

**CAST 407: Picturing War and Human Rights:  
Trauma, Violence and Spectatorship  
(capstone seminar for GSFS)  
Fall 2010**

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Class meets Mondays 2:30-4:20, King 239

*In her discussion of the Abu Ghraib pictures, Susan Sontag famously stated that “the photos are us.” These torture pictures visualize normative and deviant bodies through racial, sexual, and gendered markers of difference. In what ways, then, are the Abu Ghraib photographs “us”? And, importantly, who is the “us” hailed in these pictures of torture?*

This seminar examines how depictions of military violence and human rights abuses inform American viewers' concepts of citizenship, sovereignty, and global politics. Ideals of gender, race, and nation are often invoked to justify militarism, yet pictures of war also provoke anxieties about masculinity and femininity, home and nation, self and other. How, for instance, do visual images rely on and/or challenge conventional ideals of masculinity and domesticity. If militarization is often linked to a heroic masculinity, war also destabilizes patriarchies and masculinities. Moreover, what roles do race and ethnicity play in securing or undermining the authority of the male body under attack? Domesticity, too, is crucial since war and human rights provoke anxieties about the need to protect or liberate the home. What meanings can we glean from pictures of women and children as victims of war?

Course readings provide critical historical and theoretical perspectives on these questions. We will study scholarly analyses of photography, film, maps, and other forms of visual culture to address such issues as the symbolic value of female bodies in human rights advocacy and how racial ideals secure or undermine masculine authority in scenes of battle. In order to explore how visual culture regulates the contested boundaries of identity and nation, we will work with theoretical concepts developed in feminist and visual culture studies including gaze, spectatorship, voyeurism, agency, and resistance.

*Course Goals:*

- to become conversant in current theories and methodologies in visual cultural studies
- to develop a historical understanding of the role of militarism in American culture
- to enhance understanding of the role of critical interdisciplinary studies in humanities and social science research
- to think critically about the relationship between evidence and critical analysis
- to enhance analytical skills in understanding and assessing scholarly research through discussion and writing assignments
- to understand ethical issues and power relations in American Studies research, especially in relation to race, class, gender, and sexuality

**Required Texts:**

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War*. New York: Verso, 2009.

Jarvis, Christina S. *The Male Body at War : American Masculinity during World War II*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Nudelman, Franny. *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, & the Culture of War*. Chapel Hill:

University of North Carolina Press, 2004.  
Sacco, Joe. *Palestine*. Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2001.  
Sarkar, Bhaskar and Janet Walker. *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering*. New York: Routledge, 2010.  
Sutton, Barbara, Sandra Morgen, and Julie Novkov. *Security Disarmed: Critical Perspectives on Gender, Race, and Militarization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008.  
Virlio, Paul. *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*. New York: Verso, 2009 [1989].

**Articles can be located on Blackboard (BB).**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **I- Class Participation (20%)**

This is a reading seminar designed to familiarize students with current research on visual culture and U.S. militarism. The success of the course is contingent on your thoughtful engagement with the texts and with the comments, critiques and issues raised by others in the class. Therefore, your attendance, timely arrival, and informed participation are absolutely required and constitute 20% of the final grade. Regular attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade.

In order to facilitate critical thinking and class discussion, each student will post a response to the reading on Blackboard by 8pm the Sunday night prior to class. These postings should include the following observations about the day's readings: 1) the writer's methodology – including methods of collecting data; 2) the author's theoretical argument; and 3) key issues raised in the text that are relevant to seminar discussion. These postings are not graded, but failure to make substantive Blackboard comments will result in a lower participation grade.

Finally, as a member of the seminar, you will facilitate one class session in the semester. Along a solid grasp of the assigned readings, please carefully read the blackboard postings the night before seminar. However, you are not required to post comments on blackboard for the class you have volunteered to facilitate. Although you are free to design class discussion however you choose, you are required to bring to the class some type of visual document through which we can address the readings assigned for that day. This could be a photograph, a segment of a film, a news report, or legal ruling that addresses the issues provoked in the readings. Your example(s) should be used to help the class engage critically with the argument(s) of the readings. I encourage you to plan ahead for the day you will lead seminar discussion and to meet with me to discuss your ideas for class.

### **II- Written Assignments**

*For more detailed information, about these assignments, see handouts.*

#### **\*\*4 Critical Review, 4-6 pages (10% each)**

In order to facilitate critical thinking and writing about visual culture studies, you will submit 4 critical reviews of weekly readings. You may select which weeks to write about but note that two reviews must be done in the first half of the semester (before fall break) and two in the second half. These critical reviews are designed to sharpen your analysis of visual culture studies scholarship and to locate your own writing in relationship to that research. Each review must be posted to Blackboard by 2:30 on the day we discuss that material. I will not accept late critical reviews.

