

American Studies 401
War and American Culture
Spring 2013
MW 1:00-2:15
Humanities 323
Code: 10075

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Required Reading:

Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (1998)

Stephen Berry, editor, *Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges* (2011)

Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (1998)

Thomas Childers, *Soldier from the War Returning: The Greatest Generation's Troubled Homecoming from World War II* (2009)

All books are available at The Little Professor Book Center.

Welcome to American Studies 401! In this seminar we will study, in an American cultural context, an activity peculiar to human beings: Politics (the contest for power) literally at its deadliest—the highly organized killing and injuring that takes place between groups of people in pursuit of some goal, announced or unannounced, often the control of territory. Ours will be a *cultural study of warfare*, a consideration of how going to war, conducting war, and dealing with war's cessation reflects and impacts the beliefs and the values of the war's participants, civilian as well as military.

Course Requirements:*Class Participation:*

As befits a seminar, there will be no lectures or professor's monologues in this class. Instead, our class meetings will be devoted to discussions of the reading that we'll do together and of the films that we will watch. It is essential that you read and carefully consider the material assigned for a particular session. On **each Monday of a week that has reading assigned**, you are to bring to class a **list of three questions** prompted by that week's reading. I will collect your questions and use them to enhance our discussion. The questions you devise, then, should be ones that you think would be good to talk about, not questions calling for a simple "yes" or "no" answer or questions that are merely inquiries about information. Place an asterisk (*) alongside the question that you yourself think is your best one. If you do not want me to identify you in class as the author of that week's questions, place a large "N" at the top of the page.

Because a good seminar depends on widespread student involvement, **attendance at each class meeting is required**. If you must miss a class, please inform me, by email or in person, of the reason for your absence. Failure to do so will hurt the large portion of your course grade for class participation.

Individual Research:

You must also conduct **independent research** for this class, culminating in a paper of at least 20 pages if you are an undergraduate or at least 25 pages if you are a graduate student. Your paper must in some fashion be related to the topic of the seminar and must be based on your research in **primary cultural materials**: "raw," unfiltered forms of cultural expression that you will interpret or analyze. You

should also consult appropriate **secondary materials** (analyses or interpretations by other scholars).

Your paper may deal with any armed conflict in which Colonial America or the United States has been involved, not just one of the conflicts with which the course's assigned reading deals. You are to select some well defined aspect of that war and investigate how, in your careful estimation, that aspect of the war reflected and/or shaped, challenged, changed, or reinforced certain beliefs and values of the Americans involved.

In my own past research, for instance, I've examined large numbers of everyday photographs of male soldiers during wartime, with an eye toward what those photographs reveal about the impact of wartime military service upon men's relationships with each other. As another example, my current research is about American men's peculiarly constrained relationships in the aftermath of World War II, throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s. The book that I intend to result from this research will be my attempt to explain those relationships as an inherently *postwar* phenomenon. In this project, I have conducted interviews with veterans and their relatives and have consulted such cultural materials as novels by veterans and the critical response those novels received, as well as a vast number of photographs of American males together in the immediate postwar period.

Deciding upon the *particular cultural materials* or primary sources you'll study and *the questions you'll ask of those sources* are the essential consideration in coming up with a topic for your own research. Photographs, advertisements, propaganda illustrations, novels, films, TV shows, songs, editorial cartoons, or politicians' speeches are but some of the sorts of materials you might appropriately select. Whether your topic interests you and arouses your curiosity should be your primary criterion. Research, you must remember, is an *investigation*; it should involve discovery, not simply a demonstration of something that you think you already know.

You certainly may approach a topic with some tentative ideas or hypotheses you wish to test, but you should strive to avoid submitting work that is rigidly thesis-driven.

Looking ahead through all of the books assigned for the class will give you some idea of the range of appropriate topics, and may also provide inspiration in coming up with a topic. Please see me in my office as often as you like throughout the semester to talk about your research. I also welcome your phone calls or e-mails. I will not assign research topics; you must select yours yourself, but I'll be happy to help you make your choice.

