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IDH 3931 /AMH 3931
Honors Seminar
Spring 2017

War in Literature and Film

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W 7-9 [1:55-4:55]
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Overview

This is a seminar about literature, art, and warfare, as interpreted through the perspectives of the historian. What do I mean by that? First, we will be looking at how American authors, photographers, and filmmakers have responded to 150 years of warfare. The authors and artists are in nearly all cases writing or filming soon after the fact, and most of the authors are writing from personal experience. That is, this is not a discussion of how novelists – for instance – have written about distant conflicts. Second, although we are free to discuss matters of symbolism and metaphor and pretty much anything we choose, we will also be thinking about each document as reflecting something about the moment it was written or filmed. In many cases the novels and films under discussion have been widely consumed, discussed, and praised. These are “primary sources” but for our purposes they are quite different from letters or diaries found hidden in archives. Each (perhaps) tells us something important about the moment it was produced.

Seminar Meetings and Preparation

This course will rely on consistently strong student preparation and participation. The readings in this course are heavy. I have, where possible, tried to balance the longest novels with shorter assignments, but the fact remains that this course requires a substantial time commitment.

Students should come to every class having completed the readings and with separate, pretty detailed, notes on the text. Those notes should include your thoughts on the topics you would like to raise in class. But you should have sufficient notes on the plot(s) so that you will be able to recall what is being discussed without flipping back and forth in your books. (If I feel that students

are not coming prepared to seminar I will give quizzes on the readings.) Students will also write reading journal entries for each week.

Although I will obviously have some input into the weekly discussions, I imagine that this class will take a fairly organic form, with students taking a huge roll in shaping discussions and establishing interesting themes. On occasion students will be tapped to begin discussions and perhaps prepare background on the readings.

Computers and other electronic devices will not be appropriate for these discussions.

Core Readings

In addition to two short stories and three sets of photographs that we will access digitally, you should acquire seven books and two films. I have selected inexpensive versions of the books that are easily available in paperback. Please get these editions, and please get them in paperback and not in a digital form. This is because when we discuss the books you will need to be able to refer to page numbers that all of our texts have in common, and you need to be able to access those pages in discussion.

Novels and Collections of Short Stories (purchase required)

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393930750.

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). Hemingway Library Edition. ISBN: 1476764522.

Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961). 50th Anniversary Edition. ISBN 1451626657.

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). Modern Library Edition. ISBN: 0385333846.

Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977). Vintage. ISBN: 0679735259.

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990). ISBN: 0544309766.

Phil Klay, *Redeployment* (2015). ISBN: 0143126822.

Feature Films (purchase required)

The Best Years of Our Lives (1946).

Apocalypse Now (1979). [Coppola reissued this movie as “Apocalypse Now: Redux.” That version added extra scenes and generally tweaked the film a bit. Most folks seem to feel it is better. I would encourage you to watch this later version.]

Written Assignments

This course will have two main written components.

First, you will keep a weekly “reading journal” with your responses to each week’s readings. These entries can be written in a fairly informal language, but

they should reflect serious contemplation of the week's readings in the context of previous readings and discussions. These should be about 350-500 words long.

Second, you will write a Final Essay which chooses a single theme and considers that theme as it emerges through the various course readings. This essay will not require additional research beyond the assigned readings.

Grading

Preparation, Participation, Presentations	40%
Weekly Reading Reflections	20%
Final Essay	40%

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will result in automatic grade reductions.

CLASS MEETINGS

(all classes will meet on Wednesdays from 1:55 to 4:55)

1. January 4 Introduction

THE CIVIL WAR

2. *January 11* *Short Stories and photographs*

- Ambrose Bearce, "Chickamauga" (1889).
- Louisa May Alcott, "The Brothers," *Atlantic Monthly* 12, no. 73 (November 1863).
- Alexander Gardner, Antietam Photographs. (National Parks Service web site.) [Each of these readings will be available digitally.]

3. January 18 Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895).

THE TURN TO MODERN WAR

4. January 25 Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

THE GREATEST GENERATION GOES TO WAR

5. February 1 FILM: *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946).
6. February 8 Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961).
7. February 15 Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969).

VIETNAM

8. February 22 Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977).
9. March 1 FILM: *Apocalypse Now* (1979).

(Ideally, watch *Apocalypse Now Redux*)

SPRING BREAK

10. March 15 Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990).
Students will select individual stories to read

IRAQ AND MODERN WARFARE

11. March 22 Phil Klay, *Redeployment* (2015).
12. March 29 Photographers and Modern Warfare
- Photographs (and text) by Jennifer Karady at <http://www.jenniferkarady.com/home.html>
 - Photographs by Lynsey Addario at <http://lynseyaddario.com/its-what-i-do/>

CONCLUSIONS

13. April 5 Student Presentations
14. April 12 Student Presentations
15. April 19 Final essays due