San Diego State University
Mondays
7 pm-9:45 PM
AL-669
Wed 11 AM - 1 PM & by appointment
Professor: Dr. Felipe Q. Quintanilla
Email: fquintanilla@mail.sdsu.edu

While few of us may ever experience the thrill, horror and banality of the battlefield, American culture has had a long love affair with narratives of war. Indeed, based on the respective cultural output, it could be argued, as George C. Scott has intoned in his haunting embodiment of General Patton, that “…all this stuff you've heard about America not wanting to fight… is a lot of horse dung. Americans traditionally love to fight. All real Americans love the sting of battle”. And yet, despite the professed love for the few good men and the good fight, cultural artifacts may also come to reveal the fissures, strip, and deconstruct the often imagined war story. It is in this context that this course aims to survey a number of cinematic and literary imaginings of American involvement in conflicts both in and out of the nation as envisioned in the thick of various historical junctures (Mexican American War, Civil War, WWI, WWII, Cold War, the War on Terror, and beyond); in films of distinct production-values; and in a gamut of film genres (melodrama, comedy, action-adventure, horror, film noir, Third Cinema, science fiction, etc.). The discussion of these films will be framed by readings organized around the topics of history, memory, and national identity; race and ethnicity; class, gender and sexuality; mobility; monuments, medals and the spectacle of killing/death; religion, terror/ism and surveillance; drones, cyber-wars, and the imagined future of warfare.

Goals and Objectives:
• Using vocabulary from cultural studies analysis, the student will identify major trends and representative creators who have shaped the construct of American war film/narrative.
• The student will recognize varied theoretical approaches to cultural studies analysis.
• Both in class discussion and in written assignments, the student will examine the filmic, historical, and social contexts as well as the form (or aesthetic structure) of the cultural artifacts studied in class.

Required Texts

*All additional readings will be available electronically on BB.*

Grade Breakdown

10 Tumblr one page papers................................. 30%
Theoretical text presentation.............................. 20%
Academic paper presentations............................ 10%
Final paper.................................................... 20%
Oral history film project.................................... 20%

Tumblr one page papers (10*3%)

Every student must create a Tumblr page for the purposes of posting 10 original thought pieces on the material covered in 10 out of the 16 weeks of classes. Each post, or “one page paper,” must be between 250 and 300 words long and contain at least 2 images to illustrate the line of argument. The paper should reflect a strong focus on the work/s by one or two of the authors/creators studied in class, as well as, potentially, trace parallels between these works to texts beyond the course. The argument must be clear, coherent, and well supported while engaging closely with the text/s. The thesis or main idea/s must be clearly stated at the beginning of the paper.

The paper is not a summary. Each paper should be an original, albeit brief, critical essay demonstrating the ability to zero-in into a particular sub-topic related their text/s of choice so as to present an evocative and original observation. Each post must incorporate at least one scholarly secondary source that is relevant to the chosen topic. Works cited must be formatted according to MLA standards.

The number of quotations must be kept at a minimum, and, wherever possible, paraphrasing is encouraged. The posts are each due on the Friday of the respective week from which the works in focus have been selected.

*Late paper or commentary submission will be automatically penalized 1% for each day beyond the due date.*

Theoretical text presentation (20%)

Each graduate student must choose one of the theoretical texts from the syllabus and prepare a 20-25 minute discussion of such text to be presented to the class towards the beginning of the class to which the reading was assigned. The presentation should focus on the salient points of the article, the possible manners of application to various types of war films and/or other types of cultural artifacts, and, finally, the students own personal critiques of the article and/or possible future directions of study. Each student should end with a small number of questions meant to stimulate a type of discussion amongst his/her colleagues. Each student must leave classmates with handouts that sum up the main points brought up during his/her presentation.

Oral history film project

The students will form (3-4 person) groups in order to gather filmic footage to be presented to the class on the last day of classes. Each group will be tasked with attaining a particular type of footage, so as to collaboratively create a documentary on the experience of war and its aftermath. Students are to make use of the free online resource, WeVideo to upload their material. Each group must also provide a two page (double spaced, times new roman, 12 font size) justification and discussion of the development of the project, the form, the content and relevance of their footage to the greater film.
Final Paper

In three parts (all formatted according to MLA standards):

1. The proposal consists of a three-page document; it must include a description of the chosen topic, the intended focus, and a possible thesis. An exploratory list of scholarly primary and secondary sources should be included. The proposal will be discussed at a private conference with the professor during office hours or any other adequate time.

2. The first draft (8 pages) should include a strong introduction that lays out a clear plan of action for the final paper. This draft should also then carry out the first half part of the stated plan.

3. The final paper (10-12 pages) is due on the last day of class. Playing off the proposal and first draft, the final paper should reflect a strong focus on works by one or two of the authors studied in class. This should be an original critical essay consisting of the student’s own interpretation, but drawing on scholarly secondary sources (a minimum of 3) that are relevant to the argument.

The argument must be clear, coherent, and well supported while engaging closely with the text/s. The thesis or main idea/s must be clearly stated in the paper’s introduction. The paper is not a summary.

*Late paper or commentary submission will be automatically penalized 10 points for each day beyond the due date.*

Grade Scale:

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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In order to earn an A in this course, students have to comply with the following criteria:
• near perfect attendance & excellent and consistent preparation in class;
• active and thoughtful participation in individual and group activities;
• outstanding ability to move easily from theory to application; that is, to apply the concepts, terms and strategies studied in class;
• high levels of competency during exams, oral presentations, class discussions and written assignments;
If you are unable or unwilling to commit your time and effort at this time, consider taking the course when your schedule is a little lighter, or your job or family responsibilities allow you to spend the required time to succeed in this course. It is important that you balance and prioritize your academic, work-related and family responsibilities. Remember that a full time student is a person who carries 12 units. That means you cannot expect to do well academically if in addition to those units you also work over 15 hours a week, and commute an hour to and from school, for instance.

