Understanding Modern War Culture

What impact has war had on literature and culture? How have writers, intellectuals, and citizens struggled to find a voice during wartime in the face of censorship, propaganda, trauma, and the technologies of violence? What does it mean to live in a culture of war? Focusing in particular on questions of gender, imperialism, and resistance, we explore these questions in a range of British, American, and postcolonial novels, poems, memoirs, military writings, theoretical texts, films, and popular culture from the 20th and 21st century. The seminar begins, however, with some foundational representations of war cultures by Homer, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy, before charting the transformations and mutations of modern war culture from the eras of colonial warfare, total warfare during the First World War, and the “People’s War” of World War Two to more recent conflicts, such as: the apocalyptic imaginary of the Cold War; the Vietnam war; guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency; and the mythology of “high tech warfare” in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The course features visits by war writers, veterans, and activists.

Required Books:
9780486295688  World War One British Poets, Ed. Ward  Dover Publications
9780156628709  Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway  Harcourt Brace
9780684826806  Primo Levi, Survival In Auschwitz  Simon & Schuster
9780679754855  Joan Didion, Democracy  Random House
9780618706419  Tim O’Brien, The Things They Carried  Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
9780143126829  Phil Klay, Redeployment  Penguin Group Usa Inc
9780300205640  Sinan Antoon, The Corpse Washer  Yale University Press

Companion Films:  Listen to Britain; Dr. Strangelove; The Battle of Algiers; Tinker, Tailor; Apocalypse Now; Come and See; Saving Private Ryan; The Thin Red Line; Bloody Sunday; Three Kings; Restrepo.

Course packet
All other secondary and theoretical readings on the syllabus will be included in the Course Packet on NYU Classes.

Course Requirements:
1. Five weekly discussion questions over the course of the semester (due on NYU Classes by 9.00 pm the day before class). You should consult the DQ schedule to see when you are due to post your questions and comments.
2. An in-class Presentation on a course related topic of your choice.
3. Written Assignments:
a short reflection paper (3 pages, due Mon 2/6),
a midterm essay (5 pages, due Mon 3/6),
and a final research paper (8-10 pages, due Mon 5/8), which may be an expanded version of the midterm paper or on a different topic.
4. Three Discussion Question posts to the NYU Classes Forum
5. Regular and informed in-class participation.

**Presentation:** Over the course of the semester students will take a turn delivering a brief oral presentation. Each presenter will be responsible for approximately 10 minutes of the seminar plus a discussion period of about 10 minutes. If you are presenting on a day with two presentations, you should make contact in advance with your partner to discuss and coordinate your session. You should meet with me briefly before your presentation.

You should also prepare a handout for the seminar to facilitate discussion, which may include visual materials or a few relevant quotations. You can also show a short video clip, or play brief musical illustrations, if you wish. You are free to divide up the task any way you like and should plan to meet in person with your fellow presenter at least once in advance.

Presentations can be written out, or delivered from notes (3 pages of double spaced text will approximate 10 minutes of reading time) and should follow these guidelines: 1) Give an overview of your chosen topic, emphasizing one or two key points that you find useful for future research; 2) Supply *briefly* any useful contextual or historical information that you have found helpful concerning the topic; 3) Connect the approach or argument about the topic you’re presenting to a specific case study or example: you may wish to show a brief clip and supply a handout with key quotations or facts, but the handout should not repeat what you’re going to say; 4) Stay strictly within the time limit; 5) Frame a couple of questions that will lead off our discussion. (You should email me your two topic presentation questions the day before the seminar in which you’re presenting, and I will circulate them to your fellow seminar members, so they will be ready to contribute to the discussion following the presentation).

**Discussion Questions:**
Each week selected students will post discussion two questions on the week’s readings on the NYU Classes Forum by 5pm on the previous day. Each discussion question should include a significant textual detail plus your questions about it. A schedule of discussion questions will be posted on the NYU Classes website.

**Policies:**
**Attendance:** Attendance in this course is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will cause your final grade to drop. Consistent tardiness will count as one absence.

**Late Papers:** It is essential that you hand in essays on time. Papers will be marked down a “step” for each day late. Papers more than a week late will not be accepted and will receive a zero.
**Essay Format:** All papers must be typed, double-spaced, left-justified only, page-numbered and stapled. Please include your name, course section, due date and my name on the front page of each paper. Each essay should have a title. **Please proofread your work carefully.**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offense: it will result in failure of the course and will be reported to your dean. You should familiarize yourself with the section on plagiarism in the *MLA Handbook* and with the handout attached detailing the College of Art and Science’s “Statement of Academic Integrity” (to be found at [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity)).

