



“Words, Words, Words: Guiding Student Discourse through Blogging”

Dr. Inga Meier, Assistant Professor – Department of Theatre



DR. INGA MEIER



Dr. Inga Meier is an assistant professor in the department of theatre arts, where she teaches courses in both film and theatre. She received her PhD in theatre history and performance studies from the University of Pittsburgh, where she also completed a doctoral film studies certificate. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy with a graduate certificate in Cultural Studies from SUNY: Stony Brook and a BA with a double major in English Literature and Theatre Arts from Rutgers College. She has presented papers at conferences throughout the United States and in England, including at ATHE, CDC, Film and History, MATC, MMLA, SETC and the Shaw Society. Her research is focused on performances of violence and trauma and her writing has been published in *Film and History* and in the anthology *Recovering 9/11 in New York*. As a dramaturg, she has worked on both professional and university productions in New Jersey, New York, and Pittsburgh and her translation of *Woyzeck* has been produced in New York and New Jersey. She also works as a director.

THE COURSE

“Topics: in Theatre: Representing War and Violence,” taught in the Spring 2016 semester at Stephen F. Austin State University,” studies cinematic and theatrical representations of U.S. war and violence following the Holocaust to the current day. In examining how the unrepresentable is represented, students study and explore the connections between collective memory, visual culture, news media, memorialization, spectatorship, history, violence, and trauma.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Each week, for a total of 11 weeks, students are required to submit:

- a blogpost and
- a response to the course blog.

The lowest score will be dropped. The assignment consists of two components:

- submission of an original post by Friday at 5 pm covering material for the preceding week (e.g for the week beginning 1/25, you may address materials covered 1/25, 1/27 or 1/29 and must submit your post by 1/29 at 5m)
- submission of 4 responses to posts for the preceding week posted after 5 pm on Friday and before 3pm on Sunday (e.g for the week beginning 1/25, you may submit your responses between 5pm on 1/29 and 3 pm on 1/31)



Shoes of Holocaust Victims – Holocaust Museum, Washington DC

I now want to visit more memorials and museums that document things like this just so I can see the narrative that they tell. – Bobby Britton

The step which must be taken in terms of representation in this era is looking not to represent ourselves, but rather representing those affected by our actions, being open to critical ideas, and most importantly open to change and progress – John Brokaw, Senior

My grandfather was drafted into the Vietnam War. He recently sent me a letter (after I asked him about his experience) that covered his time in Vietnam. – Brooke McPherson

I’m kind of stuck this week and it’s not because there isn’t something to write about. It’s actually the exact opposite issue for me. There’s so much, an overwhelming amount of information and feeling, to figure out exactly what to say. This whole semester we have talked about wars and events that have happened in our history that seem so far away, that feel like things we have learned from a textbook. But this? This feels very real and very personal and close, which in reality it is. – Karen Rush, Senior



National 9/11 Memorial – New York, NY

This is the second week in a row where I’m arguably blaming my education for my lack of knowledge towards history, but this blog was truly meant to be for the purpose of my own lack of attention towards my country and the other [...] countries who suffered throughout the years [of] war. – Chelsea Denard, Senior



National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial – Arlington, VA

If you actually educate people about the history of America’s past from an accurate representation then this is how people think, raise questions and understand multiple viewpoints of a situation that they can’t personally experience. This is how people learn from mistakes and discuss differences. – Angel Williams, Junior

Artists must be hungry for knowledge and hungry to experience the world around them. – Joshua Lopez, Senior

As artists, performers and designers, we must not allow ourselves to become so mired in the emotional responses that we lose the ability to look at a situation critically. [...] What really matters? What do we hope to achieve by remembering the horrors of the past? Is it a beacon that is lit to shine a constant light on these darkest parts of ourselves so that we may never again make the mistake of allowing such atrocities to occur again? Is it to educate the future generations of how we once lost sight of the value of human life? – Bruce Moran, Junior



“Tumbling Woman” by Eric Fischl, The Granary, New Milford, CT

GUIDELINES

On the Blog:

- Students are expected to properly cite any outside sources they may be quoting or referencing in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the syllabus.
- Posts must consist of at least 500 words.
- Posts should be critical, factual, and analytical in nature, avoiding qualitative judgments.
- Students may bring the material they are addressing in dialogue with other material covered that week or with material covered previously. However, focus should be on something covered in class during the week in question.

On the Responses:

- Responses should consist of at least 100 words each.
- At least two of the responses must be to the posts of two other individuals.
- The remaining two may be in response to others’ comments on the post.
- Students may exceed the number of required responses.
- Students may disagree with one another. However, this must, like the blogs be framed in a critical, factual, and analytical nature. Students may also expand off of someone else’s post, but must avoid simple statements of agreement or disagreement.

In General:

- While tone may be informal and while students may use the “I” voice, posts should still be written using appropriate language and grammar.
- Students must be respectful of one another in their commentary and must avoid incendiary language.
- My own commentary will be limited to class discussion, unless intervention is required.

PEDAGOGICAL PURPOSES:

- To provide students with an intellectually vibrant and safe discursive space in which to process, formulate, and expand their responses to sensitive material beyond the conventional classroom structure and to, in turn, generate content for in-person class discussion.
- To provide students with an opportunity to critically examine those responses within and against the larger discourse formulated by the group.

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