PICTURING WAR

MLS 587
Spring 2009
January 12-May 4 (our last class: 4/28)
Tuesday, 6:45-9:20 PM
CFAC 116
Dr. Susan Libby, Department Of Art and Art History

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Office: CFAC 105; office hours 5:00-6:00 PM Tuesdays and by appointment.

Course description from the Spring 09 course catalogue:
From Roman triumphal arches to the Abu Ghraib photographs, war has been the subject of much of Western visual culture. Imagery can be just as effective at promoting war and national identity as in questioning the ethics of armed conflict and other forms of large scale aggression. Examines the historical contexts and rhetorical strategies of the imagery of war in the Western world, focusing mainly on art, with some attention to film.

Class structure:
Each class is centered around one work of art having to do with war in different times and places, from the 1789 French Revolution to the present war in Iraq. Each work and the reading assigned to contextualize it will form the focus of a larger set of issues in war imagery, for example, the uses of martyrdom, the impact of the invention of photography, the ethics of making evil look beautiful, the politicization of the aesthetic, and the role of mass media in shaping public perception of war. The material covered will combine the concrete, the historical, and the theoretical, and will span the disciplines of art history, history, critical media studies, and philosophy.
The first half of each class will consist of discussion of the readings, led by two students. The discussion leaders will be responsible for raising questions related to the reading and the ideas it raises and will lead the class in applying the reading to a deeper understanding of the work(s) of art under discussion. The second half of the class will consist of an interactive lecture by the professor that will introduce and contextualize the art for the next week, answer art historical questions, and provide a basic chronology of events.

By the end of the semester, all students will have participated in leading one discussion. “Extra” discussions will be led by the professor.

Reading:
- Reading assignments are listed below, with their formats and/or locations, if known when this syllabus was completed.
- Password for e-reserves: mls587—lower case, no spaces, dashes, etc.
- For basic information about art and artists, see the following:
  1. Grove Art Online; accessible via Olin Library electronic databases (password required off-campus)
  3. Art History Resources on the Web: http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHLinks.html

Assignments:
All assignments listed below are 25% of your final grade.
- Discussion. There are 10 class sessions available for teams of two. Each discussion leader should:
  1. Read the required assignments carefully.
  2. Confer with your fellow discussion leader about what you think are the most important points in the readings and how you will relate them to images.
  3. Each write a 3-5 page critical response to one of the readings (you should divide them up so that you’re not both writing about the same one).
  4. Be responsible for obtaining images not shown in class, either by contacting me or finding them on ARTStor or the web.
  5. Lead the discussion from 6:45 to about 8:00.
6. Of course it goes without saying that EVERYONE does the reading and discusses it!

- **Participation (note attendance policy):**
  1. All members of the class are expected to do the reading, discuss it in class, engage thoughtfully with the lectures, and otherwise show a lively and consistent involvement with the course content. It is far more important that you show a critical interest in the course material than that you find “right” or “wrong” answers— which are elusive in this case anyway. We are an intellectual community striving to make sense of a wide array of visual representations of war, and you should see this course as an opportunity to learn from each other as well as from the professor and the course content.
  2. You may miss one class during the semester with no penalty. Missing two classes will result in lowering your final grade by one whole letter grade, and missing three or more classes will result in failure for the course. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving early except in case of emergency will count as an absence.

- **Midterm.** The midterm will be a take home exam in which you will examine critically aspects of the course content so far. 5-7 typed pages.

- **Research paper.**
  1. This will be a 12-15-page paper in which you will research and write about some aspect of war imagery not specifically covered in the course. Guidelines forthcoming.
  2. The paper is broken down into components: proposal, annotated bibliography, optional draft, final paper, and 20-minute presentation during the last three weeks of the semester.
  3. See “Possible Paper Topics” at the end of the syllabus for ideas.

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**JAN. 13: RHETORIC OF THE IMAGE; THEMES IN ART AND WAR**

Reading: optional:


Reading for Jan. 20:

Required:


Optional:


**Jan. 27: 1804: Antoine-Jean Gros, Napoleon in the Plague House at Jaffa: Empire and the Birth of the Modern Hero**

Reading for Jan. 27:

Required:


David O’Brien, “Propaganda and the Republic of the Arts in Antoine-Jean Gros’s *Napoleon Visiting the Battlefield of*
Eyalu the Morning after the Battle,” French Historical Studies, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 261-314. JSTOR

Optional:

Grigsby, “Revolt: Egypt; Girodet’s Revolt of Cairo,” Chapt. 5 in Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France (Yale, 2002). Reserve.

