# Course Name: Telling the Stories of Displacement

## Instructor Information

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## Course Description

Experiences of displacement disrupt our life rhythms both inside and out. The goal of this course is to examine the intersections of displacement and the healing power of storytelling. Through reading Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, the course will explore the soldiers’ experiences of displacement. We will delve into the psychological toll of being separated from home and familiarity, and reflect on the role of storytelling in the novel. The course will then interrogate the concepts of narrative medicine and graphic medicine, both of which are ways of storytelling that communicate the lived experiences of pain and suffering. Drawing on elements of graphic medicine in Thi Bui’s graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*, the course will examine how this work conveys individuals’ experiences of suffering. This course offers students many opportunities to develop a well-rounded understanding of the power of storytelling that strengthens empathy and care. Students will engage with relevant articles and multimedia to deepen their knowledge. Activities will include collaborative pair work, classroom discussions, and hands-on activities on the final zine project.

## Textbook & Course Materials

### Primary Texts: It is recommended to purchase this edition for *The Things They Carried* so that it will help us locate the passages during class discussion. For *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*, I will provide scanned copies or the online version of the texts, so purchasing them is not required.

O’Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. Mariner Books Classics, 2009.

### Recommended Texts & Other Readings: Relevant articles will be consulted throughout our classes. Other scanned readings regarding narrative and graphic medicine will be made available in the course packet. Feel free to come prepared with some questions and comments for the class.

Chen, Tina. “‘Unraveling the Deeper Meaning’: Exile and the Embodied Poetics of Displacement in Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*.” *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1998, pp. 77–98. doi.org/10.2307/1208922.

Ronan, Lara K., and M. K. Czerwiec. “A Novel Graphic Medicine Curriculum for Resident Physicians: Boosting Empathy and Communication through Comics.” *The Journal of Medical Humanities*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2020, pp. 573-578. doi.org/10.1007/s10912-020-09654-2.

## Course Requirements

### We will utilize a Google Doc for students to take notes and share them daily. I will update this document with key points from each session as a recap. I plan to circulate the printed versions at the start of each class.

### Zine Project: By the end of the course, we will prep and execute a collaborative zine project, which will be thoroughly explained in advance. This project will provide an opportunity to collaborate as co-creators of stories while practicing both narrative and graphic medicine. This will involve hands-on activities using scrap paper and magazines.

## Expected Outcomes

Our learning goals are:

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the physical and psychological injuries of displaced populations, while engaging with literary works that reflect the realities of displacement.
2. Learn key terms and concepts related to narrative strategies and narrative/graphic medicine and gain insight into the ways medicine can be practiced with narrative competence.
3. By the end of the course, create a project that demonstrates your understanding and application of the storytelling or narrative/graphic medicine strategies learned throughout the course, and develop your own narrative ‘rhetoric.’

## Course Timeline

Tentative Schedule: Though the assigned literary texts will remain unchanged, I may modify the secondary readings as the course progresses. The materials for the final classes may be adjusted based on student interests.

M 7/7: Course Introduction, Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*; Displacement

T 7/8: Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*; Displacement; Storytelling

W 7/9: Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*; Displacement; Storytelling

Th 7/10: Thi Bui’s *The Best We Could Do*; Storytelling; Graphic Medicine

F 7/11: Exploration of Multimedia Platforms; Preparation and Creation of Zine Projects