

The Literature Section of the English Department, with the full support of the University of Macao, is delighted to be hosting an advanced research seminar on the important topic of 'Suffering in Literature'. The event takes place from 23-25 August 2012.

The field of Trauma studies, originating in Medicine, has long been concerned with the psychological effects of mass trauma resulting from natural disasters, political instability and war, torture, slavery, the Holocaust, other genocides, etc. In recent years, the field has become increasingly multi-disciplinary, including sociology, anthropology, philosophy, law, history and so forth.

The question of human suffering has been central to literary and religious texts across most cultures for millennia. Scholars in literature have recently become aware of the need to focus attention on and develop a specific field of studies which allows for advanced theoretical consideration of this central issue, which remains of crucial importance in contemporary societies. We have been honoured that several leading figures in the field have accepted our invitation to participate in the seminar.

We will address questions of the following kind:

(a) The limits of the representation of suffering. Theoretical considerations include Adorno's influential hypothesis that recollection and remembrance post-Holocaust have become seriously impaired or even impossible. The self-annihilation and self-negation of language when confronted with pain and suffering is acknowledged by several theorists, and yet representations of suffering persist.

(b) Given the limitations of representation and the aporias of language when confronted with suffering, what are the cultural and sociological functions which representations of suffering might serve? To what extent are the insights gained in Holocaust studies applicable to other instances of human suffering? What are the interconnections between Literature, History and Trauma Studies?

(c) Contributing to a general theoretical framework, individual research will consider, the Holocaust poetry of Paul Celan, the poetic output of Guantanamo Bay prisoners, representations of the Einsatzgruppen massacres, suffering and testimony in Sri Lankan Narratives, the modern 'chic' of victimhood, music and misery in Renaissance drama, imagined trauma in the literature of Malay and Singapore, the literature of slavery, the issue of suffering in children's literature, seeing suffering in Women's literature, the suffering of China during the Japanese invasion, and other topics.

Our distinguished guests, who are world experts in the field, are (in alphabetical order):

**Marc Amfreville**, Professor of American Literature at the University of Paris-Sorbonne and currently the chairman of the French Association for American Studies (AFEA).

**Cathy Caruth**, Frank H.T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters at Cornell University.

**Elizabeth A. Dolan**, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Health, Medicine, and Society Program at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA.

**William Franke**, Professor of Comparative Literature and Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University.

**Madelaine Hron**, Associate Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada.

**Diana Lary**, Professor of History at the University of British Columbia.

**David Miller**, previously a research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, and about to join the University of Manchester.

**Harold Schweizer** who held the NEH Chair in the Humanities and the John P. Crozer Chair in English Literature at Bucknell University.

**Sue Vice**, professor of English Literature at the University of Sheffield

**Elisabeth Weber**, professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Several members of our own faculty will also be presenting papers. We trust that this multi-disciplinary seminar will lead to important developments in the field, and serve to enhance the reputation of the University of Macau as an internationally recognised university.