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JRNL 383L.01: Hollywood and the War Correspondent

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Hollywood and the War Correspondent

JRNL 383 / Fall 2021 / TTH / 12:30-1:50 / DAH 210

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Since the 1940s, Hollywood directors have regularly returned to the character of the foreign correspondent reporting from a war zone. At turns heroic, adventurous, glamorous, dashing, cowardly, tragic, and naïve, Hollywood's portrayal of the war reporter has in large part defined to the American public (and to many journalists) the role of the foreign correspondent and the experience of the media covering conflict.

But how accurate are these artistic portrayals? How have they changed over the decades? How well has the popular film industry's artistic depiction corresponded to the reality of the job or the realities of the conflicts in which the films are set? How much have outside realities, including cultural shifts, cinema aesthetics, and philosophical questions including the popularity of the war in which the films are set, influenced the artistic portrayal of correspondent by Hollywood directors?

In this course, we will explore Hollywood's depiction of the war correspondent from World War II to Afghanistan. During the course of the semester, we will view nine or more films dating from 1940 to 2008 to chart the shifting narrative of the role of the war correspondent, their work, their influence, and their character. We will dive deep into film and critical theory in order to gain both a structural and philosophical framework for critiquing film.

To compare and contrast these Hollywood depictions, we will read and view journalism created by war correspondents themselves, as well as their essays, memoirs, non-fiction accounts and other personal writings, photographs, audio and video. Together, we will consider the character of the war reporter as created, and curated, by Hollywood and journalists themselves. Through the course of our study, we will come to a better understanding of the work war reporters do and the aesthetic, philosophical and cultural factors that have gone into creating the changing mythical versions of their character.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

Develop a strong understanding of the varied artistic portrayals of the war correspondent by Hollywood and international cinema.

Explore cinema's historical representation of class, race, and gender, and colonialism through the lens of journalists at war.

Develop a familiarity with significant journalistic and literary work including non-fiction writing, photography, audio and video created by journalists during wartime and beyond.

Explore the historic, aesthetic, philosophical and cultural features of wartime literary journalism and international cinema's depiction of its creators.

Analyze the literary journalism of war to better understand the structure and significance within non-fiction artistic traditions including emergent movements and forms.

Develop coherent arguments that critique both journalistic non-fiction of war and cinematic representations of wartime journalists using critical theory including structural, historical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological, political and philosophical approaches.

FILMS TO BE VIEWED IN CLASS (Subject to change)

All films will be shown during class. Students are responsible for attending class viewings.

A Private War
Foreign Correspondent
The Story of GI Joe
Full Metal Jacket
The Killing Fields
Welcome to Sarajevo
The Year of Living Dangerously
Generation Kill
Restrepo

REQUIRED BOOKS

Dispatches, Michael Herr
Hiroshima, John Hersey
The First Casualty, Philip Knightley
You Don't Belong Here, Elizabeth Becker

A NOTE ON CONTENT

Due to the subject matter, many of the films and books in this course contain images and descriptions of extreme violence and death. They also contain highly offensive sexist and racist language and actions.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

There will be two major assignments in this class that will have minor assignments attached. All must be filed by deadline via email as an attached Word doc. *All deadlines and word counts subject to change.*

The major assignments, in order, are:

- **Midterm paper**
Word Count: 2,500 to 4,000
October 11, midnight
Topics must be cleared by professor
- **Final paper:**
Word Count: 2,500 to 4,000
December 7, midnight
Topics must be cleared by professor

MINOR ASSIGNMENTS

Throughout the semester, I'll assign minor assignments. Minor assignments include reading and writing exercises, listening to podcasts or watching short documentaries. Students are also required to write and turn in short initial impressions after viewing each film.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

You'll do a good amount of reading in this class. Some is from the required books. Some is from materials provided to you by me. You must complete all reading and come to class ready for vigorous discussion.

GRADING

Midterm paper: 35 percent

Final paper: 45 percent

Minor Assignments: 10 percent

Attendance, Participation and Final Assessment by Instructor: 10 percent

ATTENDANCE

COME TO CLASS AND COME ON TIME. The only excused absence is one communicated to and accepted by the instructor via e-mail at least one hour prior to class. Three unexcused absences will result in the loss of a full letter grade. There is no exception. Please come to class on time. This is a large class, and it will be disruptive for students to trickle in over the first 10 minutes.

Engagement in class: Except when otherwise noted, this classroom is a device-free zone. Active participation requires your attention to the topic at hand. Texting and traveling in the online world will harm our discussion and hinder your grade.

Grades are based on a scale of 100 percent and will use the University of Montana's plus/minus system. The final grade (per requirement) will be given as a letter grade.

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 59 or lower

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

- The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please let me know **during the first week of the semester** so that proper accommodations can be discussed and provided. Please contact [Disability Services for Students](#) if you have questions, or call DSS for voice/text 406.243.2243.
- Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the university. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/vpesa/Dean%20of%20Students/default.php>.
- PLAGIARIASM: Have pride in your work and yourself. Penalties for turning in something written by someone else range from failing this class to expulsion from school.
- DOUBLE-DIPPING: **You may not submit for this course any assignment or variation on an assignment that was, or will be concurrently, submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from the professor for this course.** To do so without **documented** permission will result in an F for the assignment.