

Department of English
Queen's University

ENGLISH 851
Course Description

Topics in Romanticism
(January-April 2012)

Instructor: Dr. David L. Clark, George Whalley Visiting Professor in Romanticism
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Class-time: Monday, 2:00-4:00 pm
Office Hours: Monday, 4:00-5:00 pm, or by appointment

Romanticism, War, and Peace



Gottfried Helnwein
*The Disasters of War 13:
In Memory of Francisco de Goya* (2007)
180 cm x 125 cm
mixed media (oil and acrylic on canvas)

Can the university stand for peace?

--Susan Searls Giroux,

*Between Race and Reason: Violence, Intellectual
Responsibility, and the University to Come*

As Canadian troops approach the ten-year anniversary of their deployment in Afghanistan, it seems apposite to hold a graduate seminar that explores the question of war and peace, and that traces modern notions of these concepts and cultural phenomena back to the end of the eighteenth-century. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars mark a consequential and deadly shift in the nature and aims of state-sponsored armed conflict. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, war is transformed *from* a dynastic and, to a certain extent, self-limiting affair, *to* “total war,” war drawing on the entirety of a nation’s resources and having as its object not only military supremacy but also the annihilation of the enemy and of a people treated *as* the enemy. Kant is the first philosopher to give a name to the advent of this horror--“war of extermination”--and worries aloud that war has become a perpetual fact of global life, always happening or about to happen. Around 1800, Europe and Britain bear witness to the massification of war and war deaths, and to the

development of economies more closely wedded than ever before to war financing. The insurgent and guerrilla emerge as militarized subjects, while the lines between civilians and combatants irreversibly blur. In what ways does total war shape the Romantic cultural imaginary, differently forming and deforming literary, philosophical, and artistic practice? Is the spectre of wars of extermination the primary historical referent of Romanticism rather than, as has been previously thought, the French Revolution? How does war unsettle the very idea of Romanticism? What does early nineteenth-century war discourse make of war? Is armed conflict generative, regenerative, and even redemptive, or is it murderously destructive? And if the nature of war undergoes a sea-change around 1800, what then of peace? How does the invention of modern warfare also mark the emergence of new ways of thinking about just communities and non-violence? What is the difference between peace and pacification? Is what comes after war a time of repose, reaction, exhaustion, and abstention, or is it a moment of intensified critique, a chance for dissenting imaginations to flourish and be heard? Or both? Amid and after war, how do key concepts like domesticity, nationality, sexuality, subjectivity, history, cosmopolitanism, citizenship, readership, spectatorship, capital, and representation warp, tremble, and morph? What is the fate of “the laws of hospitality,” as Kant had described them, in a belligerent and inhospitable age?

These are the primary questions that this graduate seminar seeks to explore. To establish a set of working principles and useful theoretical provocations we will begin with Mary A. Favret’s *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, a text that augurs a new line of thought in Romantic studies focussed on the symptomatic presences of war in everyday life, and that gives us a generative critical language with which to consider the ways in which Romantic war inscribes present day understandings of both armed conflict and peaceful cooperation. After considering Favret’s book *and* her Romantic archive (which ranges from poems to letters and from meteorological discourse to paintings), we will consider a range of other materials which explore the cultural and conceptual churn that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century warring violence imposes, and the ways in which that violence contributes to the radicalization of the notion of peace and war...both then and now. We will address and in turn be addressed by Francisco de Goya’s infamous series of etchings, *The Disasters of War*, about eighty images from the 1810’s that open a gruesome window on the Peninsular War’s culture of cruelty, images that we will engage in conjunction with the work of several contemporaries: the Austrian-American artist, Gottfried Helnwein, whose sometimes shocking photo-series, *Disasters of War*, re-imagines Goya’s scenes of torture and death for the twenty-first century; Jake and Dinos Chapman’s notorious graffiti “destruction” of Goya’s prints, *Insult to Injury*; and the Canadian novelist, Larry Gaudet, whose *The Disasters of Peace* project, unveiled in Toronto in 2011, provides a complex autobiographical gloss on the terror of Goya’s etchings. We will also read Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, for which global war forms an absent presence that informs the novel’s *mise en scène*, reminding us that when the war comes home, home is never the same because of it. We will conclude the course with a close and careful reading of *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), Kant’s indictment of European warfare and colonial aggression, a text that is written in the form of a treaty and anachronistically modelled on several “failed” eighteenth-century peace projects. In addition to locating Kant’s text in its historical and cultural contexts (including its almost instantaneous translation and reception in Britain and France), and investigating its odd nooks and crannies, we will examine how and why Kant’s text speaks to the present day through a consideration of the *Perpetual Peace Project* (2010)-- materials collected by the Slought Foundation that include interviews with leading philosophers

and cultural theorists who are invited to explore why Kant's text matters now.

After Friedrich Hölderlin's elegy, "Brod und Wein" (1807), then, this course asks: "In a destitute time, what are poets for?" In other words: in wartime—today and yesterday—what is the function of robustly public forms of humanistic inquiry? The seminar wagers answers to these pressing questions, and does so by considers how Romantic texts and Romantic criticism about war and peace speak both to and from a history that we have not yet exhausted.

In addition to contributing position papers for circulation and discussion in class, students will write a research essay due after the course concludes. I will run a course blog simultaneously with the seminar, using it as an extra-curricular space in which to reflect on the class's particular interests, concerns, emphases, and problems. Students will also be invited to compose a collective multi-media memorandum about war and peace (*The Occupy Peace Memorandum*), a video-based presentation that will then be posted on my website and Facebook page. In other words, students will ultimately be asked to create their own version of Kant's *Toward Perpetual Peace*, a critique of violence and a wager about peace.

