Most of us are familiar with a Holocaust “story” that goes like this: during the Nazi occupation of Western and Central Europe during World War II, Jews were confined to cities or neighborhoods of cities. They were then transported by train to concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, where they were either gassed on arrival or worked to death. We see it as cold, remorseless, impersonal, assembly-line destruction.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s, however, the story of the Holocaust has been revised because of new access to archives in Eastern Europe. The nature of the killing there has shifted the focus from structures—the bureaucracy that operated the railroads and concentration camps—to a new understanding based on participant roles. Who was—and what does it mean to be—a perpetrator of the Holocaust? A rescuer? A bystander?

Our class will look specifically at one category of Holocaust participants: the victims. We’ll learn the stories of young victims—Helene Berr from France, Ruth Kluger from Austria, Dawid Sierakowiak from Poland, and others—in their own words. Berr and Sierakowiak kept diaries of their experiences; Kluger, years after the war, wrote a memoir. We will embed our reading of these books in Doris Bergen’s work of history, War & Genocide. As we read, we’ll be writing, too: we’ll do five writing assignments about the work of our class, three of which will be rewritten based on the instructor’s suggestions.

Fourteen year-old Pakistani school girl Malala Yousafzai loves education and peace, and she is not afraid to speak out for both, even if doing so endangers her life. In this course students will reflect upon their own educational backgrounds as we read through Yousafzai’s memoir, I Am Malala. In the spirit of tolerance and peace that Malala is seeking for her war-torn homeland, we’ll also explore the stories of individuals from around the world who have worked tirelessly for peace, animal compassion, the environment, and the well-being of children, while continuing to educate others about ways to change their communities and the world. All our reading will be springboards for a variety of essays and opportunities to expand students’ skills in correctly using sources in writing.

This writing-intensive course will explore different concepts of law and justice, from natural law (rules of behavior and justice derived from nature) to positive law (the jurisprudence, or theory and philosophy of law of a given political community). We will discuss the relationship between justice and jurisprudence, and consider how concepts of each have evolved over time. Attention will be given to the way that the media and pop culture represent law and justice. This course may be of particular interest to students who aspire to careers in law, criminal justice, or public service.

The Pulitzer Prizes are awarded in 21 categories every year. Because the 14 journalism awards must go to American newspapers, and because the seven “Letters, Drama, and Music” awards must be given to American writers and musicians working with American themes, the Pulitzer Prizes not only showcase journalistic and creative excellence; they also allow us to take the pulse of what’s happening right now in the United States.

Our class will begin with the students themselves choosing which Pulitzer Prize winners to read in several possible journalism categories—Public Service and Investigative Reporting, Breaking News Reporting and Breaking News Photography, Feature Writing and Feature Photography, Explanatory Reporting, and Criticism. We will also read the 2010 winner of the Fiction award, Tinkers, by Paul Harding, and a collection of poetry and possibly a play. We’ll write six papers in response to these works, and three of those papers will be revised and collected in a portfolio at the end of the semester.
In this 111 section, we will look at a variety of texts that in some way touch on the issue of chivalric behavior, beginning with Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* and including several plays, poems, and films up to the present day. The world of chivalry is often defined by the representation of Arthur’s world of knighthood, hence the reason for our beginning with the Middle Ages. We will look at how the concept has changed in the next five hundred years by examining Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer*, and a couple of twentieth-century films such as *Ever After*. We will find that chivalry isn’t dead; it has merely taken on a different form. Our writing assignments will engage a variety of aspects and forms.

Homer’s epic, *The Odyssey*, is one of the great books of world literature. It has been studied for over 2,000 years and has influenced just about every subsequent storyteller who has based a story on a weary, wayward, wandering hero just trying to get back home. In this section of English 111, we will use *The Odyssey* as our primary text for a quest to learn how to read and write about literature at a college level. We will also study the impact and aesthetic value of the epic itself as literature, and its lasting cultural legacy, primarily through cinematic adaptations and variations on its central themes. Students will spend approximately half the semester carefully reading a modern translation of Homer’s epic, then we will turn our attention to a few other works directly inspired by *The Odyssey*, such as Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses,” Margaret Atwood’s recent novel from patient Penelope’s perspective, *The Penelopiad*, and the Coen brother’s film *O Brother Where Art Thou?* This special topic will provide a perfect opportunity to introduce students to college-level reading, research, and writing—just don’t get lost wandering around out there!