

Fall 2017
PSC 403

War & Popular Culture
M 4:00-6:20, Smith Hall 433
Dr. Jess Morrisette

War & Popular Culture

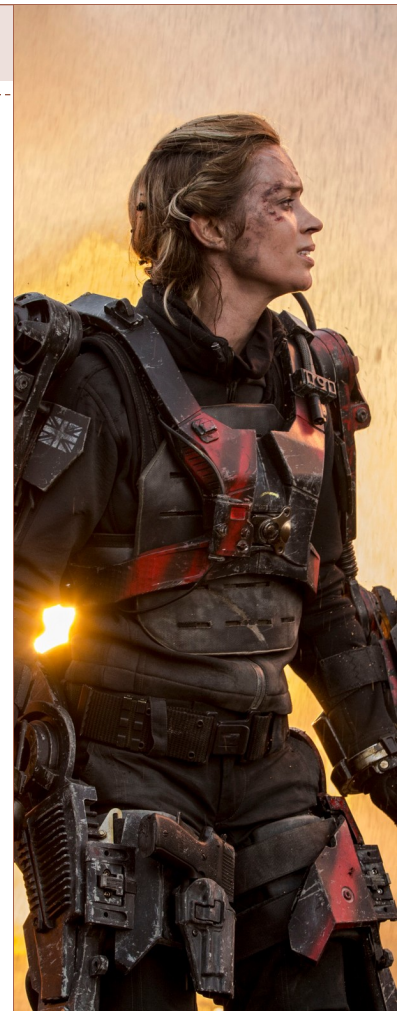
ABOUT THIS COURSE

Course Description: An exploration of evolving depictions of political violence in film, television, graphic novels, and popular music (3 credit hours).

The purpose of this course is to encourage students to think critically about how war is depicted in the pop culture they consume on a daily basis. More specifically, my goal is to help students construct original arguments about how specific works of popular culture either reinforce or challenge predominant views of war in our society.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning	How we will	How we will
Analyze works of pop culture with regards to how they depict war and other	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities.	Movie essays. Midterm and final
Critically appraise how depictions of war in pop culture and news media	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities.	Midterm and Final exams.
Construct an original argument about the political messages embedded in pop culture.	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities. Movie essays.	Pop Culture & War essay.



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OFFICE HOURS & CONTACT INFO

- Office: Smith Hall 739
- Hours: Tu/Th 9-12, or by appointment
- morrisette@marshall.edu
- (304) 696-2760



REQUIRED MATERIALS

The following texts are **required**:

- Alford, *Reel Power*
- Brooks, *World War Z*
- Donald and MacDonald, *Reel Men at War*
- Jaramillo, *Ugly War, Pretty Package*
- Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies*
- Martin, *Pop Culture Goes to War*
- Satrapi, *Persepolis: Story of a Childhood*

Additional readings (articles, etc.) will be posted on MUOnline.

In addition, four required films are on reserve in the library: *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Starship Troopers*, and *Wag the Dog*.

“War. War never changes.” — Narrator, *the Fallout series*

CALCULATING YOUR GRADE

Your final grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

Movie Essays	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Pop Culture & War Paper.....	25%
Participation.....	5%

Failure to submit any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course, regardless of the missing assignment's point value.

Grading scale: 90-100 (A), 80-89 (B), 70-79 (C), 60-69 (D), ≤ 59 (F).

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is required in this class, and students are expected to have read and be ready to discuss all assigned readings prior to class. Students will also be graded based on their class participation—engaging in discussion of the readings and current political events, asking questions, and so forth. Once again, attendance is clearly important; if you aren't in class, you can't participate. If you feel that you are having trouble getting your voice heard in our discussions, please contact me as soon as possible and we will work together to get you more involved.

The participation grade will be determined as follows: 5 points will be awarded to students who attend class consistently and make valuable contributions to class discussion on a regular basis; 4 points will be awarded to students who attend class consistently and contribute to discussions occasionally; 3 points will be awarded to students who attend class consistently, but seldom participate in class discussions. Attendance grades of 2 and below are reserved for those students who either fail to attend class regularly and therefore cannot participate meaningfully in class discussions or who actively disrupt discussions.



CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Please turn off your cell phone prior to the start of class.

I will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage your active participation in class discussions. Each of us may have strongly differing opinions on the various topics of class discussions. The conflict of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is similarly welcome. However, I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further.

Moreover, all students are expected to engage with each other respectfully. Unwelcome conduct directed toward another person based upon that person's perceived or actual race, color, gender, sexuality, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or veteran status is not permitted.

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to adhere to the University's policies concerning academic honesty (provided in the undergraduate catalog).

Cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty on an exam, quiz, or assignment will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent under University policies.

The penalty for academic dishonesty is a failing grade for the course.

Cheating is defined by the University as "[a]ny action which if known to the instructor in the course of study would be prohibited." This includes, but is not limited to, the use of any unauthorized materials or assistance during an academic exercise.

Plagiarism is defined as "[s]ubmitting as one's own work or creation any material or an idea wholly or in part created by another." Furthermore, it is "the student's responsibility to clearly distinguish his/her own work from that created by others. This includes the proper use of quotation marks, paraphrase and the citation of the original source. Students are responsible for both intentional and unintentional acts of plagiarism."

7 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. **Complete the readings prior to class.** You'll understand the material better and be ready to participate in discussions.
2. **Keep notes on the readings.** It's easy to get the readings mixed up in class. Take notes and bring them along with you to help keep everything straight.
3. **Aren't familiar with a word, historical event, or work of pop culture you stumble across in the readings? Look it up!** This is where Wikipedia is your friend.
4. **Participate in class discussions.** It's ten percent of your grade! Even asking a question counts.
5. **Work on papers ahead of time.** I'm happy to provide feedback on rough drafts.
6. **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Seriously, proofread.
7. **Come see me.** I'm always willing to offer help, brainstorm ideas, or provide feedback.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Email Policy: Please check your Marshall email regularly. Articles, assignments, and other important announcements may be sent to your "@marshall.edu" email address during the course of the semester.



Other University Policies: By

enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. The full text of each policy is available at <http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/policies/>.

- Academic Dishonesty, Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates, Computing Services Acceptable Use, Inclement Weather, Dead Week, Students with Disabilities, Academic Forgiveness, Academic Probation and Suspension, Academic Rights & Responsibilities of Students, Affirmative Action, Sexual Harassment.

MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS

The midterm and final exams are take-home tests. Approximately one week prior to the due-dates, I will distribute a set of essay questions. Students will then return the completed exams on the dates specified in the course schedule. Please note that while these are take-home exams, *they are still exams*. In other words, students are **not** allowed to collaborate with one another in the completion of the exams.

MOVIE ESSAYS

Students will write a series of essays in response to four movies: *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Starship Troopers*, and *Wag the Dog*. These essays should be approximately **2 pages** long. In each essay, you should analyze how the film under consideration depicts war. In other words, what message does it communicate about war, its purpose, and its effects? Be sure to cite specific examples (scenes, characters, dialogue) that support your arguments! In addition, you might consider such questions as how the film reflects the period during which it was made and how certain creative choices film help convey the film's political message.

WAR & POP CULTURE PAPER

Students will choose any work of popular culture that portrays war and write a paper (approximately **6-8 pages** long) analyzing its depiction. What message does it send about war? How does the work convey that message? Be sure to support your claims with specific examples from the work of pop culture under consideration (scenes, dialogue, characters, et cetera).

Where possible, consider drawing on what other scholars and critics have written about the work you have chosen. Also, please note that the primary goal of this assignment is engaging in original **analysis** — not simply providing a narrative summary of the work.



“Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here! This is the War Room!” — President Merkin Muffley, Dr. Strangelove

GENERAL WRITING TIPS

- All papers and exams are due in class on the due dates listed in the syllabus. No e-mail submissions will be accepted.
- Be sure to include a brief introduction that states the purpose of your essay, as well as a concise conclusion that sums up what you have written.
- Always cite your sources! For this class, I request that you use the American Political Science Association style guidelines. In turn, be sure to make it clear where you found any “outside” information in your essay. This includes not only citing direct quotations, but also any paraphrased material or statistics. Also, include a “works cited” page at the end of your essays and exams. Failure to properly cite your sources constitutes **PLAGIARISM**.
- Be judicious in choosing online sources, and do not cite Wikipedia or other online encyclopedias. Online news articles from major media outlets and official organizational websites are always safe bets; some dude’s Twitter feed is decidedly less so. If it’s a website that you’ve never heard of prior to it popping up in a Google search, that’s probably a good sign that it’s not an appropriate academic source.
- Proofread your essays! Most grammatical and typographical errors can be easily caught with a simple read-through before a paper is submitted. Essays and papers plagued by significant grammatical or typographical errors will be penalized.
- Papers should conform to the suggested lengths provided above (title pages and works cited pages do not count toward the suggested length). Papers should be double-spaced with 1” margins and typed using the standard 12-point Times/Times New Roman font (or the Macintosh equivalent).



LATE PENALTIES

Late assignments will be assessed a 10% penalty per day after the missed deadline (including week-ends), with a maximum penalty of 50%.

