Voices of War & Peace: Art, Literature & Film (PAX-CPL 240)
Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies Program & Comparative Literature
DePaul University
Fall 2014

Mondays & Wednesdays 2:40-4:10pm
Arts & Letters Hall Room 406
Instructor: Miklos Gosztonyi
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Office hours: M-W 12:00-1:00pm, with previous email appointment
Clifton-Fullerton Hall, Room 150.21

Course description

This course is designed to provide students a set of analytical tools to understand the various ways in which war has been represented in film and to critically deconstruct how we think about war through film. More specifically, students will be encouraged to analyze the multilayered and complex imageries of war projected by war films, and to differentiate those imageries that contribute to a perpetuation of war, such as grand narratives that emphasize nationalism, honor, glory, and masculinity, from those who challenge a direct or indirect glorification of war by emphasizing its unequivocal abysmal consequences for all the parties involved in a conflict.

Since its early years, the use of film media has been closely associated with the depiction of war, a practice that became widespread during World War II in the form of newsreels used by governments to fuel patriotism and popular support for their military adventures. Film
studios saw the commercial potential of depicting war in film, giving birth to the so-called genre of war film, usually understood as films “about the waging of war,” in which scenes of combat are a requisite.

This class will take a broader definition of the genre and will include films that do not necessarily depict combat but who talk about war and create specific imageries of war. Casablanca, as a means of mobilizing the United States into World War II and creating a sense of patriotism without showing images of war, constitutes perhaps the quintessential example of this. Although we will be watching a considerable amount of films and clips, this course is not a film appreciation course. Rather, our goal will be to explore and deconstruct some of our collective imageries of war by, for example, contrasting the ways in which certain films have fueled uncritical triumphalism, while others have emphasized the human suffering (physical, psychological, economic) caused by war. We will examine the political and ideological contexts in which certain films were produced, and the ways in which certain values embedded in those films perpetuated conflict.

The course will be divided in two parts. The first part (weeks #1-3) will be devoted to examining some of the analytical tools required for the purposes of this course. As the discussion progresses, we will be watching excerpts of movies that illustrate the main points under consideration. Once we have covered the analytical tools, the second part of the course (weeks #4-10) will consist of watching each Monday a full-feature film, which we will be discussing the following Wednesday of the same week. The films have been selected to provide students a wide-ranging perspective on war film, and will be watched in chronological order.

**Readings**

There is one required book for this course:


It is available as course reserve at the Richardson Library’s Reserve Desk and for purchase at the DePaul Bookstore. All articles listed on this syllabus are required readings and have been posted on D2L. Students will have to print the readings and bring them to class on the corresponding meeting for discussion.

**Requirements**

All assignments are mandatory. In order to obtain a passing grade at the end of the course, students must complete all assignments specified on this syllabus.

1. Class participation and attendance: 30% of the final grade.

Class attendance is mandatory. The instructor will check attendance at the beginning of each class. A minimum 75% attendance is required for students to obtain a passing grade at the end of the course, unless for medical reasons supported by appropriate medical
certificates.

Students are required to do the assigned readings before each meeting and to actively participate in class discussion and make references to the readings.

3. Four position papers (3-4 pages): 40% of the final grade.

These papers are intended to give students the chance to write a commentary on the films that we will be watching on weeks #4-10. We will be watching in total seven movies, of which you will have to choose four to write your position papers about.

Position papers must be brought in hard copy on the Wednesday meeting following the screening of the movie and handed over before the class begins. Late submission of your position paper (i.e. once we have discussed the film in class) will not be accepted.

The positions papers should not be summaries of the film’s plot, but rather a series of personal reflections and reactions to the film. You must make references to the readings that are assigned for that film in your position papers if you intend to get a good grade.

As a general advice, don’t leave writing your four position papers for the last four weeks. Manage your time strategically.