#### **\*\* Visual Analysis, 5-7. Due October 22 by 5:00pm. (15%)**

Visual analysis is the cornerstone of visual culture studies because it provides a crucial source of evidence for any argument about how representations produce meanings. Select a single image (painting, photograph, poster, etc.) that represents some aspect of U.S. militarism. For

this assignment, analyze both the formal elements in the image and the contexts of production and circulation. The objective of the assignment is to write a polished essay that may be submitted to the Photography and Conflict website for their “Featured Image” section. See: <http://www.ucd.ie/photoconflict/>

**\*\* Final Project, 7-9 pages. Due Thursday, December 20 by 11:00 am. (25%)**

For the final assignment, you will develop a research project that utilizes some of the methodological and theoretical approaches we have studied throughout the semester. Within the broad perspective of cultural studies approaches to representation and militarization, select a project that builds on your individual interests and knowledge. This research project will be based on the identification and analysis of primary documents, a discussion of relevant secondary works, and the crafting of a coherent narrative and a persuasive argument.

**Research project proposal, 1-2 pages, due November 8 (P/NP)**

Identify your topic and explain its relevance to scholarly debates about visibility, embodiment, and war.

**Final Project (7-9 pages) 25%**

For this paper, you will write two drafts. The first draft is due by **December 13**, to be exchanged with one other student. We will workshop these drafts in class.

ALL PAPERS must use double-spacing and at least 11-point font size. Include your name, date, a title, and page numbers. Please be sure to proofread carefully for style and grammar before you submit written work. All papers must be uploaded to the BB site.

**Grading Policy**

Class participation	20%
Critical Analyses	40%
Visual Analysis	15%
Final Project	25%

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Late Work:** All assignments must be completed on time. Papers not turned in on that date will be penalized in grading (your grade will drop by 1/3 each day) and will not receive written comments.

**P/NP:** If you opt for this grading system, you must complete all assignments to receive credit.

**Academic Incompletes at the end of the semester:** you must get approval from me at least 48 hours before the deadline.

**Honor Code:** This course adheres to the policies of the Oberlin College Honor Code which applies to all work submitted for academic credit, whether it is a creative project, a quiz, an exam or a paper. For quizzes and exams, this means you must complete the assignment independently of other students. For papers, you must cite all written sources that you consulted, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials. Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, or have questions please consult me, a reference librarian, a writing tutor and/or a style manual. Lack of familiarity with proper procedures is not a defense.

At the end of each academic exercise, students shall write in full and sign the Honor Pledge: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” See Oberlin Honor Code, <http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/>, for more information.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you need disability-related accommodations for your work in this class, please let me know. Support is available through Disability Services. Contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. See also: <http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/>

## CLASS SCHEDULE

- Sept. 13: Introduction  
Watch *Calling the Ghosts* (on reserve)  
Reading: Sjoberg "Justice and the Wars in Iraq" (BB)
- Sept. 20: War and Visibility  
Reading: Butler, *Frames of War*
- Sept. 27: Picturing Death  
Reading: Nudelman, *John Brown's Body*
- Sept. 29: Optional: Trevor Paglen, Class Guest  
Mudd 202, 3:15-4:20  
"Photography and the Creation of the World"  
Hallock Auditorium, 5pm
- Oct. 4: World War I and Technologies of Visualization  
Reading: Virilio, *War and Cinema*; Kaplan website
- Oct. 11: Masculinities and War  
Reading: Jarvis, *Male Body at War*
- Oct. 18: CLASS MEETS AT PRINT STUDY ROOM (MUDD 2<sup>ND</sup> FL)  
Meet promptly at 2:30 pm  
Reading: Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed* (BB)
- Oct. 22: **Visual Analysis Paper Due by 5pm**
- Oct. 25: FALL BREAK**
- Nov. 1 Cultural Memory and the Vietnam War \*\*\*\*\*  
Readings: Bleakney, *Revisiting Vietnam* (BB)  
Watch *Okay Bye-Bye* (on reserve)
- Nov. 8: Mapping War  
Readings: Parks, "Satellite Witnessing" (BB); Piper, "Cartographic Cyborgs" (BB); Shapiro, "Violence in the American Imaginaries" (BB); Vujakovic, "Mapping the War Zone" (BB)  
**Final Paper Proposal due (1-2 pages, P/NP)**
- Nov. 15: Witnessing Torture  
Reading: French, "Exhibiting Terror" (BB); Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame" (BB); Mirzoeff, "Invisible Empire" (BB);  
Watch *Battle of Algiers* (on reserve)
- Nov. 22: Visuality in the War on Terror \*\*\*\*\*  
Reading: Sutton, Morgen, and Novkov, *Security Disarmed*
- Nov. 29: Human Rights, Trauma, and Witnessing \*\*\*\*\*

