

War, Anti-War, Postwar: Culture and Contestation in the Americas

Comparative Literature COLT1812V, Spring 2014

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 1:00-1:50pm

Watson Institute (111 Thayer Street) Room 112

Professor Esther Whitfield
Esther_Whitfield@Brown.edu

Office Hours: M. 2-3pm; W. 10-11am.
Marston Hall 102

This course addresses the relationship between language and war, and the ways in which it has been represented by writers and artists. In recent decades the term "war" has been used to legitimize a broad spectrum of situations, lending them the structure of organized hostility and the moral opposition of right to wrong. Drawing primarily on U.S. and Latin American contexts - from the "Cold War" to the "War on Terror", from Argentina's "Dirty War" to Cuba's "War on Imperialism" and the transnational drug "wars" - we will explore ways in which literature, cinema and visual arts have responded to real and rhetorical declarations of war.

READINGS

Classes will be conducted in English, but you are encouraged to read texts in Spanish where applicable. Readings and movies will be posted on our Canvas web site; **please print copies to consult in class**, as the use of laptops in class is discouraged. Additionally, you will need the full text of two books available at the Brown bookstore: Marc Falkoff, ed., *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak* and Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School*. A further book, Fernando Vallejo's *Our Lady of the Assassins* (*La virgen de los sicarios*) should be purchased on-line in either Spanish or English. All books are on 24-hour reserve at the Rockefeller Library.

REQUIREMENTS

- * Attendance and thoughtful participation in class (15% of final grade).
- * Weekly discussion question. Please post a discussion question to our Canvas web site by 9am on the morning of each class designated on the syllabus. Questions will reflect your own queries or thoughts on the readings and/or raise issues that you would like to discuss in class. Be sure to post them consistently, to keep them brief (1-2 sentences), and to give page references for all quotes. A file will be kept of your questions and they will count toward your grade. Be prepared to lead discussion in class on your questions (10%).
- * A 10-15 minute presentation on a topic of relevance to our readings, to be given in class. Each presentation must be accompanied by a 2-3 page written paper (20%).
- * A mid-term assignment of 5-7 pages on a topic of your choice, or from a list to be provided on Friday, March 7. Due in class on Wednesday, March 19 (20%).
- * Final assignment. Either a paper of 12-15 pages on a topic discussed during office hours, or a take home exam (questions available on April 20). Assignment due on Wednesday, May 7 at 12pm (35%).
- * Students are advised to consult the university's Academic Code on academic integrity (http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/academic_code/code.html). If in doubt about collaboration or the use of a particular source, please speak with me.

Wk 1

Wed, Jan 22 Introduction to the course

Fri, Jan 24 Metaphor

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, from *Metaphors We Live By*
James Geary, from *I is an Other*
Sylvia Plath, "Metaphors"

Wk 2

Mon Jan 27

War metaphors and The Cold War

James F. Childress, "The War Metaphor in Public Policy: Some Moral Reflections"
Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"

Wed Jan 29

Lori A. Hartmann-Mahmud, "War as Metaphor"
Alexis C. Madrigal, "Why are Spy Researchers Building a 'Metaphor Program'?"
From Marc Hadden, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time?*

Fri Jan 31

Robert L. Scott, from *Cold War Rhetoric*
View: dir. Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove, or, how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb*

Wk 3

Mon Feb 3

Post Discussion Questions

Wed Feb 5

Cuba's "Wars" and "Postwars"
Fidel Castro, "Mother's Day Address, 1961"
Richard Fagen, from *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*
Presentation topics and dates to be decided in class

Fri Feb 7

Ernesto "Che" Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba"
Alejandro Aguiar, "Landscape of Clay"

Wk 4:

Mon Feb 10

Post Discussion Questions

Wed Feb 12

Dir, Florian Borchmeyer, "Havana: The New Art of Making Ruins"

Fri Feb 14

Antonio José Ponte, "Heart of Skitalietz" and "What Am I Doing Here?"
Susan Sontag, from *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Wk. 5:

Mon Feb 17

No class

Wed Feb 19

First in-class presentations
Post Discussion Questions

Fri Feb 21

Argentina's "Dirty War"
Marguerite Feitlowitz, from *A Lexicon of Terror*

Wk 6:

Mon Feb 24

Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School*

Wed Feb 26

Feitlowitz, "The Scilingo Effect"

Horacio Verbitsky, from *The Flight*

Fri Feb 28 Dir. Luiz Puenzo, *The Official Story*

Wk 7:

Mon March 3 **Second in-class presentations**
Post discussion questions

Wed March 5 **The "War on Terror" and Guantánamo**
George W. Bush, "Address to Congress, September 20, 2001"
Richard Jackson, from *Writing the War on Terrorism*

Fri March 7 Dir. Christopher Morris, *Four Lions*
Mid-term suggested topics distributed in class

Wk 8:

Mon March 10 **Third in-class presentations**
Post discussion questions

Wed March 12 Amy Kaplan, "Where is Guantánamo"?

Fri March 14 View dir. Michael Winterbottom, *The Road to Guantánamo*

Wk 9:

Mon March 17 ed. Mark Falkoff, *Poems from Guantánamo: the Detainees Speak*
Judith Butler, from *Frames of War*

Wed March 19 Lecture on Guantánamo and Cuba
Mid-term due in Class

Fri March 21: No class

Wk 10:

Mon March 31 **Fourth in-class presentations**
Post discussion questions

Wed April 2 **Wars on Drugs**
From Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
~~War~~ on Drugs (Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, June 2011)

Fri April 4 View dir. Cary Fukunaga, *Sin Nombre*

Wk 11:

Mon April 7 **Fifth in-class presentations**

Wed April 9 Fernando Vallejo, *Our Lady of the Assassins*

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| Fri April 11 | Vallejo, <i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i> Gabriel García Márquez, "Big Mama's Funeral" |
| Wk 12: | |
| Mon April 14 | Sixth in-class presentations |
| Wed April 16 | Ioan Grillo, from <i>El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency</i> Rossana Reguillo, "The Narco-Machine and the Work of Violence: Notes towards its Decodification" Magali Tercero, "Daily Life" |
| Fri April 18 | Javier Sicilia, "We've Had it Up to Here!" Guillermo Gómez Peña, "An Open Letter from a Post-National Artist to a Mexican Crime Boss" Luis Felipe Fabre, "Notes on a Zombie Cataclysm" |
| Wk 13: | |
| Mon April 21 | Seventh in-class presentations |
| Wed April 23 | Dir. Natalia Almada, <i>The Night Watchman</i> |
| Fri April 25 | Closing discussion Final exam distributed in class |
| Wednesday May 7 | Final exam/ paper due at 12pm |