

**UMBC UGC New Course Request: POLI 379 (proposed number) : War and Film**

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Proposed Effective Date: Fall 2012

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**COURSE INFORMATION:**

Course Number(s)	POLI 379
Formal Title	War and Film
Transcript Title (≤24c)	WARFLM
Recommended Course Preparation	POLI 280
Prerequisite	None
Credits	3
Repeatable?	No
Max. Total Credits	3
Grading Method(s)	x <input type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F)

**PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This course explores the history of interaction between war and film to understand the impact of these two powerful technologies on each other and on human life. Students taking the course can expect to develop a culturally differentiated understanding of meanings of war in film. We will watch and critically review films, audio, and other media and tie intellectual developments with the representation of war in film.

**RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:**

Since the invention of moving pictures, our understanding of war is intricately tied to the representation of the phenomenon in film. We often believe what we see on the screen—which is a highly stylistic recreation—to be the true nature of one of the most awesome aspects of human life. This is especially true as most countries have moved away from military conscription and exempted the majorities of their population from the direct experience of war. As analogy of war, films have been used to inspire soldiers as well as to decry violence. They have moved masses and voiced wide-ranging beliefs about the role of war in human existence. Films have been coopted by states—democratic and authoritarian—and used as instruments of megalomania. They have served as tools for legitimizing *raison d'etat* and have contributed to the obsolescence of war between major states.

Students taking the course can expect to develop a culturally differentiated understanding of meanings of war around the world. We will try to answer questions about how war is differently understood across cultures? How did the representation of war in film change over time? What impact did such change have on war itself? As the incidence of war shifted from Europe to Asia and Africa did the representation of war change? Were cross-cultural representations of war in film consistent with each other?

Despite the interconnection, the study of war in film remains at the periphery of scholarly work in international relations. Current streaming technology is making it possible to teach this course in a way we could not have done in the past. Many of the films are available to stream from Netflix. Almost all the films are available on Netflix DVD. This means that with a little care in the choice of films, students can view the material outside of class and that will leave class time for discussion, comparison, and dissection of the material.

The course fits the department's and UMBC's increasingly internationalized curriculum, which is in itself a reflection of the nature of our diverse student body. The technologies of film and war are among the fastest diffusing technologies and even less well-off societies are able to use them even though they may not have invented the technology. Furthermore, the course brings together "the art and the science of war" that makes the study of war more comprehensive. For example, the scientific study of war focuses most clearly on causes of war and the conduct of war, but war in film always incorporates the human costs of war--bringing together these aspects of war makes for a more comprehensive study of the phenomenon.

Because the instructor is based on UMBC's political science program at Shady Grove, the course will be offered there primarily, though I have no objection to teaching it on main campus. I hope to include this course in the two-year rotation we have down here in Shady Grove. I am going to seek a culture designation for the course, which will make it attractive to students in the history, social work, and psychology programs down here.

The course is offered at the 300-level because it is a survey course.

**ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):** Proposed syllabus appended at the end of this document.

POLI 379 (proposed number): War and Film  
Department of Political Science

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Office Hours: xxxxx; by appointment

Class Location: xxxx

Class Day and Time: xxxxxx

### Course Overview

Since the invention of moving pictures, our understanding of war is intricately tied to the representation of the phenomenon in film. We often believe what we see on the screen—which is a highly stylistic recreation—to be the true nature of one of the most awesome aspects of human life. This is especially true as most countries have moved away from military conscription and exempted the majorities of their population from the direct experience of war. As analogy of war, films have been used to inspire soldiers as well as to decry violence. They have moved masses and voiced wide-ranging beliefs about the role of war in human existence. Films have been coopted by states—democratic and authoritarian—and used as instruments of megalomania. They have served as tools for legitimizing *raison d'etat* and have contributed to the obsolescence of war between major states.

This course is designed to explore the history of interaction between war and film in the twentieth century and in the present decade in an effort to understand the impact these two powerful technologies have had on each other and on human life. We will watch a number of films, hear related audio, and other media, critically review them, and present synthetic analysis of war-related themes in film. We will read critical theory and tie intellectual developments with the representation of war in film.

Students taking the course can expect to develop a culturally differentiated understanding of meanings of war around the world. We will try to answer questions about how war is differently understood across cultures? How did the representation of war in film change over time? What impact did such change have on war itself? As the incidence of war shifted from Europe to Asia and Africa did the representation of war change? Were cross-cultural representations of war in film consistent with each other?

