

Claire Potter
NHUM3162 A
Fall 2012
M 4:00-5:50

potterc@newschool.edu
office: 72 Fifth Avenue #604
office hrs: T 3-4, or by appt.
66 W. 12th Street room 704

**Violence and American Identity:
World War II, Vietnam and the War on Terror**



How do we understand the simultaneous disavowal, and persistent use, of violence in the United States?

This interdisciplinary course examines a foundational theme in modern American studies: a state, national culture and models for democratic citizenship that are, and have been, shaped by violence. Over the course of the semester, we will explore the ways in which a national identity in the United States can be understood in the context of three modern conflicts: World War II (1941-1945), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), and the War on Terror (2001- present). Our work will allow us to explore changes in how human beings inhabit "American" identities and democratic citizenship: for example, as politicians, citizen-soldiers, memorialists, and immigrant (or exile) communities who have a stake in a violent struggle. We will also look at the ways in which states use violence, not just to wage war, but also to transform the social order and the nature of political power.

This is an *intermediate course*. While you need have had no prior knowledge of this material, the course presumes that each student is engaged with and enthusiastic about the project of cultural analysis.

The following required books are available online or at Shakespeare & Company, 716 Broadway. Inexpensive used copies are available from online booksellers. *= available on Kindle.

*Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1970)
ISBN-10: 0156695006

Henry Giroux, *Against the New Authoritarianism: Politics After Abu Ghraib*
(Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2005), ISBN-10: 1894037235

*Chris Hedges, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public
Affairs, 2002) ISBN-10: 1586480499

*Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise And Power: America And Europe In The New
World Order* (New York: Knopf: 2003), ISBN-10: 1400040930

Required readings, films and videos are available on Black Board.

There will be readings and films on the syllabus listed as “recommended:” *these are not required readings*. They should be considered a resource to enhance your understanding of our course if you have the time and the inclination to read them. If a reading has been extracted from a book you can assume that the rest of the book is recommended as well.

Our semester will focus on developing the following capacities:

- Advancing our critical reading and viewing skills. We want to be able to read deeply into a secondary or primary text, understanding its power to move an audience as well as its implications for our own work.
- Understanding violence as a multi-faceted, and sometimes contradictory, dynamic in political and mass culture. Arguably, violence has the power to move history, promote nationalism and cause national identities to evolve. But how -- and by what media -- does this emerge as a lived experience of and between real people as well as the states that govern citizens?
- Research. Portions of many classes will be devoted to exploring the possibilities that different primary sources and the evidence of everyday life have for our work. In the second half of the class, students will write a *short* research paper of 8-10 pages, focusing on the process of research. This paper may take the shape of a formal essay, creative nonfiction, fiction or a film treatment, but it must be based on research. Students will also learn citation practices that credit the ideas of others and allow a reader to understand the broader context of your work.

Expectations and grading:

- Class attendance is mandatory. You must be on time and you must remain for the entire class period unless excused in advance. Attendance will be factored into

your grade, and missing more than two classes will trigger a grade deduction of 3 points for every absence. Should you miss a class, you are responsible for contacting a classmate to catch up.

- All reading and viewing assignments are *required*. You must come to class having prepared the assigned materials to the best of your ability.
- Participating in class discussions. This means coming to class with something to contribute, but it also means being an active and respectful listener. Students are reminded that it is rude and non-participatory to check devices, text, surf the web or email during class.
- All writing for the class, graded and ungraded, is required. All assignments for the course are posted and due dates are on the syllabus. Unexcused late papers will be penalized and any writing not turned in will result in a zero for that assignment.

Your grade will be determined by the following formula:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Class participation & attendance | 20% |
| • First paper | 10% |
| • Take-home exam (Due 10/20) | 20% |
| • Research Topic, with short bibliography | 5% |
| • First draft of research paper (4-6 pp.) | 15% |
| • Final draft of research paper (8-10 pp.) | 30% |

All writing will be submitted and returned electronically.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES: Please read and/or review

Disabilities:

In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who may need academic accommodations should contact the office of Student Disability Services. Students requesting any accommodations will need to meet with Jason Luchs, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter. All conversations will be kept confidential.

