

Bearing Witness

The literature, music, and art of protest and hope

Purpose: The seminar's purpose is to investigate the role of the arts in protesting, empowering, providing comfort and bearing witness.

Moderator:	Sandi Albertson-Shea
Date and Time:	Monday morning, 10:00-Noon 10 weeks, starting September 24 (no class Nov.12)
Format:	Seminar
Location:	Smith College, Campus Center room 102

Description: What art forms lift your heart these days (music, poetry, cartoons, film)?

What art forms have documented/borne witness to difficult times?

What art forms comforted/empowered American slaves and abolitionists? Chilean/Argentinian mothers of the “disappeared”? Civil Rights workers? Chinese dissidents of Tiananmen Square? Survivors of the Cambodian “killing fields”?

These 10 weeks will provide a window into the ways human beings, past and current, in the U.S. and around the world, have used story, poetry, drama, song, and paintings to respond to troubling historical events. Some art forms appear in the midst of the challenging times; some come only later.

Participants can select from a variety of topics (e.g., American slavery, Soviet Union gulags, European Holocaust, U.S. Civil Rights movement, South African apartheid, mothers of the “disappeared” in Chile and Argentina, El Salvador’s civil war, 9/11, Women’s Rights, Israeli/Palestinian conflict, post-election issues) or offer a topic of their own choice approved by the Moderator.

“In the dark times, will there also be singing?

Yes, there will be singing.

About the dark times.” - Bertolt Brecht

Role of participants: Each participant will offer an approximately 30-minute presentation with some historical background and whatever versions (print, graphic, audio/visual) of art forms have been discovered related to the chosen topic, and lead the following discussion. As Moderator, I will provide a list of potential subject areas.

Resources: Since much of this material comes from primary sources, there is no one text available. I will be happy to provide suggestions: titles, sites, even objects (such as Chilean arpilleras) from my own collections.

About the Moderator: I have taught differing versions of this topic in the Humanities Division at Middlesex Community College for the last 36 years. From 1966-68, I served in the Peace Corps in Uganda, East Africa, and studied on Fulbright travel scholarships in South Africa (2000) and Cambodia (2002).

Maximum number of participants: 17

Auditors accepted: yes, up to 2

Course # 18FBW