

War in Words

COURSE LEADERS

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WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

Warfare produces stories – originally these were oral stories but nowadays they are more often in the form of films, novels, theatre, song, poetry, memoirs, video games and the graphic arts (paintings, drawing and still photos), etc. We also note that, conversely, narratives are used to support war.

Although this course is called War in Words (WiW) we consider all media that are used to transmit experiences of war from generation to generation.

We examine how accurate they are, if they have become myths (and why), and how they influence how war is conducted.

While the course focuses on English sources, we do also examine cultural differences in the way war stories are told to better understand why nations (and non-state actors) go to war.

We set ourselves some research questions and 'test' these against the media that we examine.

These research questions are on the next slide

OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A SELECTION OF THE QUESTIONS WE EXAMINE

- For any given event, topic or theme, which gives the more convincing social, cultural, historical and political message - the fictional account or the non-fictional account?
- What differentiates anti-war from pro-war material and can war fictional artefacts be neutral?
- What makes war entertaining?
- When an item is produced long after the event, how does the time interval 'colour' the way the material is presented?
- Why do some conflicts produce a large quantity of literature, for example, WW1, and some, such as Korea, produce little?
- Can propaganda be good art?
- There has always been factual and fictional war reporting. Which provides us with the 'true' account of warfighting?

AIMS OF THE MODULE

YOU WILL FINISH THE COURSE BEING ABLE TO:

- understand the historical and cultural context in which wars and war material are produced and consumed
- interpret media critically using media specific language
- analyse and discuss war media topics with skill and knowledge
- justify your favourite war artefact (film, book etc.)
- write at length on various war and media related topics
- successfully give a 20-minute presentation on complex topics related to the course

METHODOLOGY

TO ACHIEVE THESE AIMS YOU WILL:

- read, make notes on, and give presentations on a variety of original artefacts (film, novels, stage plays, etc.)
- listen to, take notes on, and critically analyse original audio and video material
- initiate discussion and debate by researching new material
- suggest, explain and justify material you think is relevant to the course
- write an ongoing portfolio, in which you will see your written English improve from week to week
- take part every week in focussed discussions
- regularly prepare and deliver presentations

COURSE CONTENT

Key prose sources (e.g. important novels and short stories)

Film, Theatre (stage plays) and Audio drama

Song (songs sung by soldiers themselves and songs about war)

Poetry (key war poets who have influenced national identities)

Graphic arts (from cartoons through fine art to war photography)

Modern media sources (YouTube, computer games, blogs)

Secondary sources such as key writers who have striven to interpret this field

Other audio and video material including formal exercises to develop specific skills

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

SOME OF THE WARS AND CONFLICTS WE WILL EXAMINE

We will focus on the wars of the 20th century, but also find the need to look at earlier and more modern ones too. You may therefore find yourself researching some of the following:

WW1

Spanish Civil War

WW2

Korean War

Vietnam

Falklands War

Gulf Wars

Afghanistan wars

Russo-Ukrainian War

Future War

We will also occasionally need to ‘dip into’ even earlier times and see what people like Homer (The Iliad) and Shakespeare had to say on this topic.

STUDENT DRIVEN CONTENT

Every attempt is made to ensure that students can drive this course by providing content they consider important, entertaining and relevant. Further to that, considerable emphasis is placed on student led discussion and critical analysis.

We encourage students to be independent thinkers and to challenge pre-conceived ideas.

We welcome debate.

We have high expectations!

PRACTICAL DETAILS

COURSE LEADERS

Peter Cant-Salkowsky

email pcs@hsu-hh.de

Dave Duke

email duke@hsu-hh.de

- War in Words (WiW) is a module aimed at students from all faculties
- Successfully completing this course will get you 4 credit points for your Bachelor. You can also refresh your SLP or just improve your English
- You need to have at least SLP (HMLS) of 3332 already

LENGTH OF COURSE AND HOURS PER WEEK

- The course runs for 3 terms: Autumn 2023, Winter and Spring 2024
- Classes are 90 minutes per week on Wednesdays from 09.45 – 11.15
- We will be working on campus (Room 1158) but occasionally we may have to work online (MS Teams). The first class will be on campus, in Room 1158 on Wednesday 4 October.
- There will be a homework assignment each week. Typically this will be reading, writing, listening and note-taking or a piece of research. This assignment is integral to the course and counts towards your Bachelor points (i.e. it has to be done)
- Maximum number of students per class: 14

CREDIT POINTS

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR CREDIT POINTS?

A 20-minute oral exam including a presentation and discussion

A continually assessed writing portfolio compiled during the course

You will have 3 attempts in total to successfully complete the oral and writing requirements of M3 and S3

REGISTERING FOR CLASS

Register for the module on Campus Management

Deadline: Between September 27 and 30 September 2023

Questions concerning the deadline or CMS: contact either Dr. Novo in room 1124 or via e.mail at novo@hsu-hh.de or Frau Henning in room 1155 or via e-mail at melanie.henning@hsu-hh.de

A FINAL THOUGHT

*“The real war will never get into
books”*

Walt Whitman