Mr. Luchs's office is located at 80 Fifth Ave, 3rd Floor (luchsj@newschool.edu, 212.229.5626 x3135). You may also access more information at <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability/>.

Incompletes

A grade of Incomplete ("I") indicates that your instructor has granted you an extension to complete outstanding work for a course. The grade of Incomplete will not be assigned automatically. It will only be assigned at the request of the student by the last day of class. Incomplete grades cannot be granted for students who are graduating seniors.

If circumstances require you to request a grade of Incomplete—and the instructor approves your request—the terms of the Incomplete should be agreed upon in writing, using the "Request for a Grade of Incomplete" form

(http://www.newschool.edu/forms/registrar_incomplete_grade.pdf). This ensures that both the student and the instructor understand the exact nature of the required work, the manner in which it is to be submitted, and the date by which it must be submitted.

Your instructor will determine the deadline for submission of outstanding work. Students with a grade of Incomplete who do not complete their work by the agreed-upon deadline will receive a grade of Withdrawal/Failure (“WF”). Students who complete outstanding work according to the terms of the Incomplete will receive a letter grade. (The “I” will be converted to a letter grade after your instructor submits a Change of Grade form on your behalf.)

Libraries

The New School Library offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage (<http://library.newschool.edu/events/>) each semester. The library also provides one-on-one support for students who in conducting research for a paper or project require additional assistance. Students can contact the library about scheduling a one-on-one appointment with a reference librarian at the following link: <http://library.newschool.edu/reference/request.php>.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work. (This could be using books, journals, Internet postings, or other students’ papers.) For further information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (2nd edition), Chapter 6, on documentation. The Bachelor’s Program provides useful online resources to inform students of correct forms of research and writing. To access these resources, go to <http://www.newschool.edu/ba/> and click on the link “Resources for Current Students.”

The New School Writing Center also provides online resources about avoiding plagiarism. (See <http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/index.html>.)

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

Writing Center

Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the university writing center, located at 71 Fifth Avenue, 9th floor (Between 14th and 15th Streets). To make an appointment, you can e-mail the writing center at writingcenter@newschool.edu or call 212.229.5121. For further information, please visit the Writing Center website: www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/.

August 27: Introduction

- Video: “Army Special Forces Commercial” (YouTube, uploaded January 17, 2008), 00:30
- Video: “G.I Joe Commercial,” (Hasbro Toys: 1964) 00:59

September 3: Class canceled for Labor Day

September 10: Shaping and Negotiating American Identities

- Richard Slotkin, “Introduction: the Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History,” *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 1-26.
- Michael J. Hogan, “The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation,” Hogan, ed., *Hiroshima: History and Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 200-32.
- Jeremy K. Saucier, “Playing the Past: the Video Game Simulation as Recent American History,” in Claire Bond Potter and Renee Romano, *Doing Recent History: On Privacy, Copyright, Video Games, Institutional Review Boards, Activist Scholarship, and History That Talks Back* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 201-223.
- Video: “Donald Gets Drafted,” (R.K.O. Pictures: Walt Disney, 1942) 8:55.

Recommended:

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso: London and New York, 1991).
- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
- Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).
- Film: “The Green Berets” (Warner Brothers: John Wayne, 1968)

First paper due on September 15: no more than 750 words.

September 17: Class canceled for religious observance

September 24: The Seductions of Warfare

- Chris Hedges, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*

Recommended:

- Film: *The Hurt Locker* (Universal Studios: Kathryn Bigelow, 2008).
- Joan Didion, *Democracy* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

October 1: Politics, People and Global Responsibility

- Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise And Power: America And Europe In The New World Order*
- Video: David Strong, “Why I Joined the US Army,” February 15 2010, 3:52.
- Video: USSoldier29, “Why I Enlisted,” November 4 2010, 4:58.
- Video: Julia Robine, “WHY I JOINED THE MILITARY!!!” 5:22.