### Grade Breakdown

Weekly film reviews: 40 percent

Midterm Exam (in class): 20 percent

Final Paper (take home): 30 percent

Participation: 10 percent.

### Assignments

Weekly film reviews

1. Your review should include information about the theme of the film, especially how it relates to war. The weekly readings will help you identify themes on which to focus.

2. The review must be ONE-page (no more and no less), single-spaced, 1" margin, 12-point Times New Roman, and in Microsoft Word.
3. Each review must go through a peer review process before submission to me. I will identify your peer reviewer to you in class. Please exchange email addresses with the reviewer. We will change peer reviewers at least two times through the semester, so please stay alert. Please follow these guidelines before submission:
  - a. Every Sunday (in the weeks when films and readings are assigned) by 12 midnight, please send your completed summary in the required format to your peer reviewer by email. If you don't send a review or send incomplete reviews I will deduct penalty points from you. Peers will report delays and incompleteness to me in confidence by email together with final submission.
  - b. Every Monday by 12 midnight, the peer reviewer will get back to author comments on the review. If the peer does not get back on time or does not provide reasonable suggestions for improvement, I will deduct penalty points from her. Authors report delays and negligent reviews to me in confidence by email together with your final summary submission.
  - c. Every Tuesday by 12 midnight, students will submit to me the final review by email. When you submit to me, please include in your email a self-grade, a grade for your peer (this information is confidential and comes only to me), and information about whether the peer response you received was substantive and on time. PLEASE MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE THE NAME OF THE STUDENT YOU HAVE REVIEWED.
4. Extensions: I am willing to be flexible for legitimate reasons AND when contacted ahead of time in writing (email is fine). After the fact, I will not be flexible unless you have dire emergency. I decide what is dire such as illness of the student or in the student's family. Late submission will cost you 10 percent of your grade every two hours. (Same rule for the final paper). For in-class exams, make-ups only for legitimate excuse AND cleared ahead of time by in writing (email if fine).
5. Turning in assignments late is always better than not turning it in at all. At least you will get some points.

#### Midterm Exam

Short essay questions on key themes emerging from the first eight weeks of the semester.

#### Final Paper

Identify a war-related film (documentary or television program) not chosen for the course and conduct an extended review (15 pages) of the work and the genre that it represents. The essay must address key themes identified in class such as is the war represented as just, are soldiers represented as following proper conduct of war, does the film associate responsibility to particular actors (in the film or implied), how do civilians and soldiers interact, how does the film see the role of war in human life. Final grade is contingent on students meeting the following deadlines. Not meeting deadlines costs penalty points up to a third of the assignment grade (or 10 percent of the overall course grade). Essay mechanics such as citation and formatting will be provided prior to the Week 8 due date.

#### Due Dates

Film reviews due midnight before class day each week there is class.

Report choice of film for final paper to instructor by email by Week 8.

Submit outline Week 10.

Submit draft Week 12.

Submit paper during finals week.

#### Course Materials and Technology

Broadband internet connection and ability to view streaming movies. Subscription to Netflix and access to Amazon Instant Movie (pay per view).

Book excerpts, articles, and publicly available video as provided in the schedule. All written articles are available through UMBC Library's e-reserves and by using the research port. Most videos are on youtube.

Schedule

Week 1

### **Modern Art and Modern War**

#### **To Watch:**

The Rite of Spring (Stravinsky, Nijinsky, France, 1913; reproduced).

Version 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrOUYtDpKCc>

Version 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNc81Dvsl5Q>

Week 2

### **The War of Worlds**

#### **To Watch:**

War of the Worlds (Welles, USA, 1938)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs0K4ApWl4g&feature=related>

Star Wars Episode IV: New Hope (Lucas, USA, 1976).

#### **To Read:**

TBA

Week 3

### **The Coming of Modern Warfare**

#### **To Watch:**

Waterloo (Bondarchuk, USA, 1970). Netflix DVD.

Gallipoli (Weir, Australia, 1981). Netflix DVD.

#### **To Read:**

John Keegan, "Old, Unhappy, Far-off Things," Chapter 1 in Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (New York: Penguin, 1983).

John A. Lynn, "Chivalry and Chevauchee: The Ideal, the Real, and the Perfect in Medieval European Warfare," Chapter 5, in Chapter 2, in Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

Week 4

### **The War Film**

#### **To Watch:**

All Quiet on the Western Front (Milestone, US, 1930). Netflix DVD.

