**Words, Words, Words:**
Guiding Student Discourse through Blogging

Dr. Inga Meier, Assistant Professor – Department of Theatre

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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 1/22 to 1/29 and must submit your post by 1/29 at 5pm)
- Submission of 4 responses to posts for the preceding week posted after 5 pm on Friday and 3 pm 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)

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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 blog, 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.