HUMS 295a/PLSC 307a/JDST 223a: Trials of Uncertainty
Norma Thompson, Senior Lecturer in the Humanities | MW 2:30-3:45 p.m
Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and by appt. | Whitney Humanities Center #102

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Is the demise of the trial at hand? Or might the trial retain its place as cultural achievement, the epitome of humanistic inquiry, where all is brought to bear on a crucial matter in an uncertain context? In this seminar we will trace three distinct pathways of “trials” and “uncertainty”:

1. The real-life legal conundrums suggested by the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials;
2. The intellectual history of the idea of the trial and its connection to the liberal arts;
3. The possibilities for truthful storytelling in modern and contemporary trials.

We will inquire into issues of meaning of the trial, its impartiality, and challenges to its endurability. The role of character, doubt, and diagnosis will be explored in Aeschylus, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Jane Austen and Kafka, as well as in the Salem witch trials and in 20th century trials. There will be opportunities to write on recommended films and documentaries. Depending on student interest, other areas of study for the final essay may include the visual, musical and dramatic arts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Each student is responsible for helping to facilitate discussion in one seminar. As part of this assignment, students will make available to the class an outline of one page of their assigned reading. “Outline” is meant to be understood loosely: the expectation is not for a summary but rather for a set of markers of or questions about what seems most significant in the reading, for purposes of a good seminar discussion. (A sample outline will be provided during Week 1.) This assignment will count as part of seminar participation, which is 20% of the grade.

There are three assigned papers, the first (5 pages = 20% of the grade) due on Monday, September 30, 2019; the second (5 pages = 20% of the grade) on Monday, November 18, 2019, and the final essay (8-10 pages = 40% of the grade) on Wednesday, December 18, 2019. The first two essays will be on a choice of assigned topics; in the final essay, students may address any trial they wish.

See the final page of the syllabus for more information regarding writing goals, expectations, and policies. This seminar is designated WR.
BOOKS TO BUY: (These specific editions/translations required in hard copy) - Prices from Barnes & Noble

- Abby Mann, *Judgment at Nuremberg: A Play* (New Directions): $15.95
- Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, Any translation/edition will be suitable for class discussion

OPTIONAL PURCHASE (Selections will be available on Bass E-Reserve):

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Unit 1: Introduction to Course: Nuremberg and Eichmann Trials as Case Studies

a) Documents vs. Eyewitness Testimony

   **Week 1**


   **Week 2**

Sept. 2: NO CLASS - Labor Day

Sept. 4: Abby Mann, *Judgment at Nuremberg: A Play*

***Highly recommended film: Judgment at Nuremberg (1961); Director Stanley Kramer, Screenplay by Abby Mann

   **Week 3**

Sept. 11: Annette Wieviorka, *Era of the Witness*: pp. 107-144

b) **Challenges to the Language of Morality**

**Week 4**


***Highly recommended viewing: [https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/eichmann-trial.html](https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/eichmann-trial.html)***

**Week 5**


Essay #1 due in class, Monday, September 30, 2019

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**Unit 2: The Trial and the Tradition of Liberal Arts in the West**

a) **Eliciting Standards for the Courtroom**

**Week 6**

Sept. 30: Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, pp. 5-21; 46-71 (1.1-1.3; 1.10-1.15) [e-reserve]


**Week 7**

Oct. 7: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

Oct. 9: Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*

**Week 8**


Oct. 16: NO CLASS - October Recess

**Week 9**


Oct. 23: Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall’s Apology*, pp. 86-169

**Week 10**

Oct. 28: Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall’s Apology*, tbd

***Highly recommended film: *The Witch* (2015); Director Robert Eggers***
b) Trials of Character and Trials of Identity

Week 10 cont.

Oct. 30: Jane Austen, *Emma*: pp. 3-112

Week 11

Nov. 4: Jane Austen, *Emma*: pp. 112-221
Nov. 6: Jane Austen, *Emma*: pp. 222-331

Week 12

Nov. 11: Jane Austen, *Emma*: pp. 331-440

Unit 3: Possibilities for Truthful Storytelling in the Modern and Contemporary Trial

a) Kafka’s Nightmare: The End of the Story

Week 12 cont.

Nov. 13: Franz Kafka, *The Trial*: pp. 3-79

Essay #2 due in class Monday, November 18, 2019

Week 13

Nov. 18: Franz Kafka, *The Trial*: pp. 80-165
Nov. 20: Franz Kafka, *The Trial*: pp. 166-231

b) The Decline of the Humanities & The Trial

Week 14


Final Essay due Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Highly Recommended texts for final essay:

- Reginald Rose, *Twelve Angry Men* and/or the Sidney Lumet film (1957)
- Robert Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, and/or the Otto Preminger film (1959)
- Podcasts: *Serial, In the Dark*
- Video Testimony from Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies
Please avail yourselves of the excellent resources provided by the The Yale Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL): https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this seminar. We will discuss integrity in writing and in research – and specifically, how to avoid unintentional plagiarism. Please review Yale’s Academic Integrity Policy. CTL elaborates on using sources well and avoiding plagiarism: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources

Writing Assignments for HUMS 295

1. Essay #1 due September 30, 2019
   First Drafts accepted through midnight September 23, 2019

2. Essay #2 due November 18, 2019
   First Drafts accepted through midnight November 11, 2019

3. Essay #3 due December 18, 2019
   First Drafts accepted through midnight December 14, 2019

Writing Goals

- Become comfortable with carving out your own position in the thesis. Find your voice!
- Understand the distinction between description and analysis.
- Compose a logic chain before you begin writing, and “correct” it as you proceed.
- Cite the text accurately and fairly. Be judicious!
- Support your assertions with text.
- Anticipate objections to your thesis.
- Discover the rewards of editing.