**Electronic devices:** Not allowed in class. Computers should be off unless I request you to used them in the context of a special activity. If you have a disability that requires special equipment please communicate with me ASAP.

**Due dates for Graded assignments:**
Exams: If you missed an exam you will be able to take a make up only if you have a document excuse of an extraordinary circumstance, otherwise you will receive a 0 for the exam.
Final paper: Due in class. Grade lowered 10 points per day is late. After 3 days max. grade will be C.

**Group work ethics and evaluation:** Collaborative learning is one of the most powerful tools we have to provide students with a comfortable environment in which they can explore, discuss and rehearse their ideas. However, the many advantages cited can be neutralized by certain behaviors. Students will have to abide to the following rules: 1. Always bring your written assignments. 2. Come to class prepared to discuss your readings. 3. Write down the questions or problems you encountered while reading the texts. 4. Do not monopolize the discussion. 5. Offer constructive criticism without being judgmental. 6. If there are problems of any nature in your group, bring them to my attention as soon as possible. 7. Build the group as a "community of learners” by meeting outside of class to talk about assignments or prepare for exams.

**Drop/Add Policy:**
It is the student’s responsibility to add/drop class. Please refer to SDSU’s Schedule of Classes for deadlines and procedures.

### Course Calendar

**Week 1- Jan 26**
Intro to class

- Intro to class.
- Reading of syllabus
- About MLA format
- On the seminar format
- Presentation tips
- Research Methods

*Starship Troopers.*

**Week 2- Feb 2**
Film genre and the first rushes of war

Screening in class: *The Alamo*

Screen before class: *Birth of a Nation*, Dir. W. D. Griffith

HW (1-30 & 95-108)

**Week 3- Feb 9**
Film genre and the American Civil War

*The Red Badge of Courage.*

Screen before class: *Glory*, 1989

HW (31-88)

HW (137-144)

**Week 4**
Feb 16 At War with the Natives. The imagined nation.

Screen before class: *Stage Coach*


**Week 5  Feb 23**  Historiophoty

Screen before class: TBA

Screening in class: Flags of Our Fathers. Dir. Clint Eastwood

Burgoyne, “Film Nation” [1-15]

White, “Historiography and Historiophoty” (1193-1199)

HW (145-156 & 195-206)

**Essay part 1 is due at the beginning of class.**

**Week 6  March 2**  Race and nation

Screen before class: *Glory*

Screening in class: *Bataan.*

HW 169-194, 257-270

Slotkin, “Unit Pride: Ethnic Platoons and the Myths of American Nationalities” [BB]

**Week 7  March 9**  Masculinity and command

Screen before class: *We Were Soldiers* (Mel Gibson, 2002)

Screening in class: *Full Metal Jacket.*

Donald and McDonald, “Reel Men at War: Masculinity and the American War Film (Introduction)” [BB]

Donald and McDonald, “Manliness and the Burden of Command” [BB]

HW (225-256)

**Week 8  March 16**  Masculinities and Women Warriors

Screen before class: *Courage Under Fire* (1996)

Screening in class: *G.I. Jane.*

Tasker, “Soldier’s Stories: Women and Military Masculinities in *Courage Under Fire*” [BB]
Williams, “Ready for action: G.I. Jane, Demi Moore’s body and the female combat movie” [BB]

HW (271-337)

Week 9 March 23 Vietnam

Screen before class: Apocalypse Now. (Ford Coppola, 1979)

Screening in class: The Big Red One.


Slocum, “Cinema and the Civilizing Process: Rethinking Violence in the War II Combat Film” [BB]

Essay part 2 is due at the beginning of class.

Week 10- March 30 Spring Recess

No classes. Carry on with the readings.

Week 11 April 6 War on Terror

Screen before class: Redacted. (De Palma, 2008) Restrepo. (Hetherington, 2010)

Screening in class: The Hurt Locker.

In Terrorism, Media, Liberation. Ed. John D. Slocum. 1-36

Stewart, “Digital Fatigue: Imagining War in Recent Film” [BB]

Provencher, “Redacted’s Double Vision” [BB]

Pisters, “Logistics of Perception 2.0: Multiple Screen Aesthetics in Iraq War Films” [BB]

Week 12- April 13 Alternative war historiophoty. Latin America.

Screening in class: Walker.

Screening before class: The Hour of the Furnaces

Getino and Solanas. “Toward a Third Cinema.”

Rosenstone. “Walker: the dramatic film as historical truth.”

Epplin. “Sound and Space in La hora de los hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces.”

Week 13- April 20 Making Fun

Screen before class: 1941. (Spielberg, 1979)

Screening in class: Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.
(Kubrick, 1964)
Spanos. “Redeemer Nation and Apocalypse: Thinking the Exceptionalism of American Exceptionalism.”
Zwagerman. “A Day That Will Live in Irony: September 11 and the War on Humor.”

Week 14- April 27  Conference day

**War Narratives Intersections Grad Student Conference**
*Dress sharp!* Grad students will present their research papers in a conference panel format.

Week 15- May 4  Film Screenings

**Film screenings**

Week 16-May 8-14  FINALS WEEK

**Essay part 3 is due by the end of this week.**

*Professor retains the right to adjust the course design throughout the term.*
Any major changes to the course syllabus will be announced in class, communicated to all students electronically, and incorporated into an updated and posted version of the syllabus.