



War and Terrorism in Popular Culture

ENGL 246
Summer 2022
Georgetown University

Instructor: Ellen Gorman
Location/Days/Times: ICC 204, MTWR 3:30 – 5:25 pm
Office Hours: By appointment
E-mail: elg27@georgetown.edu

Required Texts

Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror," Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell Eds.
Looking for the Good War: American Amnesia and the Violent Pursuit of Happiness, Elizabeth D. Samet
Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk, Ben Fountain

Films/Video on Canvas - Sharestream:

Oklahoma City (2017); *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb* (1964);
Homeland (Season 1, 2011; *Team America* (2004); *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012); *Do Not Resist* (2016)

Course Description:

How are war and terrorism reimagined and imbricated into popular culture? What are the effects of aestheticizing violence? This course will examine the proliferation of artistic forms that seek to address the issue of war and the attendant concern about terrorism in America by looking at contemporary conflicts and their impacts on texts including literature, film, television, video, song lyrics, and poetry.

In this course you will be asked to read and then to think critically about what you have read. You will also be asked to articulate and make claims about your interpretations in your writing, and participate in collaborative discussions, including leading discussions, and peer response sessions. The overall frame around any of our inquiries in this course is the development of critical thinking and writing skills.

List of assignments and percentage of grade

Response Papers (5 x 10% each)	50%
Researched Argument	20%
Online Discussion	10%
War Memorial Visit and response	10%
Attendance and participation	10%

General Policies

Attendance and participation:

Attendance is required except for documented reasons and is essential in this intensive five-week course. Since we are a small seminar class, participation is necessary and beneficial for a fulsome discussion of and engagement with all the themes and texts in the course!

Grading

All assignments are to be posted to the Canvas site for the course on the due date and time (EST) Assignments submitted after the deadline will be dropped 10 points; assignments submitted 24 hours late will be dropped 20 points. A grade of "No Credit" or 0 points will be given for assignments submitted later than 24 hours late.

Formal Assignments

Assignments should conform to MLA-style format and be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-point font, and paginated with the author's name on each page on the top right-hand side. For more specific information see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>.

All students are encouraged to avail themselves of the free services at the University's Writing Center:

<http://www.georgetown.edu/departments/english/writing/wcenter.html>.

Responses

You will need to submit six (6) informal response papers by the end of the course. Due dates and criteria for these responses are available on the Assignments tab on our Canvas site for the course.

Canvas Discussion Board Forum and Debate Assignments

You will be asked to respond to a prompt and then engage with your classmates via the Canvas Discussion Board format one time during the course. Dates are on the schedule and will require completion deadlines. This discussion is designed to encourage thoughtful and productive engagement among the students in the course in written form.

University Policies

All Georgetown University policies, as stated in the Undergraduate Bulletin, will be observed: <http://www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/>.

All students are required to be aware of the University's Honor Code regulations:

<http://www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/regulations6.html#standards>.

If you believe that you have a disability that will affect your performance in this class, please contact the Academic Resource Center (<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>) for further information. The center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. University policy requires faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct.

These resources include Jen Schweer, MA, LPC, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention, (202) 687-0323 (jls242@georgetown.edu) and Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS), (202) 687-6985 (els54@georgetown.edu).

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

Sensitive Material

At times this semester we will be discussing events and issues that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you ever feel the need to withdraw from reading, listening to or viewing a specific text, please feel free to do so. Also be in touch with me so that we may find a substitute for you to engage with that is more suitable.

Schedule:

- July 11** **Introduction and discussion of course**
- July 12** **Be prepared to discuss these texts:**
 Look up: definitions of “war” and “terrorism” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* electronic database at <http://www.library.georgetown.edu>
 Assess: “America’s Wars” – US Department of Government Affairs – VeteransAffairs.gov
 Read: “Language, Media and War: Manipulating Public Perceptions” – Yahya R. Kamalipour, *Global Media Go to War*, Marquette Books, 2004, p. 87 – 94.