3. As a final assignment, a film review essay (10 pages): 30% of the final grade.

As a final assignment, students will have to write an essay-type review of the film *The Battle of Algiers* by Gillo Pontecorvo (1966).

The format of the final paper will be similar to the weekly position papers and a handful of readings on *The Battle of Algiers* will be provided for the assignment. You will be asked to write a lengthier and more developed piece than the weekly papers and to make connections to the films, debates and written materials covered throughout the course. More details on final papers will be provided on our last meeting on Monday, November 17.

You will need to upload your final essays on D2L in a folder named “Final Assignments” by 6:00pm on Friday, November 28.

Rules

#1. The use of all types of electronic devices, including computers, is strictly not allowed in class. I’m asking for your undivided attention twice a week for an hour and a half. Please turn off your phones before class begins and put them away. I will be strict in enforcing this rule.

#2. Late submission of assignments will not be accepted unless for justified medical
reasons and with prior notice only. If you are having family, health, or personal issues of any kind, do not hesitate to contact me beforehand so that things can be accommodated in such a manner that will allow you to fulfill the course requirements, but again, contact me beforehand.

#3. You are required to come to class for the Monday screenings of movies on weeks #4-10. The purpose of the screenings is to watch all the movies in full, as a group, and to discuss them the following Wednesday. If you don’t come to the screening of a movie on Monday, your position paper will not be accepted that week.

#4. Students are strongly advised against plagiarism, especially copying and pasting materials from the internet, journals, and books without proper citations. Students should familiarize themselves with the University’s policy on academic integrity at the Student Handbook, which can be found at: http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu

#5. All written assignments must be doubled-spaced and typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides of each page. If you make extensive quotes from sources (i.e. more than a few lines) the length of those quotes will be deducted from the total length of your paper. Quantity does not make for quality or intellectual depth, but the required paper length range must be respected if you intend to receive a good grade. You may use any citation format as long as it is consistent.

Course schedule

Week #1: Course introduction

Wednesday, September 10: General course introduction


Week #2: Analyzing the representation of war in film #1

Monday, September 15: War as spectacle: Saving Private Ryan

Wednesday, September 17: War as tragedy: *All Quiet on the Western Front, The Grand Illusion, Come and See*


**Week #3: Analyzing the representation of war in film #2**

Monday, September 22: The Vietnam War film: *Full Metal Jacket, Apocalypse Now, Taxi Driver*


Wednesday, September 24: Truth told through lies: *Black Hawk Down, Zero Dark Thirty*


**Week #4: Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, 1942)**

Monday, September 29: Screening of *Casablanca*

Wednesday, October 1: Discussion of *Casablanca*


Week #5: The Day the Earth Stood Still (Robert Wise, 1951)

Monday, October 6: Screening of The Day the Earth Stood Still

Wednesday, October 8: Discussion of The Day the Earth Stood Still


Week #6: Paths of Glory (Stanley Kubrick, 1957)

Monday, October 13: Screening of Paths of Glory

Wednesday, October 15: Discussion of Paths of Glory

23. Criterion Collection guide to Paths of Glory


Week #7: *Ivan’s Childhood* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1964)

Monday, October 20: Screening of *Ivan’s Childhood*

Wednesday, October 22: Discussion of *Ivan’s Childhood*

27. Criterion Collection guide to *Ivan’s Childhood*

Week #8: *Dr. Strangelove* (Stanley Kubrick, 1964)

Monday, October 27: Screening of *Dr. Strangelove*

Wednesday, October 29: Discussion of *Dr. Strangelove*


Week #9: *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (George P. Cosmatos, 1985)

Monday, November 3: Screening of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*

Wednesday, November 5: Discussion of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*


**Week #10: Waltz With Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)**

**Monday, November 10:** Screening of Waltz with Bashir

**Wednesday, November 12:** Discussion of Waltz with Bashir


**Week #10: Wrapping up**

**Monday, November 17:** Concluding class discussion and guidelines for final papers