Reading: Sarkar and Walker, *Documentary Testimonies*

Dec. 6: Graphic Novels and the Challenges of Genre  
Reading: Sacco. *Palestine*  
Watch *Waltz with Bashir* (on reserve)

Dec. 13: Final Discussion on War and Representation  
Writing Workshop  
**Final Projects – First Draft (bring in a hard copy**

**FINAL PROJECT DUE BY DECEMBER 20, 11AM. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED.**

## ARTICLES ON BLACKBOARD

Bleakney, Julia. *Revisiting Vietnam: Memoirs, Memorials, Museums*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Chaps. 1, 3, 5.

French, Lindsay. "Exhibiting Terror." In *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights*, M. Bradley and P. Petro, eds. 131-155. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Hariman, Robert and John Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Chaps. 5-6.

Keenan, Thomas. "Mobilizing Shame." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 435-449.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib." *Radical History Review* 95 (Spring 2006): 21-44.

Parks, Lisa. "Satellite Witnessing: Views and Coverage of the War in Bosnia." In *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual*, 77-108. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005.

Piper, Karen. "Cartographic Cyborgs." In *Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Rogoff, Irit. "Mappings." In *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, 73-111. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Shapiro, Michael J. *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 1-40.

Sjoberg, Laura. *Gender, Justice and the Wars in Iraq: A Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory*. Boulder, CO: Lexington Books, 2006. 5-15, 45-62.

Vujakovic, Peter. "Mapping the War Zone: Cartography, Geopolitics and Security Discourse in the UK Press." *Journalism Studies* 2 (2002): 187-202.

## FILMS ON RESERVE

*The Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1962. **VCR-28**

*Calling the Ghosts*, by Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelincic, 1996. **VCR-1855**

*Okay bye-bye*, by Rebecca Baron 1998 **DVD-1310**

*Waltz with Bashir*, by Ari Folman. 2009. **DVD-6339**

## BOOKS ON RESERVE

Bradley, Mark and Patrice Petro, eds. *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. **K3240 .T78 2002**

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. **HV6432 .B88 2004**

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War*. New York: Verso, 2009. **HM1116 .B88 2009**

Cubille, Anne. *Women Witnessing Terror: Testimony and the Cultural Politics of Human Rights*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005. **PN3377.5.R45 C83 2005**

Douglass, Ana and Thomas A. Vogler, eds. *Witness & Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*. New York: Routledge, 2003. **BF378.S65 W58 2003**

Goldberg, Elizabeth Swanson. *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007. **PN1995.9.H83 G65 2007**

Hesford, Wendy and Wendy Kozol, eds. *Just Advocacy? Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005. **HQ1236 .J87 2005**

Hunt, Krista and Kim Rygiel, eds. *(En)gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflaged Politics*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. **HV6432 .E64 2006**

Jarvis, Christina S. *The Male Body at War : American Masculinity during World War II*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004. **HQ1090.3 .J368 2004**

Kinney, Katherine. *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. **PS228.V5 K56 2000**

Martin, Andrew and Patrice Petro, eds. *Rethinking Global Security: Media, Popular culture and the "War on Terror."* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley: University of California, 2001. **DS63.2.U5 M37 2005**

Nudelman, Franny. *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, & the Culture of War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. **E468.9 .N84 2004**

Piper, Karen. *Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. **GA108.7 .P56 2002**

Sacco, Joe. *Palestine*. Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2001. **DS119.7 .S29 2001**

Sarkar, Bhaskar and Janet Walker. *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering*. New York: Routledge, 2010. **PN1995.9.D6 D5775 2010**

Slocum, J. David, ed. *Terrorism, Media, Liberation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005. **PN1995.9.T46 T47 2005**

Sutton, Barbara, Sandra Morgen, and Julie Novkov. *Security Disarmed: Critical Perspectives on Gender, Race, and Militarization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008.

Thussu, Daya Kisha and Des Freedman, eds. *War and the Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003. **PN4784.W37 W38 2003**

Virlio, Paul. *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*. New York: Verso (reprint) 2009. **PN1995.9.W3 V58 1989**