



2020–21 ENGLISH HONORS SENIOR SEMINAR

(English 399W)

Prof. Steve Kruger

2 sections: MON 5:00 – 8:50 p.m. or TUE
1:40–5:30pm

For more info about the English Honors Program,
visit
[http://english.qc.cuny.edu/undergraduate/honors-
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Seminar, contact Prof. Natalie Léger at
nleger@qc.cuny.edu.

Love in Wartime

An ancient theme in literature—including the Hebrew Bible, Homer’s *Iliad*, and Virgil’s *Aeneid*—is the intersection between the erotic and the military, love and war. This honors seminar will consider how literature written in English has engaged, developed, and interrogated that theme, sometimes directly referring to ancient stories (Samson and Delilah, the Fall of Troy, Dido and Aeneas), and sometimes engaging contemporary history to put the passions and desires of individual characters into play within the framework of violence and crisis. The course will begin with a consideration of how medieval and early modern writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare engage with ancient stories of love and war. It will then move to consider how, in later moments of conflict, stories of love are mobilized—to emphasize the human stakes of warfare; to deflect attention from histories of conquest and exploitation; to suggest some of the ways in which erotic/romantic relationships are themselves often conflictual; to interrogate the connections between romance and rape culture; to undermine the dominant political ideologies of a particular historical moment.

Authors we might read in the course include Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Behn, Pope, Austen, Byron, Whitman, Dickinson, Baldwin, Morrison, Achebe, Head, Moraga, and Wojnarowicz. (The list will change as the final syllabus is developed. We probably won’t be able to read all the authors I’ve listed here, but any of these might provide the basis for student’s individual projects.)