Provisional Seminar Schedule

January	9	Prefatory Remarks
	16	Introduction
	23	Introduction
	30	Favret, <i>War at a Distance</i> (Part 1)
February	6	Favret, <i>War at a Distance</i> (Part 2)
	13	Austen, <i>Persuasion</i>
	20	Reading Week
	27	No class
March	5	Goya, <i>Disasters of War</i>
	12	Goya, <i>Disasters of War</i>
	19	Slought Foundation, <i>Perpetual Peace Project</i> [Screened in class] Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i>
	26	Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i>
April	2	Recapitulation: Occupy Peace

Assigned Texts*

Francisco Goya. *The Disasters of War*. With a new Introduction by Philip Hofer. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1967. 10-486-21872-4

Mary Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. 978-0-691-14407-8

Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006. 978-0300110708

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. Ed. Linda Bree. Broadview, 1998. 978-155111131

Laura Hanna, Alexandra Lerman, and Aaron Levy. Dir. *Perpetual Peace Project*. Slought

Foundation. Philadelphia, 2010. <http://perpetualpeaceproject.org/>

***Additional texts and readings will be made available.**

Work and Mark Distribution; Assignment Descriptions

Seminar Participation and Creation (15%)

Instead of delivering formal presentations, members of the class will be encouraged to *create*, on an ongoing basis, a *lively graduate seminar*—i.e. an inquisitive and informed space of critical labour, discussion, and debate. All students will therefore be invited to contribute consistently and meaningfully to the intellectual life of the seminar, developing and volunteering questions and arguments as well as responding mindfully to queries and challenges that are put to them by their classmates and by their instructor.

Students must be willing and able to:

- read and engage all assigned materials.
- attend all classes and participate in all classes.
- explore and absorb as much related critical material as possible, both seeking this material out independently and in consultation with their classmates and instructor.
- develop questions and arguments that are directly relevant to the materials at hand, and actively to introduce these points into the class discussion on a consistent basis.
- listen and respond thoughtfully to the issues raised in class, engaging the issues in ways that complicate and advance the intellectual life of the seminar.
- foster a developing scene of pedagogy, bearing in mind that a central part of our task is to *teach* others and to be *taught*.

At midterm, students will be given an informal assessment of the quality of their seminar participation work. Authors of response papers circulated in a given class should contribute to the class discussion in an especially robust way, taking particular responsibility for *leading* the seminar on that day.

Response Papers (2 x 15%=30%)

Each student will be responsible for two 750-word (3 pages) responses to the readings, each of which is worth 15% of your final grade, for a total of 30%. Response papers should provide a succinct summary of and engagement with some of the text's most pressing themes, arguments, and questions. The response paper should be written in such a way to prompt and provoke discussion in class. Students who have submitted response papers for a particular class may well be expected to expand upon their remarks. Remember: critique of the assigned material is welcome, but the object here is not to find fault, but rather to *engage* the materials at hand, and risking the chance of taking some of their arguments on-board.

The response papers must be completed and circulated by e-mail to all members of the course (as well as to me) at least **24 hours** before the start time of class. Beyond that point no response paper may be submitted since it does not give the class or me time carefully to consider that paper. Please ensure that *all* members of the class (including me) are in fact copied your

response paper. E-mail addresses have a surprising way of dropping out of distribution lists. If for a significant reason (and only for a significant reason) you are unable to submit a response paper, a new and different response paper may be submitted for another class, but only after making special written arrangements with me. Students are free to exchange response paper assignments among themselves, but should inform me of this swap.

Response Papers Schedule

February	30	Favret, <i>War at a Distance</i> (Part 1) [Student #1, 5, 9, 13]
	6	Favret, <i>War at a Distance</i> (Part 2) [Student #2, 6, 10, 14]
	13	Austen, <i>Persuasion</i> [Student #3, 7, 11, 15]
	20	Reading Week
	27	No class
March	5	Goya, <i>Disasters of War</i> [Student # 4, 8, 12, 16]
	12	Goya, <i>Disasters of War</i> [Student #1, 5, 9, 13]
	19	Slought Foundation, <i>Perpetual Peace Project</i> [Screened in class] [Student #2, 6, 10, 14]
	26	Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i> [Student #3, 7, 11, 15] Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i> [Student # 4, 8, 12, 16]

The Occupy Peace Memorandum (10%)

The class will create a co-operatively developed multi-media presentation, to be posted on the course web-page, that addresses the question of war and peace and that reflects the work that this seminar has accomplished over the course of the winter term. The objective here is to reflect upon the question of peace—its problems and possibilities, its histories and futures, its conceptual, political, and ethical difficulties in wartime and in the wake of the wartime that is Romanticism.

Research Essay (45%)

15-20 page essay. Students will write a research essay—i.e., an essay that fully engages extant theory and criticism and that either breaks new ground or significantly reframes existing arguments—on a topic of their own choosing. It's important to begin work on your essay earlier in the term rather than later, not only because of the complexity of the questions and problems with which you will be engaging, but also because it will take time to gather together the relevant primary and secondary sources. With the approval of the student, essays will subsequently be made available on the coursepage. I am happy to discuss your research essay with you at every stage, but all students are expected to consult with me about their work at least once prior to submitting the essay. Research essays are due by noon 20 April 2012 via e-mail attachment sent to dclark@mcmaster.ca. Essays submitted after that date may not have a marking commentary. The very last day and time that essays may be submitted for this course is noon, 27 April 2012.