Recommended:

- Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1967)
- Henry Luce, “The American Century,” *Life Magazine* (February 17, 1941)
- “Army Wives,” *Lifetime Channel* (Mark Gordon, 2007-present). Based on Tanya Blank, *Under the Sabres: the Unwritten Code of Army Wives* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006)

October 8: World War II as “the Good War”

- Mariana Torgovnick, “Hiding in Plain Sight,” *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-19.
- Mary Dudziak, “Introduction” and “When Was World War II?” in *War-Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-9, 33-62.
- Film: *Saving Private Ryan* (DreamWorks: Steven Spielberg, 1998).

Recommended:

- John Bodnar, “Saving Private Ryan and Postwar Memory in America,” *American Historical Review* vol. 106 no. 3 (June 2001), 805-817.

Paper Topic and short bibliography due on October 14

October 15: Towards a Theory of Violence

- Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

Recommended:

- Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009)
- “Patton,” (20th century Fox: Franklin Schaffner, 1970).
- Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Take Home Exam Will Be Posted on October 17 and is Due on October 21. You do not need to study for this exam, since it is open book. The best preparation is to do your work conscientiously; keep up with your reading, viewing and lecture notes; and be an alert discussant in class.

October 22: The Business of America is Business War

- Film: *Why We Fight* (Sony Pictures: Eugene Jarecki, 2005).

October 29: The Home Front

- Jeremy Varon, “‘Hearts and Minds’: the Anti-war Movement, Violence and the Critical Mass,” from *Bringing the War Home: the Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.)
- George Kateb, “Democracy and Untruth,” *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* vol. xxxi n. 3 (Winter 2012), 60-88.
- Howard Zinn, “A People’s War?” *The Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 137-181.

Recommended:

- Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)
- Jerry Lembke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998).
- Cathy Wilkerson, *Flying Too Close to the Sun: My Life and Times as a Weatherman* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007).

November 5: Democracy's Frontiers, Democracy's Warriors

- Marilyn Young, “The American Invasion of South Vietnam (1965-66)” and “An American War (1966-1967),” from *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 150-191.
- Catherine Lutz, “Many Reserve Armies: The Faces of Military Dependency (1974-2000),” in *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 171-213.
- Film: *Hearts and Minds* (BBS Productions: Peter Davis, 1974).

Recommended:

- Ron Kovic, *Born on the Fourth of July* (New York: Akashic Books, 2005. Orig. 1976).
- Wallace Terry, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War, an Oral History* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985).

- Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).
- Film: M*A*S*H (Twentieth Century Fox: Robert Altman, 1970).

First Draft of Research paper due November 20

November 12: Paper Workshop Session

In this class, students will meet in groups to present their papers to each other and workshop them. Students will be assigned to groups in advance, will have read the papers of all students in their group by the time they come to class, and will have prepared a page of comments for one other student. Students will also receive comments from the instructor.

November 19: Who Orders the Violence?

- Film: *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (Sony Pictures: Errol Morris, 2003).
- Peter Baker, “For Real: Torture America Style,” *The Nation* (August 13/20 2012)

Recommended:

- David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973).
- Film: “Dr. Strangelove; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb,” (Columbia Pictures: Stanley Kubrick, 1964).

November 26: Transforming “America”

- Henry Giroux, *Against the New Authoritarianism: Politics After Abu Ghraib*

Recommended:

- James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Beth Bailey, *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009).

December 3: Producing America, Producing the Other

- Film: “The Great Dictator,” (Charlie Chaplin, 1940), 125:16.
- Edward W. Said, “The Iran Story,” from *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 74-125.

- Marita Sturken, “The Wall and Screen Memory: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 44-84.

Recommended:

- John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1987).
- Film: “Apocalypse Now,” (United Artists: Francis Ford Coppola, 1979).

December 10: Prisoners of War

- Jana K. Lipman, “‘Give Us A Ship’: the Vietnamese Repatriate Movement on Guam, 1975,” *American Quarterly* vol. 64 no. 1 (March 2011), 1-31.
- Natasha Zaretsky, “Homeward Unbound: Prisoners of War, National Defeat and the Crisis of Male Authority,” *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 25-70.
- Amy Kaplan, “Where Is Guantanamo?” *American Quarterly* vol. 57 no. 3 (September 2005), 831-858.

Recommended:

- Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape and Brainwashing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family’s Journey* (New York: Villard Books, 2010).

December 17: Student Research Presentations

Final Papers are due on December 20