

IDH 3931 /AMH 3931

Honors Seminar

Spring 2021

War in Literature and Film

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

Online

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Overview

This is a seminar about literature, art, and warfare, as articulated by American participants and contemporary observers, and 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 war, from the American Civil War to the War in Afghanistan. The authors and artists are in nearly all cases writing or filming soon after the fact, and most (although not all) of the authors are writing from personal experience. 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 a historical primary source, reflecting something about the moment it was written or filmed. In many cases the books and images under discussion have been widely consumed, discussed, and praised. Each (perhaps) tells us something important about the moment it was produced.

Students will write short essays in response to all (or nearly all) weekly assignments. The semester will end with an interpretive essay based on all (or most) of the material discussed during the semester. There is no research component.

A note about the selection of authors and artists: My first rule in selecting sources to read and discuss was that the seminar would be entirely about American artists, starting with the Civil War. There are great war novels that were not written by Americans, including great writing by voices representing enemy nations. This course will focus on how Americans have thought about war. My second rule was to select truly great work, that has been recognized as such. [We will be watching the recent movie “The Outpost,” which I think is a nice piece of work although perhaps not recognized as “great.”]

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 books with shorter assignments, but the fact remains that this course requires a substantial time commitment.

Students should attend 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. 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. Your notes should include page numbers, so that you can refer the class to particular passages. (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 role in shaping discussions and establishing interesting themes. On occasion students will be tapped to begin discussions and perhaps prepare background on the readings.

On-line Teaching and Class Protocol Practices

Thanks to COVID-19, this class will meet remotely, using Zoom.

That of course requires that you have access to a computer with a camera and microphone, and a functioning internet connection. If your equipment is dicey, you should make it a point to log on before class to be sure that you are ready. I will sometimes begin classes with a short quiz. Those quizzes will assess if you are there and ready to discuss the materials. In order to take this course you must have the proper equipment to do the work. (So, for instance, it is not sufficient to say that you cannot do some task because you are using your phone.)

I will do my best to run this course as close to a familiar face to face class as we can manage. For you, that means a few things:

- You should be logged in on zoom when class is scheduled to begin, just as I would expect you to be on time if we were meeting in a classroom. And you should remain with the class until the class is over (again, just like a normal classroom). If the class is going to run fairly long we will take a break at some point.
- I will require that everyone turns on their camera when class begins. I do this to ensure that everyone is fully engaged with the class discussions. It has been my experience that folks who turn off their cameras are far more likely to wander away from their computer or simply do other things while class is in session.
- If you have a personal reason why you do not wish to turn on your camera, you should contact me.
- If there is some reason why you are unable to attend a particular class you should also contact me.

This class will use many components of **Canvas**. There is a Canvas page for the course, and you should familiarize yourself with the various pages. A few specifics:

- There are ten short papers (of varying length) and a take-home final described under “**Assignments.**” The current listings give dates but not all the details of each assignments. Those will come later.
- I will make regular use of the “**Announcements**” pages for giving you regular updates on the class. Specifically, I will note whether we are meeting on Canvas or Zoom (or both).
- I may use the “**Quiz**” function periodically to assess your preparation.
- I very much dislike Canvas’s “**Speed Grader**” function. It is bad software. But I will use it for grading papers that you submit on-line. I will not use Speed Grader for all grading components, so the numbers you see will not reflect your entire grade.
- Grades for graded papers and quizzes will appear on the “**Gradebook,**” but quizzes will not be on the same point scale as the other materials. I will not use the Gradebook feature for recording or announcing final grades, but it will allow you to keep track of intermediate grades.
- Under “**Pages**” you will find a page for “Documents discussed in class.” This is a crucial page, offering links to web pages or JPEG files that you will read this semester. Usually I will also provide a link in the syllabus.

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.

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.

Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher, editors (2013) De Capo. ISBN: X0020YATJX

Feature Films (purchase or rental required)

“Platoon”

“The Outpost”

Written Assignments

This course will have two main written components.

First, you will write short responses to most weekly 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. You should submit a version on-line through Canvas by 5:00 or the day before class.

Second, you will write a Final Essay based on a single theme that runs through all or most of the films and photographers. This interpretive essay will not require additional research beyond the assigned readings. It will be about 2,000 to 2,500 words.

Academic Integrity

I assume that anything you do in this class is your own work unless I am told otherwise. You also may not rely on someone else's notes in taking the reading quizzes. Please review the section on Academic Integrity in the Student Handbook. In your papers all direct quotes should be identified with quotation marks and cited properly. *Any* instance of intentional dishonesty on any assignment -- no matter how small -- will result in an automatic F for the entire course. Please review the University's honesty policy at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm>.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. (In short, please talk with me early in the semester.)

Grading

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

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences or excessive lateness will result in automatic grade reductions. For more information on the University's grading policy see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Class Meetings and Assignments

1. Wed Jan 13 - Introductions

Civil War

2. Wed Jan 20 - Short Stories and Photographs

Read:

- Ambrose Bierce, "Chickamauga" (1889).
- Louisa May Alcott, "The Brothers," *Atlantic Monthly* 12, no. 73 (November 1863).
- Alexander Gardner, Antietam Photographs. (National Parks Service web site.)

3. Wed Jan 27 - Stephen Crane, *Red Badge of Courage*

The Turn to Modern War?

4. Wed Feb 3 - Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

The Greatest Generation Goes to War

5. Wed Feb 10 - Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*

6. Wed Feb 17 - Salter, *The Hunters*

Vietnam

7. Wed Feb 24 - Herr, *Dispatches*

8. Wed Mar 3 - Watch Movie: *Platoon*

9. Wed Mar 10 - O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

10. Wed Mar 17 - Vietnam photography

<https://time.com/vietnam-photos/>

This is a nice web page of iconic photographs accompanied by short essays by many of the great photographers of the Vietnam War.

No short essay. Come to class prepared to discuss at least three separate essays but look at all of them.

Iraq, Afghanistan and Contemporary Warfare

11. Wed Mar 24 - NO CLASS - VACATION

12. Wed Mar 31 - Klay, *Redeployment*

This is book of short stories. We may choose to focus on a portion of them

13. Wed April 7 - Watch Movie: *The Outpost*

14. Wed April 14 - Women and War Photography:

Look at: Photographs (and text) by Jennifer Karady at

https://www.jenniferkarady.com/soldier_stories1.html

Karady did a project where she interviewed veterans and created "posed" pictures based on those interviews, accompanied by captions that are really stories. This is the section "Soldiers' Stories, from Iraq and Afghanistan." Look at them all and select at least 2 to discuss in class.

Look at: Photographs by Lynsey Addario at <http://lynseyaddario.com/its-what-i-do/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Addario has a very large web site of amazing photographs. Please look through the subheading "Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq" (which has several sub-subheadings). Be sure to note the captions (which sometimes require clicking the link). Come to class with at least 3 images you would like to talk about.

No short essay due this week.

15. Wed April 21 - Scranton and Gallagher, editor, *Fire and Forget*
I will probably select specific short stories for discussion.
No short essay due this week.

April 29 Final Paper due (at time of final)