31 March: Three Generations of Latin American Women (Chile), panel lecture, Union Wisconsin Room Lounge, 12 -2 p.m.

Friday 8 April- Friday 15 April: Latin American Film Festival, Union Theatre

Thursday 15 April: Tony Kushner, Lecture, Union Wisconsin Room, 8 p.m. \$5.00

Monday 2 May: Sisters of the Screen: African Women in the Cinema, film, Union Theatre, 7 p.m.

### **Select Bibliography in English**

#### **The Theories of Testimony and Modern Subjectivity**

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster: L'Écriture Du Désastre*, translated by Ann Smock. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. ISBN: 0803261209

Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics." In *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. 79-153. [B2430 D482 E5 1978](#)

Eagleton, Terry. "Self-Undoing Subjects." In *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, edited by Roy Porter. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Forché, Carolyn. *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993. ISBN: 0393309762 [Anthology]

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise Than Being: Or Beyond Essence*. Duquesne, IA: Duquesne University Press, 1998. ISBN: 0820702994

#### **Testimonial Literature: The Shoah**

Adorno, Theodor W. "Commitment." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* ed. Andrew Arat and Eike Gebhardt New York: Continuum, 1982. 300-318.

Celan, Pal. "The Meridian" trans. Jerry Glenn, *The Chicago Review* 29:3 (Winter 1978): 29-40. [AP2 .C5152](#)

Desden, Sem. *Persecution, Extermination, Literature*. Translated by Henry G. Schogt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. 3-21.

Felstiner, John. "Translating Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge': Rhythm and Repetition as Metaphor. In *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*,

- edited by Saul Friedlander. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. 240-258, 384-387.
- Haidu, Peter. "The Dialectics of Unspeakability: Language, Silence, and the Narratives of Desubjectification." In *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution,'* edited by Saul Friedlander. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. 277-299, 392-396.
- Horowitz, Sara R. "Memory and Testimony of Women Survivors of Nazi Genocide." In *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing*, edited by Judith R. Baskin. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994. 258-282.
- Langer, Lawrence. "The Dominion of Death." In *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1975. 74-123.
- . "Language as Refuge." In *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*. Albany, N.Y. State University of New York Press, 1982. 1-65; 251-254.
- Lanzmann, Claude. *Shoah* [videorecording] Hollywood, CA : New Yorker Video, 2003; 1985.
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H. "The Problematics of Holocaust Literature." In *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1980. 12-34; 189-191.
- Wiesel, Elie. "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration." In *Dimensions of the Holocaust*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977. 5-19.
- Young, James E. "On Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs." In *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. 15-39; 194-196.

### Testimonio

- Bados Ciria, Concepción. "In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez: History, Fiction, Testimonio and the Dominican Republic." *Monographic Review/Revista Monográfica* (MRRM) 1997; 13: 406-16. [PQ7081.A1 M66x](#)
- Bartow, Joanna R. "Essential subversions: reading theory with Latin American women's testimonial discourse." In *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*, edited by Linda S. Maier and Isabel Dulfano. New York, NY: Peter Lang; 2004. [PQ7081.5 .W66 2004](#)
- Beverly, John. "The Margin at the Center: On testimonio (Testimonial Narrative)." (1989) In *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. 23-41.
- . "The Real Thing." (1995) In *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. 266-286.
- . "Through All Things Modern': Second Thoughts on Testimonio." In *Critical Theory, Cultural Politics, and Latin American Narrative*, edited by Steven M. Bell, Albert H. Le May and Leonard Orr. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P; 1993. 125-51. [PQ7082 N7 C685 1993](#)
- Brittin, Alice A. "The Making of Rigoberta Menchú: Testimonio and Self-Fashioning." *Lucero: A Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 4 (Spring 1993): 7-15.
- Bueno, Eva Paulino. "Race, Gender, and the Politics of Reception of Latin American Testimonios." In *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*, edited by Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj. New York, NY: Garland; 2000. 115-47.
- De Costa, Elena. "Voices of Conscience: The Power of Language in the Latin American Testimonio." In *Storytelling: Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Perspectives*, edited by Irene Maria F. Blayer and Monica Sanchez. New York, NY: Peter Lang; 2002. 41-57.

- Denegri, Francesca. "Testimonio and Its Discontents." In *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies*, edited by Stephen Hart and Richard Young. London, England: Arnold, 2003. 228-38. [F1414.2 .C62189x 2003](#)
- Jameson, Fredric. "On Literary and Cultural Import-Substitution in the Third World: The Case of Testimonio." (1992-3) In *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. 172-191.
- Lombardi, Marilyn May. "The Crying Game: Rigoberta Menchú and the Responsibilities of Testimonio Criticism." In *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*, edited by Linda S. Maier and Isabel Dulfano. New York, NY: Peter Lang; 2004. 21-45. [PQ7081.5 .W66 2004](#)
- Nance, Kimberly. "Disarming Testimony: Speakers' Resistance to Readers' Defenses in Latin American Testimonio." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 24:3 (Summer 2001): 570-88. (Internet source: search for the Journal title on the Library's home page.)
- Restrepo, Luis Fernando. "Bounding the Self: Subject Positions and Contestation in Rigoberta Menchu's Testimonio." *Torre de Papel* 6:1 (Spring, 1996): 37-49.
- Rice-Sayre, Laura P. "Witnessing History: Diplomacy versus Testimony." In *Testimonio y literature*, edited by René Jara and Hernán Vidal. Minneapolis: Inst. for Study of Ideologies & Lit., 1986. 48-72.
- Rodríguez, Ileana. "Testimonio and Diaries as Narratives of Success or Failure in [Claribel Alegria's] *They Won't Take Me Alive*." In *Claribel Alegria and Central American Literature: Critical Essays*, edited by Sandra M. Boschetto-Sandoval and Marcia Phillips McGowan. Athens, OH: Ohio Univ. Center for Internat. Studies, 1994. 45-57.
- Yúdice, George. "Testimonio and Postmodernism." (1991) In *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. 42-57.

The following are questions to keep in mind when you review an article.

1. How is the article structured? (How does the argument progress?)
2. Are there are terms or phrases that appear significant to the argument?
3. What is the argument?
4. On what does the author seem to base the argument? In other words, who are there critics, and what are their arguments, that serve as a foundational base for the argument (even if the author disagrees with them at times)?
5. What are the main points of the article?
6. What evidence does the author bring forth to support the article?
7. What is persuasive about the article?
8. What is not convincing about the article?