

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

21H.214: War and American Society: Spring 2019

Professor Christopher Capozzola

Writing in the wake of the Civil War, poet Walt Whitman insisted that “the real war will never get in the books.” Throughout American history, war has fundamentally shaped the ways that Americans think about themselves, their fellow Americans, and their country’s place in the world. This subject examines how Americans have experienced war and represented it in the rapidly evolving media of communication in the twentieth century, and interprets history, politics, and popular culture in terms of changing ideas about American national identity.

Requirements: The success of this class depends on the active participation of all students.

Classroom participation (20%) represents a substantial portion of the grade, and will be evaluated in terms of preparation, participation in large and small group discussion, active listening, collaboration, and overall contributions to the class during the term. Needless to say, if you do not attend a class it is impossible for you to contribute to it. This is a small class focused on discussion and mutual engagement; if you are using a device to do other things, you are not only not contributing to the class, you are harming it, which will be reflected in your class participation grade. There are no midterm or final examinations in this class, but you must complete all the assignments to pass the class as a whole.

Writing Assignments: Everyone will write **one 2-3pp. essay (15%)**, **one 4-5pp. essay (20%)**, and a **final paper of 8-10pp. (35%)** on a topic of your choice. Various **preparatory writing exercises (10%)** will help you develop a topic, a bibliography, and an argument in advance of the final paper itself. Writing assignments should be submitted through Stellar. Keep a backup copy. Brief extensions will be granted for good reasons explained well in advance; computer malfunctions are never an acceptable excuse for a late submission. Adherence to standards of academic honesty is required. If you have questions about writing or citations, don’t hesitate to ask. A selection of valuable information appears on the Writing Resources page of the class website.

Books: Required books are available at the MIT Coop. Copies of all required books have also been placed on reserve at Hayden Library. Readings should be completed by the beginning of the class under which they appear, unless otherwise stated.

Contacting Me: I can be reached by phone at (617) 452-4960 or by email at capozzol@mit.edu. My office is in E51-284. Regular office hours are Wed. 10:00-11:30am and by appointment.

Class Website: <http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/21H/sp19/21H.214/>.

**** COURSE OUTLINE ****

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION: HOW TO TELL A TRUE WAR STORY

Tuesday February 5

READING: Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story," in Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990), 67-85. [in class]

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004), 3-17, 74-103. [electronic reserve]

VIEWING: *The Longest Day* (1962).
Saving Private Ryan (1998).

WEEK 2 WORLD WAR II: THE GOOD WAR?

Tuesday February 12

READING: Richard H. Minear, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* (1999).

John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986), 234-261, and selected additional cartoons. [electronic reserve]

Kyu Hyun Kim, "Japanese Manga and Anime on the Asia-Pacific War Experience," in Michael Berry and Chiho Sawada, eds., *Divided Lenses: Screen Memories of War in East Asia* (2016), 101-125. [electronic reserve]

Tuesday February 19

MIT observes a Monday schedule today. No class.

WEEK 3 VISUALIZING IMPERIALISM

Tuesday February 26

Visualizing Imperialism and the Philippines: Module II: Civilization and Barbarism: Cartooning and Global Imperialism. [electronic reserve]

WEEK 4 VISUALIZING THE PHILIPPINES

Tuesday March 5

Visualizing the Philippines: Module III: Photography and Power: The Philippine-American War. [electronic reserve]

Friday March 8

WRITING: FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 5:00pm TODAY.

WEEK 5 WORLD WAR II AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY

Tuesday March 12

READING: Henry R. Luce, "The American Century" (1941), in John K. Jessup, ed., *The Ideas of Henry Luce* (1969), 105-120. [electronic reserve]

Brooke L. Blower, "V-J Day, 1945," in Brooke L. Blower and Mark Philip Bradley, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (2015), 70-87. [electronic reserve]

Julian E. Zelizer, "How the Democrats Won World War II," in *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (2010), 39-59. [electronic reserve]

VIEWING: *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980).

WEEK 6 WORLD WAR II: THE DAWN OF THE ATOMIC AGE

Tuesday March 19

READING: John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946), esp. 1-90.

Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's Magazine* (February 1947): 97-107. [electronic reserve]

Michael Sherry, "The Slide to Total Air War," *The New Republic*, December 16, 1981, pp. 20-25. [electronic reserve]

Richard H. Kohn, "History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition," *Journal of American History* 82 (December 1995): 1036-1063. [electronic reserve]

Tuesday March 26

MIT Spring Break. No class.

WEEK 7 KOREA AND THE COLD WAR

Tuesday April 2

READING: James Salter, *The Hunters* (1956).

Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (1994), 97-130. [electronic reserve]

Susan A. Brewer, "War in Korea: 'The Front Line in the Struggle between Freedom and Tyranny,'" in *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (2009), 141-178. [electronic reserve]

Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Address," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower* (1961), 1035-1040. [electronic reserve]

Friday April 5

WRITING: SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 5:00pm TODAY.

WEEK 8 VIETNAM

Tuesday April 9

READING: Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (2008).

Beth Bailey, "The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting the All-Volunteer Force." *Journal of American History* 94 (June 2007): 47-74. [electronic reserve]

Tuesday April 16

MIT Spring Holiday. No class.

Wednesday April 17

LECTURE: Zahra Ali, lecture on women and gender in Iraq [title TBA], MacMillan-Stewart Lecture on Women in the Developing World, 5:00pm, 2-105. [This is an optional event for students who are interested and as additional content for classes cancelled due to MIT holidays.]

WEEK 9 SEPTEMBER 11TH—AND SEPTEMBER 12TH

Tuesday April 23

READING: Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* (2016), 1-134.

Ussama Makdisi, "Anti-Americanism in the Arab World: An Interpretation of a Brief History," *Journal of American History* 89 (September 2002): 538-557. [electronic reserve]

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (2004), 47-70. [electronic reserve]

VIEWING: *Three Kings* (1999).

WEEK 10 WAR IN IRAQ

Tuesday April 30

READING: Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* (2016), 137-294.

Alex Ross, "The Sound of Hate: When Does Music Become Torture?" *New Yorker*, July 4, 2016, pp. 65-69. [electronic reserve]

Mary Roach, "Fighting by Ear: The Conundrum of Military Noise," in *Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War* (2016), 56-71. [electronic reserve]

WEEK 11 THE NEXT WAR?

Tuesday May 7

READING: Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* (2016), 295-370.

Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *Atlantic Monthly* 317 (April 2016): 70-90. [electronic reserve]

National Security Strategy of the United States (2018), selections. [electronic reserve]

Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *Atlantic Monthly* (September 2015). [electronic reserve]

Kishore Mahbubani, "What China Threat? How the United States and China Can Avoid War," *Harper's* (February 2019). [electronic reserve]

Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* no. 189 (November 2011): 56-63. [electronic reserve]

WEEK 12 WAR'S FUTURE, AMERICA'S FUTURE

Tuesday May 14

WRITING: FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT due at beginning of class today.

READING: Margaret Mead, "Warfare Is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity," *Asia* 40 (1940): 402-405. [electronic reserve]

Short additional readings on one additional topic for group discussion: (1) privatization and outsourcing; (2) drones and other UAVs; (3) cyberwarfare; (4) something we haven't thought of yet.