Joyeux Noel (Carion, France, 2005). Netflix DVD.

#### **To Read:**

Stephen Van Evera, The Cult of the Offensive, *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer, 1984), pp. 58–107.

Andrew Kelly, "The Greatness and Continued Significance of *All Quiet on the Western Front*," in Eberwein, ed., *The War Film* (2006): 23-29.

Week 5

### **The Right War**

#### **To Watch:**

Band of Brothers (Robinson, USA, 2001). Netflix DVD.

Saving Private Ryan (Spielberg, USA, 1998). Netflix DVD.

#### **To Read:**

Michael Walzer, World War II: Why Was This War Different? *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1971), pp. 3-21. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265089>  
Albert Auster, Saving Private Ryan and American Triumphalism, in Eberwein, ed., *The War Film* (2006): 23-29.

Week 6

### **Leadership and War**

#### **To Watch:**

Patton (Scaffner, USA, 1970). Netflix streaming.  
The Desert Fox (Hathaway, USA, 1951). Netflix streaming.

#### **To Read:**

Eliot Cohen, "Lincoln Sends a Letter," Chapter 2, in Cohen, *Supreme Command* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

Week 7

### **Science and War**

#### **To Watch:**

Godzilla (Honda, Japan, 1954). Netflix streaming.  
Dr. Strangelove (Kubrick, USA, 1964). Netflix DVD.

#### **To Read:**

P.W. Singer, "Science Fiction's Impact on War," Chapter 8, in Singer, *Robots and War* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

Week 8

### **War of the Classes**

#### **To Watch:**

Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, Russia, 1925). Netflix streaming.  
Che (Soderbergh, USA, 2008). Netflix streaming.

#### **To Read:**

Guevara, Marx, Engels, Luxembourg, *Manifesto: Three Classic Essays on How to Change the World* (New York: Ocean Press, 2005).

Week 9

### **Warrior Culture**

#### **To Watch:**

300 (Snyder, USA, 2007). Netflix DVD.  
Come and See (Klimov, Russia, 1985). Netflix DVD.

#### **To Read:**

John A. Lynn, "Written in Blood: The Classical Greek Drama of Battle and the Western Way of War," Chapter 1, in Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).  
Omer Bartov, "Nationalist Socialist Ideology and the Barbarization of German Soldiers," excerpt, in Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 1985).

Week 10

### **East Meets West**

#### **To Watch:**

The Drum (Korda, UK, 1938)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MGUqvpSYD8&feature=related>  
Zulu (Endfield, UK, 1964). Netflix streaming.  
Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo, France, 1966). Netflix DVD.

**To Read:**

TBA

Week 11

**War outside the West**

**To Watch:**

Kagemusha (Kurosawa, Japan, 1980). Netflix streaming.

Incendies (Villeneuve, Canada, 2010). Netflix DVD.

Hotel Rwanda (George, USA, 2004). Netflix DVD.

**To Read:**

John A. Lynn, “Subtleties of Violence: Ancient Chinese and Indian Texts on Warfare,” Chapter 2, in Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

Week 12

**The Vietnam Affect**

**To Watch:**

Apocalypse Now (Coppola, USA, 1979). Netflix DVD.

The Killing Fields (Joffe, USA/France, 1984). Netflix DVD.

Black Hawk Down (Scott, USA, 2001). Netflix streaming.

**To Read:**

Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). Chapter 1.

John Keegan, “Introduction” and “War in Human History Interlude: Limitations on Warmaking,” in Keegan, *History of Warfare* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

Week 13

**Reclaiming History**

**To Watch:**

Schindler’s List (Spielberg, USA, 1993). Netflix DVD.

Red Cliff (Woo, China, 2008) Netflix streaming.

Letters from Iwo Jima (Eastwood, USA, 2007). Netflix streaming.

**To Read:**

TBA

Week 14

**Insurgency and Terrorism**

**To Watch:**

The Terrorist (Sivan, India, 1999). Netflix DVD.

The Hurt Locker (Bigelow, USA, 2008). Netflix DVD.

**To Read:**

Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want, *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), pp. 78–105.

Week 15

**Coming Home**

**To Watch:**

Judgment at Nuremberg (Kramer, USA, 1961)

Grave of the Fireflies (Takahata, Japan, 1988)

**To Read:**

TBA