Course description

This course is designed to provide students a series of analytical tools to understand the various ways in which war has been represented in film and to deconstruct the ways in which we think about war through film. Students will be encouraged to analyze the multilayered imageries of war projected by film and to differentiate those imageries that contribute to a perpetuation of war by means of grand narratives that emphasize patriotism, honor, glory, and masculinity from those who unambiguously stress the dreadful consequences that wars have for all sides of 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 uses a broader definition of the genre and includes films that do not necessarily depict combat but who directly or indirectly talk about war. 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 physical, psychological, economic suffering caused by wars. We will examine the political and ideological contexts in which specific films were produced and the ways in which certain values projected by those films perpetuated conflict.

The course will be divided in two parts. On weeks #1-2 we will be watching excerpts of movies that will help introduce the analytical tools that we will be using for the rest of the course. Those films have been uploaded on D2L for students to watch at home in full before class meets. On weeks #3-10 we will be watching a full-feature film on each Monday and discussing it on the following Wednesday. The films have been selected to provide students a wide-ranging perspective on war film, and will be watched following the chronological order of the conflicts that they depict.

**Readings**

There is no required book for this course. All articles listed on this syllabus are required readings and have been posted on D2L’s dropbox tool. It is your responsibility to print all readings and bring them to class on the corresponding meeting.

**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:** 10% of the final grade.

Class attendance is mandatory. The instructor will check assistance at the beginning of each meeting. In order to obtain a passing grade at the end of the course, students cannot miss more than three classes. Exceptions to this rule will be considered only for medical reasons if the instructor is notified in advance of the class to be missed and the absence is subsequently justified with appropriate medical certificates.

2. **Weekly reading quizzes on weeks #3-10:** 35% of the final grade.

Starting on January 21, at the beginning of each Wednesday meeting you will be given a written quiz to complete in ten minutes to show that you have done and understood the readings assigned for that week. Of the total eight quizzes that you will complete, the best seven grades will be computed, for a total 35% of your final grade. It is imperative that you arrive to class on time at 1:00pm in order to complete the quizzes.

3. **One oral presentation:** 20% of the final grade.

Each student will be responsible for making a ten-minute oral presentation introducing the main themes arising from the readings and posing relevant questions for discussion on the
Wednesday meetings of weeks #3-10. A sign-up sheet for students to select a week of their choice will be circulated on the first day of classes.

4. A take-home final paper: 35% of the final grade

As a final assignment, students will be asked to write a 8-10 page (approximately 2000+ words) essay on the film The Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966). A series of readings and documentaries related to the film will be provided for students to complete the final assignment. More details on the paper will be provided as the quarter progresses.

Final papers 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 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.

Students will need to upload their final papers on D2L’s Dropbox tool before 6:00pm on Thursday, March 19.

Late submissions will not be accepted. An extension to this deadline will be granted at the instructor’s discretion only for health reasons on the condition that the extension is requested prior to the deadline, and with proper medical certificates.

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. Notice: your lap is not particularly interesting, so if I see you looking at your lap under the table, I will automatically assume you’re texting or playing with your phones. Don’t force me to ask you to turn your phones off.

#2. As stated below, late submission of assignments will not be accepted unless for justified health reasons, with notice prior to the deadline, and with accompanying medical certificates.

#3. The purpose of the Monday screenings during weeks #3-10 is to attentively watch all the films as a group and to discuss them the following Wednesday. Class attendance will be verified at the beginning of each meeting. If you happen to be late, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor at the end of the class.

#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. It is important that students with disabilities notify the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students with disabilities must complete the administrative requirements with the Office of Students with Disabilities in order to have their accommodations provided.
#6. In the event of family, health, or personal issues of any kind, do not hesitate to contact the instructor beforehand so that things can be accommodated in such a manner that will allow you to fulfill the course requirements. Once again, contact the instructor in advance.

**Course schedule**

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

**Monday, January 5:** General course introduction


**Wednesday, January 7: Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998)**


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

**Monday, January 12: Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)**


**Wednesday, January 14: Full Metal Jacket (Stanley Kubrick, 1987)**

**Week #3: Grand Illusion (Jean Renoir, 1937)**

Monday, January 19: Screening of *Grand Illusion*

Wednesday, January 21: Discussion of *Grand Illusion*


**Week #4: Paths of Glory (Stanley Kubrick, 1957)**

Monday, January 26: Screening of *Paths of Glory*

Wednesday, January 28: Discussion of *Paths of Glory*


**Week #5: Ivan’s Childhood (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1964)**

Monday, February 2: Screening of *Ivan’s Childhood*

Wednesday, February 4: Discussion of *Ivan’s Childhood*

19. Criterion Collection guide to *Ivan’s Childhood*
Week #6: *Godzilla* (Ishiro Honda, 1954)

**Monday, February 9:** Screening of *Godzilla*

**Wednesday, February 11:** Discussion of *Godzilla*


Week #7: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951)

**Monday, February 16:** Screening of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

**Wednesday, February 18:** Discussion of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*


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

**Monday, February 23:** Screening of *Dr. Strangelove*

**Wednesday, February 25:** Discussion of *Dr. Strangelove*


**Week #9: Waltz With Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)**

**Monday, March 2:** Screening of *Waltz with Bashir*

**Wednesday, March 4:** Discussion of *Waltz with Bashir*


**Week #10: Rambo: First Blood Part II (George P. Cosmatos, 1985)**

**Monday, March 9:** Screening of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*

**Wednesday, March 11:** Discussion of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*