July 13 Watch and critique episode of *Band of Brothers* – “Why We Fight”

July 14 Read: “Vietnam: The War That Killed Trust” – Karl Marlantes, *NewYorkTimes.com*
 Discuss your choice to discuss depictions of war and terrorism in American pop culture

July 17 **Module 1 Response due**

Respond to these learning materials:

- Watch: “Oklahoma City” – American Experience, PBS (2017) – Sharestream
- Read: Excerpt from *What Terrorists Want* – Louise Richardson (Canvas)
- Read: “The Spirit of Terrorism” excerpt/Jean Baudrillard (Canvas)
- Watch: CBC Radio, Scott Vrooman on the use of the word terror (YouTube)
- Read: “The Difference Between a Killer and a Terrorist” – J.M. Berger, *TheAtlantic.com*
- Read: “Why Is it So Appealing to Play as a Terrorist in Video Games?” – Phil Hartup, *NewRepublic.com*
- Read/Interact: “The Faces of American Power” – *TheNewYorkTimes.com*
- Watch comedy segment: *The Stephen Colbert Report: “ISIS Militants in Iraq”* – YouTube
- Watch/listen/read: Videos on YouTube and Read lyrics on *Genius.com*:
- “ObamaNation” – Part 3: Lowkey feat. Lupe Fiasco, Malcolm X, Tupac, M1 and Black the Ripper (2014)
- “When the President Talks to God” – Bright Eyes (2005):
- “Mosh” – Eminem (2004)

July 18 Discuss module texts and responses

July 19 Discuss module texts and responses

July 20 Discuss Introduction and Chapter 1 of Samet, *Looking for the Good War*

July 21 Read: The Cold War: A Pop Culture Timeline” – *Interactives.AVClub.com*
 Watch *Dr. Strangelove: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (in class)

July 23 – 25 **Discussion on Canvas**

July 24 **Module 2 Response Due**

Respond to these learning materials:

- Read: “Truth Stranger than ‘Strangelove’” – Fred Kaplan, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*
- Read: “Why the CIA Loved ‘Doctor Zhivago’” – Kevin Canfield, *TheDailyBeast.com*
- Listen to: “Wind of Change” podcast, Episodes 1 and 2 – May 2020, CrookedMedia, *Crooked.com*
- Read: “Was Threads the Scariest TV Show Ever Made?” – Ross Davies, *BBC.com*
- Read: “Americans are Unprepared for a Nuclear Attack” – Gordon F. Sander, *Politico.com*
- Read: “We Have No Nuclear Strategy” – Tom Nichols, *The Atlantic*, July/August, 2022.
- Look at/Read: “This Haunting Survivor Artwork Depicts the Horror of Nuclear Weapons” – Meghan Neal, *Vice.com*
- Watch: “September 11th 2001: A Day That Changed The World” – Top5s (YouTube)
- Read: “Speech to Islamic Center, September 17, 2001” – George W. Bush – WhiteHouseArchives.gov
- Watch “Osama bin Laden has Farty Pants – South Park, November 7, 2001 (Sharestream)
- Check Out: Memes - “September 11, 2001 Attacks” – *Knowyourmemes.com*

- Read: "Bin Laden Walks Into a Bar: Why teenagers love making jokes about 9/11" – Amanda Hess. *Slate.com*
- Look at: Graffiti.org – 9/11 Murals
- Look at: "9/11 Memorial Tattoos" – Inkedmag.com
- Watch: Jon Stewart, Response to 9/11 - *TheDailyShow.com*
- Read: "How 9/11 changed fiction: After the unthinkable," *TheEconomist.com*
- Watch Videos on YouTube/read lyrics on *Genius.com*
- "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" – Toby Keith
- "The Proud" – Talib Kweli
- "An Open Letter to NYC" – Beastie Boys
- Read: Croft: Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 – Canvas
- Read: "The Washington Post Reveals 'Top Secret America'" - Max Fisher, *TheAtlantic.com*

July 25 **No class/online discussion**

July 26 Discuss module texts and responses

July 27 Discuss Chapters 2, 4 and Epilogue of Samet, *Looking for the Good War*

July 28 Discuss module texts and responses

July 31 **Module 3 Response Due**

Respond to these learning materials:

- Read: "How likely are foreign terrorists to kill Americans? The odds may surprise you" – *BusinessInsider.com*
- Read: Muslim Americans: Current political climate worse than after 9/11, Gregory Krieg, *CNN.com*
- Investigate site: "Islamophobia" - *Testkitchen.huffingtonpost.com*
- Listen to: Interview with Deepa Iyer: "How South Asians Have Been Othered by 9/11" – *MSNBC.com*
- Watch: "2016 NPS Finals - San Diego - "Islamophobia" by Rudy Francisco, Natasha Hooper, and Amen Ra" (YouTube)
- Read: "Can Television Be Fair to Muslims?" – Melena Ryzik, *Nytimes.com*
- Read: "Actor Riz Ahmed wants to stop Hollywood's 'toxic portrayals' of Muslims" – *BBCNews.com*, June 2021
- Read: *Reframing 9/11*, Introduction and choose four of Chapters 1,2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 16
- Watch: *Team America* (Sharestream)
- Read: "'Team America: World Police' is still relevant" – Mark Harrison, *DenofGeek.com*
- Read: "The KKK Is a Terrorist Organization" – Max Abrams, *Politico.com*
- Read: "'I Think About It Daily': Life in a Time of Mass Shootings" – *TheNewYorkTimes.com*;
- Read: "Guns kill more people. So why does terrorism get all the attention?" – Tom Diaz, *TheWashingtonPost.com*
- Read: "Civil Liberties Today"- Adam Liptak, *TheNewYorkTimes.com*
- Read: "Orlando, race, and the meaning of terror," Terrell Starr, *Splinternews.com*
- Read: "The Rise of Domestic Extremism in America" – April 12, 2021 – *TheWashingtonPost.com*
- Excerpt from *American Hate*, Arjun Sethi, The New Press, 2018, pps. 96.
Chapter 7: "Marwan Kreidie and Shahid Hashmie (Canvas)

Aug 1 **No class/war memorial visit**

Aug 2 Discuss module texts and responses

Aug 3 Watch: *Homeland*, first two episodes (Sharestream)
Read: "Homeland TV Series Offers Critique on Real-Life Terrorism and What Constitutes Patriotism" – *HuffingtonPost.com*
Read: "How sensationalist TV stories on terrorism make Americans more hawkish" - Shana Gadarian, *TheWashingtonPost.com*
Read: "The '24' Effect" – Matt Bai, *News.Yahoo.com*

Aug 4 Watch: *Four Lions* – Trailer, YouTube
Read: "Mr. Robot, Narcos and Terrorism on the Small Screen" – Enigma-Mag.com
Read: The Dark History of Defending the 'Homeland' - *TheNewYorkTimes.com*

Aug 7 **Module 4 Response Due**

Respond to these learning materials:

- Watch: *Zero Dark Thirty* (Sharestream)
- Read: "What the Torture Report Reveals About Zero Dark Thirty" – Eliana Dockterman, *Time.com*
- Read: "11 Popular Songs the CIA Used to Torture Prisoners in the War on Terror" – To Barnes, *Mic.com*
- Watch: "Torture" – Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, *ComedyCentral.com* (YouTube)
- Listen to podcast: "Slow Burn: The Road to the Iraq War" – Season 5, Episode 2 – "Terror" April 28, 2021, *Slate.com*,
- Read *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*
- Read: "'Thank you for your service': what we really mean when we salute our troops" – Barrett Swanson, *Guardian.com*
- Look at: "Peter van Agtmael's Absurd, Grotesque Chronicle of the Fallout from the Iraq War" – Luke Mogelson, *NewYorker.com*
- Read: "Katy Perry and the Military Pop Cultural Complex" – Naomi Klein, *The Guardian.com*

Aug 8 Discuss module texts and responses

Aug 9 Watch: *Do Not Resist* (Sharestream)
Read: "How the War on Terror has Militarized Police" – Arthur Rizer and Joseph Hartman, *The Atlantic.com*
Read: "Warrior Nation" – *Pop Culture Goes to War*, Geoff Martin and Erin Steuter, Lexington Books, 2010.

Aug 10 **Module 5 Response Due**

Respond to these learning materials:

- Check out site: Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>
- Read: "The poisonous paranoia of 'see something, say something'" – Joshua Kopstein, *America.Aljazeera.org*
- Watch "The Snuke" – South Park (Sharestream)
- Listen to: Episode 44, Big World Podcast - "Capitol Insurrection, Riot or Terrorism?" – American University School of International Service
- Read/watch: "Day of Rage" – *TheNewYorkTimes.com* (YouTube)
- Listen to: Testimony of Officer Michael Fanone, July 27 House Select Committee Hearing on January 6, C-SPAN (YouTube)
- Listen: Podcast "Will Be Wild" – listen to at least two episodes, Pineapple Street Studios/Wonderly/Amazon Music, April 2022.

Aug 10 Discuss module texts and responses

Aug 11 **Last class; present researched argument sentence and discuss**