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**FEB. 3: 1834: EUGÈNE DELACROIX, WOMEN OF ALGIERS: COLONIALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER**

Reading for Feb. 3:

**Required:**


**Optional:**

Gillo Pontecorvo, dir., The Battle of Algiers (1966); Italy, 121 min. Reserve. Clips will be shown in class.

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**PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Reading for Feb. 10:

**Required:**


Alexander Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War (1866): http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam1.html

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**FEB. 17: 1792: JOHAN ZOFFANY, PLUNDERING THE KING’S CELLAR AT PARIS AND CELEBRATION OVER THE BODIES OF THE SWISS SOLDIERS, 1792.**

**NOTE DIFFERENT CLASS TIME: 5:00-7:30 PM**

**PROFESSOR WILLIAM L. PRESSLY, WINTER PARK INSTITUTE VISITING SCHOLAR, WILL LEAD A DISCUSSION OF HIS BOOK, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AS BLASPHEMY: JOHAN ZOFFANY’S PAINTINGS OF THE MASSACRE AT PARIS, AUGUST 10, 1792.**

Reading for Feb. 17:

**Required:**


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**FEB. 24: 1937: PICASSO, GUERNICA: MODERNISM AS PROTEST**

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE; MIDTERM EXAM QUESTIONS POSTED**

Reading for Feb. 24:

**Required:**


Optional:


MIDTERM EXAM DUE

Reading for March 3:

Required:

Film: Leni Riefenstahl, dir., Triumph of the Will, 1935; Germany, 114 min.
Clips will be shown in class, but students should watch the whole film outside of class. Reserve.


Optional:


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**March 10: SPRING BREAK**


Reading for March 17:

Required:


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**OPTIONAL DRAFT DUE**

Reading for March 24:

Required:

Film: Frieda Lee Mock, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*; U.S.A., 1994, 105 minutes. Clips will be shown in class, but students should watch the first 60 minutes of the film outside of class. Reserve.


Reading for March 31:

Required:

Katalin Orbán, “Trauma and Visuality: Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers,*” *Representations*, Winter 2007, n. 97. JSTOR


Optional:


Art Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* (graphic novel), (Random House, 2005). Location/format TBA.

APRIL 14: 2003?: *HOODED MAN WITH ELECTRODES: ABU GHRAIB AND THE PROBLEM OF THE REAL II*

Reading for April 7:

Require:


Optional:


April 14: Presentations

PAPERS DUE; RETURNED 4/28 WITH COMMENTS

April 21: Presentations

April 28: Presentations

PAPERS DUE; NOT RETURNED; NOT ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE

Critical response papers

- 3-5 pp., typed, double-spaced
- Your papers should answer these questions, as appropriate to the reading:
  1. What is the author’s thesis/main point/argument?
  2. What type(s) of evidence does s/he use to support the thesis?
  3. How does the evidence support (or fail to support) the author’s argument?
  4. How convincing do you find the argument? What makes it convincing—or not?
  5. What does this reading contribute to the course content?
Possible paper topics: a brief list (topics not covered in depth in class)

- Film (with a focus on the visual)
- Television coverage of Vietnam and the Iraq wars
- Photography; the impact of digital photography
- Propaganda posters
- Psychoanalytical approaches (eg. The French Revolution and decapitation)
- Goya’s Disasters of War series
- War and gender; constructions of masculinity
- Theories of war (eg. Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes), and their visual expression
- Architecture (eg. Mussolini, Fascism, and Rome)
- Monuments and memorials (besides the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial)
- Battles
- Portraiture
- Technology
- Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- War documentary; ethics, politics, aesthetics
- Maps and mapping
- War in the ancient world
- Fictional TV shows about war
- Resistance; pacifism
- Domestic terrorism
- Censorship
- Display and reception of war imagery
- Demonizing the enemy