You must have selected that research topic and have notified me of your choice in a **written research proposal** no later than **Monday, February 25**. This notification, which should be at least 3 pages long, should clearly define your topic, and must include a discussion of your planned procedures and goals for the work along with a *tentative title* for your paper. You should be as specific as possible at that early stage of your research about the sources you will consult and will base your paper upon; a tentative, *preliminary bibliography* must accompany the proposal. The quality of this proposal will be part of your grade on the paper itself.

We'll devote our last three weeks of class time (apart from Finals Week) to **presentations** of these research projects, with each presentation lasting around 15 minutes. (Those who present earlier will not be expected to be as conclusive in their findings as those who present later on.) Your **paper's final version** is due on **Monday, May 20, at 3:00 pm**. We won't meet as a class that week.

Your paper must include a *bibliography* that lists *all* sources you consulted in your research, not just the sources that you actually cited in the text. You may use *either footnotes or endnotes*, whichever you prefer. You must use one of those forms of citation, of course, whenever you quote directly from any source, and also when you are using specific

information from your research or expressing a specific idea that is someone else's. Footnotes or endnotes are important; they show a reader, as they remind a writer, of how a piece of research came together. You may use any research paper format guide that you like; just be consistent in the way that you cite sources, etc. Dividing the paper into sections, each with its own title, might be quite helpful.

Grading:

The grade on your **research paper**—largely the paper itself, but also your presentation and your research proposal—will constitute 50% of your course grade. The quality and extent of your **participation in our discussions**—including your attendance, your notification(s) to me regarding your absence(s), your speaking and your listening in class, and the quality of the several lists of discussion questions you'll prepare—will constitute the other 50%. I use the university's plus/minus grading system.

Academic dishonesty, presenting someone else's work as your own, will, depending on the severity of the offense, result in a penalty ranging from a lowered grade on an assignment to failure in the course. Additionally, if I believe the offense warrants it, I will notify the Dean of Students Office of the offense.

Working with the **Office of Disabled Student Services**, I'll make any necessary arrangements for the particular needs of students with disabilities.

COURSE OUTLINE

M 1/28 What We're Doing and Why We're Doing It

W 1/30 Getting Started: The Cultural Meaning of War
Video for class discussion: Portions of "Letters Home from Viet Nam"

I. WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE FIGHT THIS WAY? WAR AND AMERICAN IDENTITY

M 2/4 **Read for the week:** Lepore, Preface, pp. ix-xxiii;

W 2/6 Prologue-Chapter 4, pp. 3-121.

M 2/11 **Read for the week:** Lepore, Chapter 5-Epilogue,

W 2/13 pp. 125-240.

II. FRATRICIDE: THE DEADLIEST AMERICAN WAR, YET "THE WAR AMERICANS LOVE TO LOVE"

M 2/18 Presidents' Day: No Class

W 2/20 **Video for class discussion:** "Death and the Civil War," a documentary by Ric Burns

M 2/25* **Read for the Week:** From Berry, pp. 15-53; 73-

W 2/27 94; 141-159; 176-188.

*******Research Proposals Due on Monday, February 25*******

M 3/4 **Read for the Week:** From Berry, pp. 215-248;
W 3/6 272-281; 301-339.

III. WAR'S ALLURE: VIRILITY AND EMPIRE IN "A SPLENDID LITTLE WAR"

M 3/11 **Read for the Week:** Hoganson, pp. 1-132.
W 3/13

M 3/18 **Read for the Week:** Hoganson, pp. 133-208.
W 3/20

IV. THE "GOOD WAR" AND THE "GREATEST GENERATION": MYTH AND REALITY IN WORLD WAR II

M 3/25 **Video for class discussion:** "Let There Be Light"
W 3/27 (1946), directed by John Huston

SPRING RECESS

M 4/8 **Read for the Week:** Childers, pp. 1-169.
W 4/10

M 4/15 **Read for the Week:** Childers, pp. 171-294.
W 4/17

M 4/22 John Ibson, "Putting Space between American Men
W 4/24 in 1950s America" : Presentation and discussion

V. CONCLUDING THE SEMINAR: PRESENTING STUDENT RESEARCH

M 4/29 Presentations of Student Research
W 5/1 Presentations of Student Research

M 5/6 Presentations of Student Research
W 5/8 Presentations of Student Research

M 5/13 Presentations of Student Research
W 5/15 Presentations of Student Research

M 5/20 **Research Papers Due, 3:00 pm.**