

Dr. Shari Goldberg  
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Office: Keiper 316  
Office hours: Tu. & Th. 12:45-2:00

English 170, Spring 2016  
Tu. & Th. 2:15-3:35  
HAC 412



## Violence, Truth, and Story

### Course description

Unhealed wounds, lifelong scars, bodies lost and recovered: the texts we will read in this course contain violent imagery. Yet they are not all graphic exposes. Instead, our texts approach experiences such as war and genocide, murder and suicide by crafting unconventional stories—stories that are farcical and funny, stories that keep starting rather than ending, stories that lie in order to tell the truth, stories that omit crucial information. By studying these seemingly confounding forms, we will come to understand the complexities of narrating violent events. We will focus on learning to analyze narrative structures and to write articulately about evasive elements such as uncertainties, gaps, and silences.

### Learning goals

Throughout the semester, students will work to:

1. Develop basic skills for analyzing literary language and form.
2. Articulate how complexity functions in literary texts.
3. Understand irresolution as a strategy for addressing difficult subject matter.

### Required texts

Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches* (Dover) ISBN 0486449009

John D'Agata, *The Lifespan of a Fact* (Norton) ISBN 0393340730

Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (Vintage) ISBN 1400034299

Jim Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity* (Harvard) ISBN 0674026230

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families* (Picador) ISBN 0312243359

Sarah Koenig, *Serial*, season 1 (<http://serialpodcast.org/>)

## Core expectations

1. Come to each class session prepared to thoughtfully discuss the assigned text. Being prepared means: you have read carefully by annotating the text (annotations include underlining, margin remarks, and/or written notes), you have thought about questions the text raises or you would like to raise about it, and you have composed a generous and serious mindset. Bring your book to every class; if we are reading a handout via Canvas, bring a printed, annotated copy.
2. Complete all written assignments on your own, on time, and with care. Your goal with any written assignment is to learn something new through the process of constructing sentences and paragraphs.
3. Act respectfully toward me, toward your classmates, and toward our readings. Do not come to class late; do not use your phone during class; do not interrupt. Do listen attentively; do try to figure out what is valuable in what you hear and read; do bring concerns or confusions to the table.
4. Visit me, during office hours, if you have questions about texts, discussions, assignments, grades, or policies.

## Policies

**Attendance:** I expect you to attend all class sessions. More than two absences will result in your semester grade being lowered (five points per additional session missed). In case of family emergency or serious illness, bring me a note from the Office of the Dean of the College. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you missed.

**Technology:** In general, books, papers, and pens or pencils will be our preferred classroom technologies. I will let you know if others are permitted for a certain session.

**Accommodations:** Bring me documentation from the Office of Disability Services within the first two weeks of the semester if you need extra time or other support to complete the work of the course.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Any assignment containing plagiarism will be sent to the Office of the Dean of the College and may result in failure of the course.

**Communication:** Feel free to email me with questions or concerns. You may expect a reply within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 on weekends. I will post announcements and handouts on Canvas.

## Evaluation criteria

Contribution	10%	Paper 1	15%
Reading questions	15%	Paper 2	15%
Presentation	10%	Paper 3	10%
		Paper 4	25%

## Schedule of readings\* and assignments, due on the date listed

\*All readings are from the required texts unless marked with a [C], in which case they may be found in Canvas.

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| T 1/12 | Introduction   |
| R 1/14 | Rice, "The Long Interrogation" [C]   |
| T 1/19 | Alcott, <i>Hospital Sketches</i> , chapters 1-3  |
| R 1/21 | Alcott, <i>Hospital Sketches</i> , complete  |
| T 1/26 | Gourevitch, <i>We Wish to Inform You...</i> , chapters 1-7   |
| R 1/28 | Gourevitch, <i>We Wish to Inform You...</i> , chapters 8-13  |
| T 2/2  | Gourevitch, <i>We Wish to Inform You...</i> , chapters 13-17<br>Paper 1 assigned   |
| R 2/4  | Gourevitch, <i>We Wish to Inform You...</i> , chapters 18-22<br>*8 p.m., Hausman Lecture by Edwidge Danticat, Barshinger Center      |
| T 2/9  | Koenig, <i>Serial</i> ( <a href="http://serialpodcast.org">http://serialpodcast.org</a> ), season 1, episode 1<br><b>Paper 1 due</b> |
| R 2/11 | Koenig, <i>Serial</i> , season 1, episodes 2-4   |
| T 2/16 | Koenig, <i>Serial</i> , episodes 5-8<br>Presentation and Paper 2 assigned  |
| R 2/18 | Koenig, <i>Serial</i> , episodes 9-12  |
| T 2/23 | Presentations  |
| R 2/25 | Presentations<br><b>Paper 2 due</b>  |

- T 3/1            Presentations  
                   D'Agata, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, main text in the center of each page  
                   and fact-checking discussion pages 15-45
- R 3/3            D'Agata, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, fact-checking discussion pages 49-99
- T 3/8            D'Agata, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, fact-checking discussion pages 103-123  
                   D'Agata, "What Happens There" [C]

Due by 9 a.m. on Wednesday 3/9: Fact-checking exercise for Paper 3

R 3/10            **Paper 3 due** (be ready to read it!)

[Spring break]

- T 3/22            Dawes, *That the World May Know*, introduction and chapter 1
- R 3/24            Dawes, *That the World May Know*, chapters 2-3
- T 3/29            Dawes, *That the World May Know*, chapter 4 and afterword
- R 3/31            Paper 4 assigned
- T 4/5             Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "The Book of the Dead," "Seven," "Water"
- R 4/7             Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "The Book of Miracles," "Night Talkers," "The  
 Bridal Seamstress"
- T 4/12            Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "Monkey Tails," "The Funeral Singer," "The  
 Dew Breaker"
- R 4/14            In-class writing on Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*
- T 4/19            Thesis workshop for Paper 4  
                   **Draft of Paper 4 due**
- R 4/21            Revision workshop for Paper 4
- T 4/26            Paper 4 due