Late exams will not be accepted without a University-excused absence.

Please keep in mind that you must complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade in the course, regardless of the point values of those assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of August 21: Studying Popular Culture

- Sellnow, "What is Pop Culture and Why Study It?"
- University of Colorado, "How to Write About Film"
- Hunter College, "Writing About Film"

Week of August 28: Pop Culture During the Cold War

- Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies* (Chapters 1-5)
- Dodds, "Screening Geopolitics: James Bond and the Early Cold War Films"
- Sandbrook, "How Pop Culture Helped Win the Cold War"

Week of September 4: Class canceled for Labor Day!

***All Quiet on the Western Front* Essay Due
Tuesday, September 5**

Week of September 11: Pop Culture During the Cold War

- Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies* (Chapters 6-10)
- Franklin, "Star Trek in the Vietnam Era"
- Maland, "*Dr. Strangelove*: Nightmare Comedy and the Ideology of Liberal Consensus."

***Dr. Strangelove* Essay Due
Monday, September 18**

Week of September 18: Fantasy, Science Fiction, and War

- Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare"
- Berents, "Hermione Granger Goes to War"
- Genter, "'With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility': Cold War Culture and the Birth of Marvel Comics"
- Norlund, "Imagining Terrorists Before 9/11: Marvel's GI Joe"
- Corrigan, "The War in Westeros and Just War Theory"
- Westmyer, "*Game of Thrones*: The Dragons and Nuclear Weapons Nexus"

Week of September 25: Popular Music and War

- Rodnitzky, "The Sixties between the Microgrooves"
- Garofalo, "U.S. Popular Music after 9/11"
- Wolf, "Katy Perry & the Military-Pop-Cultural Complex"
- Associated Press, "US Co-opted Cuba's Hip-hop Scene to Spark Change"

***Starship Troopers* Essay Due
Monday, October 2**



COURSE SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

Week of October 2: *Persepolis*

- Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (all)

**Midterm Exam Due
Monday, October 9**

Week of October 9: The Military-Entertainment Complex

- Alford, *Reel Power*
- Kang, "Tales Of The Military-Entertainment Complex: Why The U.S. Navy Produced *Battleship*"
- Turse, "Hollywood Is Becoming the Pentagon's Mouthpiece for Propaganda"
- Hornaday, "*Act of Valor*: New Breed of War Movie or Propaganda?"

Week of October 16: Militarism in American Popular Culture

- Martin and Steuter, *Pop Culture Goes to War* (Intro and Chapters 1-4)
- Giroux, "War on Terror: The Militarising of Public Space and Culture in the United States"
- Lipsyte, "Sports Metaphors Trivialize War"
- Stahl, "Sports and the Militarized Body Politic"

***Wag the Dog* Essay Due
Monday, October 23**

Week of October 23: Militarism in American Popular Culture

- Martin and Steuter, *Pop Culture Goes to War* (Chapters 5-8 and Conclusion)
- Spigel, "Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11"
- Kuipers, "'Where Was King Kong When We Needed Him?' Public Discourse, Digital Disaster Jokes, and the Functions of Laughter after 9/11"

Week of October 30: Masculinity, War, and Pop Culture

- Donald and MacDonald, *Reel Men at War: Masculinity and the American War Film*



COURSE SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

November 6: Video Games and War

- Goldstein, “Immortal Kombat: War Toys and Violent Video Games”
- Nieborg, “Training Recruits and Conditioning Youth: The Soft Power of Military Games”
- Thomson, “From Underdog to Overmatch: Computer Games and Military Transformation”
- Kang, “ISIS’s Call of Duty”

**War & Pop Culture Paper Due
Monday, November 13**

November 13: Media Depictions of War

- Jaramillo, *Ugly War, Pretty Package* (Intro, Chapters 1-3)
- Mason, “The Hillbilly Defense”

November 20: Thanksgiving Break

November 27: Media Depictions of War

- Jaramillo, *Ugly War, Pretty Package* (Chapters 4-6, Conclusion)
- Lindsey, “What Does the Arab Spring Tell Us about the Future of Social Media in Revolutionary Movements?”

December 4: *World War Z*

- Brooks, *World War Z* (all)
- Morrisette, “Zombies, International Relations, and the Production of Danger”

**Final Exam Due
Monday, December 11**

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Sep 5:** *All Quiet* essay due
- **Sep 18:** *Dr. Strangelove* essay due
- **Oct 2:** *Starship Troopers* essay due
- **Oct 9:** Midterm exam due
- **Oct 23:** *Wag the Dog* essay due
- **Nov 13:** War & Pop Culture paper due
- **Dec 11:** Final exam due

