

## Writing Project #1: Writing War: Language and Violence, Memory and Myth

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- **Blog Entries and Blog Comments:** See blog assignment sheets
- **First Draft Due:** Tuesday, September 17 (post to course blog)
- **Final Draft Due:** Thursday, September 26
- **Post final draft to Sakai Forums (under your section's Project #1 forum space)**

**Writing Task and Goals:** For your final essay of Project #1, I would like you to develop a 4-5 page paper (1000-1250 words) that makes an argument about one of the literary texts we have read. You may expand and revise one of your blog entries into this longer paper or you may choose to write about Ambrose Bierce's "Chickamauga" (which we read together as a class on the first day) or Tim O'Brien's "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong." Your essay should have an organizing claim that interprets and analyzes the text of your choice. Some questions to consider as you formulate your claim: What points/ideas/themes are most interesting, significant, important, or strange for you in your chosen text? What questions has the author raised for you? What patterns or anomalies do you notice in your text and what do they mean? What does your author or text suggest about the relationship between writing and war, language and war, storytelling and war? What is your author trying to say about war or societies engaged in war?

The key move for this assignment is to interpret the text, not simply describe, summarize, or narrate it. Your claim should strive to say something about the text that would not be immediately obvious to most people when they first read it. Use your organizing claim to keep your paper focused and coherent. This will help you analyze the text as a representation of war rather than just narrate or summarize it. Once you've established your claim, your analysis should proceed by describing specific details and explaining their significance. Always strive to explain how your evidence leads to the claims you make. As you develop your claim, please review the Writing Studio handouts on "Developing a Central Claim" and the "Argument Essay" which are located on our Sakai site in the "Writing Handouts" folder in Resources as well as on the Writing Studio website. Is your claim contestable, reasonable, significant, specific, and interpretive?

**Engaging the Work of Others:** In order to make your analysis more complex, you will also be required to engage some of the ideas contained in the essays we've read. Specifically, choose one essay from the five we have read (Favret, Cole, McLoughlin, Winn, or Gill) and take up the author's claims, main ideas, or key terms in your analysis of the text. The author's essay should help you develop, support, and/or complicate your argument; in other words, you should continue to employ the "forwarding" and/or "countering" moves we learned from Harris. Don't get stuck simply agreeing or disagreeing with the author. Rather, use the author's ideas as an analytical lens and use your analysis to test the applicability or usefulness of that lens. While you don't want to summarize the author's work at length, you should be sure to explain the context of any ideas or quotations you decide to use. Keep in mind that your argument should be driven by your analysis; in other words, don't let the author's voice/analysis overshadow your own voice and argument.

**Your Peers' Blog Entries:** While you must substantively engage one of the scholarly essays we have read as a class, you may also find it useful to draw on your peers' blog entries to develop, support, or test your claim. Do not feel obligated to use your peers' blog entries in your paper; this is not a required part of the paper. However, if you choose to do so, please draw on their blog entries sparingly (use no more than 1-2 of your peers' blog entries). If you use your peers' entries,

treat them as academic authors and cite them properly. Again, keep in mind that your argument should be driven by your analysis and voice.

**The Role of your Peers' Blog Comments:** The first feedback you will receive on your ideas and blog entries will come from your peers' blog comments. As you work on revising and expanding your blog entry (or choosing which blog entry to expand), pay close attention to their comments. Like you, they are familiar with the stories, poems, and scholarly essays we've read, and you should take their feedback seriously. What worked especially well in your blog entry, according to your peers? What concerns or questions did they raise in their comments? Did they suggest alternative course readings for you to consider? Did they offer alternative interpretations of your evidence or present new evidence that you had neglected to consider in your initial blog entry? How might you incorporate their feedback into your revisions?

**The Role of your UWT:** As you work on revising and expanding your blog entry into a longer, more complex paper (or brainstorming and developing a paper about "Chickamauga" or "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"), you will have the opportunity to meet with our UWT. This is a chance to work with an outside reader as you develop and refine your ideas. Your UWT will not tell you how or what to write. Indeed, your tutoring session will be most successful if you set the agenda. What aspect of your paper do you want to focus on? Will it be most helpful to talk about revising your blog entry claim into a complex claim that can sustain 1000-1250 words? Do you need to scrap your claim and brainstorm a new one? Are you uncertain about what evidence you want to use to develop your argument? Do you need to talk to someone about how to accommodate aspects of the text that don't seem to fit your argument? Do you need to talk to someone about how to incorporate your peers' blog comments? Are you struggling making transitions between your ideas? Arriving at your UWT session with a clear sense of what you want to accomplish will go a long way towards making it a successful session. Toward that end, prior to your UWT session, be sure to fill out the pre-tutoring reflection form on Sakai and bring this form to your session.

Everyone will meet with our UWT between Thursday, September 12, and Tuesday, September 24; if you plan on revising one of your earlier blog entries, please plan on scheduling your UWT session for earlier in this period. Prior to your first UWT session, your UWT will visit class and explain how to sign up for a tutoring session. Please sign up for your session after your UWT's visit and no later than September 11.

**A successful essay will include:**

- A strong interpretive claim that appears early in the paper and gives the paper a clear focus
- Textual evidence—in the form of direct quotations and references to your chosen text—which you analyze/interpret in order to support, develop, or complicate your argument; use proper MLA in-text citation
- Effective use of a course reading to develop, support, or complicate your analysis, with proper MLA in-text citation and proper framing of your sources
- Cohesive organizational structure: developed paragraphs; clear, focused topic sentences; appropriate transitions between paragraphs and ideas; an introduction and conclusion
- Few grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors
- A title and bibliography