**Grading:** Your final grade will be based on a combination of your written and other work in the seminar and participation (discussion questions and presentation 20%; reflection paper 10%; midterm essay 20%; final paper 40%; participation 10%). Class discussion is an important part of the course and your in-class participation will be factored into your grade.

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**Course Schedule**

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction: War Poets, War Culture and Propaganda</th>
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**Film Clips:** *Saving Private Ryan* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1998): "Opening" and "Behind the Lines"; *All Quiet on the Western Front* (dir. Lewis Milestone, 1930): "Soldiers’ Debate" and "Final Scene"

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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Anthropologies of War</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 1/30</td>
<td>Homer, <em>The Iliad</em>, Books I &amp; XVI (P)</td>
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**Secondary reading:**
Simone Weil, “The Iliad, or the Poem of Force” (1940-41) (P)

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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Shakespeare and War</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/6</td>
<td>William Shakespeare, <em>Henry IV, Part 1</em> (c. 1597)</td>
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**Film:** *Henry IV, Part I* (dir. Richard Eyre, 2012) AFC# DVD 31447

**Secondary Reading:**
Klaus Theweleit, from *Male Fantasies*, vol 1 & vol 2 (P)

**First Reflection Paper Due**

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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>World War I</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 2/13</td>
<td><strong>I. Selected Great War poetry:</strong> Brooke, Sassoon, Kipling, Owen, Rosenberg; Selected women poets of the Great War (P)</td>
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**II. Fictions:** Ernest Hemingway, “A Very Short Story” & “Soldier’s Home,” from *In Our Time* (P)

**III. Memoir:** Ernst Junger, from *Storm of Steel* (P)
Vera Brittain, from *Testament of Youth*, (1933) pp 205-244 (P)
Secondary Reading:

Week 5
M 2/20
No Class

Week 6
Modernism and Modern Memory
M 2/27
Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (1925)
Secondary reading:
Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917; trans. 1925) (P)

Week 7
WW II
M 3/6
Alexander Baron, From the City, From the Plough (P)
Virginia Woolf, “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid” (1940) (P)
Elizabeth Bowen, “Preface to The Demon Lover” (P)
Films: London Can Take It, Words for Battle (dir. Humphrey Jennings, 1940, 1941) AFC # DVD 6699

Midterm Paper Due

Week 8
M 3/13
Spring Break

Week 9
Holocaust
M 3/20
Secondary reading:
Cathy Caruth, “Introduction to Part 1: Trauma and Experience” &

Week 10
Cold War
M 3/27
George Orwell, 1984 (1949)
Secondary Reading: Seymour Melman, from The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism in Decline (1984), 7-26, 260-264 & 290-300 (P)
Film: The Fog of War (dir. Errol Morris, 2004) AFC # DVD 2112

Week 11
Reimagining Vietnam
M 4/3
Joan Didion, Democracy (1984)
Tim O’Brien, from The Things They Carried (1990)
Film: Apocalypse Now (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) AFC # DVD 7296 disk 1)
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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Truth and Reconciliation?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Reading:</td>
<td>Priscilla Hayner, from <em>Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocities</em> (P)</td>
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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>The Iraq War: Fallujah and After</th>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong> <em>Fear Not the Path of Truth: A veteran's journey after Fallujah</em> (dir. Ross Caputi, 2014)</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Anthony Swofford, from <em>Jarhead</em> (2003) (P)</td>
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<td><strong>Class visit:</strong> Ross Caputi</td>
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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>The Iraq War: Homeland</th>
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<td>Phil Klay, “Prayer in the Furnace” &amp; “War Stories,” from <em>Redeployment</em></td>
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<td>Siobhan Fallon, “You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming”</td>
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<td><strong>Secondary Reading:</strong> Patrick Deer, “Mapping Contemporary War Culture” (2016) (P)</td>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong> <em>The Hurt Locker</em> (dir. Katherine Bigelow, 2010) DVD 14109</td>
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<th>Week 15</th>
<th>Representing Iraq</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Riverbend, from <em>Baghdad Burning</em> (2003-07)</td>
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<td><a href="http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/">http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Secondary Reading:</strong> Sinan Antoon, “Embedded Poetry”</td>
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<th>Week 16</th>
<th>Conclusion: Final Projects Roundtable</th>
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<td><strong>Final Paper Due:</strong> Brief oral presentations on final projects</td>
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**Class Cultural Outings:** The September 11th Museum, date TBA; The Museum of Modern Art, TBA.