

Professor Shari Goldberg  
shari.goldberg@fandm.edu  
Office: Keiper 304

CNX 247, Spring 2018  
Mon. & Wed. 1:00-2:20  
LSP 256

Office hours: Tu.12:30-1:30, Th. 3:45-4:45, and by appointment

Preceptor: Jadeite Javier, jjavier1@fandm.edu  
Office hours: Fri. 11:00a.m.-12:00p.m. in the Schneider Lounge

## Cross-Examining the Witness

### Course description



We are all witnesses: so says the Nike corporation. But what does it mean to be a witness? How and why has witnessing become celebrated as a universal activity? This course will address these questions through the differing lenses of literary, historical, and legal studies. Students will complete a research project that entails analyzing first-hand testimonies as well as critical scholarship about an event of their choosing.

### Learning goals

Throughout the semester, students will work to:

1. Employ different disciplinary perspectives to examine witnessing as a concept and as a way of understanding important events.
2. Respond to texts by analyzing quotations, arguments, and positions.
3. Give clear, engaging class presentations.
4. Navigate the steps for conducting scholarly research.
5. Synthesize primary and second sources in a well-argued paper.

### Required texts

Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Cornell) ISBN 978-0801473166

Lola Vollen and Chris Ying, eds., *Voices From the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and its Aftermath* (McSweeney's) ISBN 978-1934781241

Various readings posted in Canvas file folders, *printed*

## Core expectations

1. Come to each class session prepared to thoughtfully discuss the assigned text. Bring your book to every class; if we are reading a handout via Canvas, bring a printed copy.
2. Complete all written assignments on your own, on time, and with care.
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 (three points per additional session missed). In case of family emergency or serious illness, have your house dean issue a short-term leave. 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

Final semester grades will be weighed as follows:

In-class contribution	15%
Brief writings	20%
Presentation	15%
Scholarship summaries	15%
Paper preparation	10%
Research paper	25%

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

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

### What is a witness?

W 1/17 Introduction

M 1/22 Tara Laskowski, "The Witness" [C]

### Literary analysis of witnessing

*Unit skill: Sandwiching quotations*

W 1/24 Chris Crowley, "Follow That Cab!" [C]  
Graff & Birkenstein, "The Art of Quoting" [C]

M 1/29 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life. . .*, chapters 1-5 [C]

W 1/31 Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, chapters 1-5 [C]  
>> Also due: How does *My Bondage and My Freedom* tell a different story from Douglass's earlier *Narrative*? Use one sandwiched quotation from each text to make your comparison (300-500 words).

M 2/5 Library session: Locating primary sources  
>> Due: Choose three historical events on which you could focus your research project this semester.

W 2/7 Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl*, excerpts [C]

M 2/12 Vollen and Ying, *Voices from the Storm...*, "Life Before the Storm," pp. 7-39 and one chapter according to assigned group: Saturday, Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday  
>> Also due: How does Vollen and Ying's oral history form differ from Alexievich's? Use one sandwiched quotation from each text to make your comparison (300-500 words).

Presentations on first-hand witness accounts

Unit skill: Making a presentation

- W 2/14      Group presentations on *Voices from the Storm* chapters
- M 2/19      Primary sources for individual projects must be selected and read. Bring them to class.
- W 2/21      Individual presentations on first-hand witness accounts
- M 2/26      Individual presentations on first-hand witness accounts
- W 2/28      Individual presentations on first-hand witness accounts  
Dori Laub, "Testimony and Historical Truth" [C]

Historical critique of witnessing

Unit skill: Pointed summaries

- M 3/5      Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, introduction & chapter 1  
Graff & Birkenstein, "The Art of Summarizing" [C]
- W 3/7      Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, chapter 2
- [Spring break]
- M 3/19      Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, chapter 3  
>> Also due: Using the pointed summary technique, explain Wieviorka's argument in chapter 3 (300-500 words).
- W 3/21      Library session: Locating historical scholarship
- M 3/26      Historical sources for individual projects must be selected and read. Bring them to class.
- W 3/28      Pointed summaries of historical sources due.

Legal questions about witnessing

Unit skill: Putting sources in conversation

- M 4/2      *The Good Wife*, Season 1, episodes 8, "Unprepared" and 18, "Doubt"
- W 4/4      Readings from *Law's Stories* [all on C]: Dershowitz, "Life is Not a Dramatic Narrative"; Malcolm, "The Side-Bar Conference"; Rosen, "Rhetoric and Result"  
    >> Also due: Which essay sheds light on *The Good Wife*? Give a pointed summary of the essay's argument, and then explain how it enhances your understanding of one episode (300-500 words).
- M 4/9      *The Sweet Hereafter* (film)
- W 4/11     Locate, read (or watch), and bring to class a new source about justice and your event.

Making an argument about witnessing

Unit skills: Writing thesis & topic sentences

- M 4/16     Final papers: assignment details and planning
- W 4/18     Paper outline due; thesis statement workshop
- M 4/23     Paper draft due; in-class topic sentence workshop
- W 4/25     Final papers due