

War and Cinema

Prof Ruth Ben-Ghiat

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Course Description

This course investigates the relationship of cinema and war around the world from the early 20th century to the present. Film has been integral to shaping public consciousness of military events as they unfold and the public memory of wars after the guns have fallen silent. The course looks at both feature films and non-fiction: we will watch government propaganda, commercial entertainment films and independent documentaries. Topics to be addressed include representations of ally and enemy; the aestheticization of violence and war as spectacle; the role of sound; the ethics of targeting. This is a class on the history of war, and the history of cinema; no prior knowledge of either field is assumed.

Course Materials

All of the films we see have English subtitles. Films may be watched on reserve in Avery Fisher, or watched privately. All course readings can be accessed on NYU Classes.

Course Requirements

Students will write one 7-8 pp paper (25%, conference paper length), and one 15-20 pp final paper (60%). Students will also do several brief presentations. These factor into the grade for course participation (15%) as do attendance and intervention in class discussions of readings and films.

Schedule of Course Meetings and Readings

Jan 23

Introduction:

The Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925) DVD 9704

Jan 30

Tool Kit

Ben-Ghiat, "War and Cinema"

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ruth-benghiat/war-and-cinema-its-complicated_b_6726410.html

Sorlin, "War and Cinema: Interpreting the Relationship"

Christensen and Haas, "The Political Analysis of Movies"

Rosenstone, "Revisioning History"

Eberwein, *The Hollywood War Film*, 11-13, 42-55

Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 1-35

Feb 6

World War I

La grande illusion (Renoir, 1937) DVD 2128

Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *Understanding the Great War*,
15-44

Kramer, "Prisoners in the First World War" (only read that article)

Vincendeau, *The Great Escape*

Wilcox, *Combat and the Soldier's Experience*

Sheehan, *Jean Renoir's Grand Illusion*

Sorlin, *Film in History*, 145-158

Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 369-393 (optional)

Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 1-4, 14-21, 24-30

Feb 13

The Imperial War Film

Gunga Din (Stevens, 1939) DVD 2853

Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema*, 1-20

Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire*, 1-12

Chowdry, *Colonial India*, 9-17, 154-159, 167-181

Callwell, "Small Wars"

Gywnn, "Imperial Policing"

Feb 20

No Class

Feb 27

World War II

A Pilot Returns (Rossellini, 1942) DVD 42319

Why we Fight: Prelude to War (Capra, 1942), clips DVD 5678

Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema*, 243-266

Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, 15-22, 73-82

Slocum, "Cinema and the Civilizing Process"

Culbert. 'Why We Fight'

March 6

World War II Resistance Film

Rossellini, *Rome Open City* (1945) DVD 28262

Pavone, *Civil War*, 29-53

Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, 33-53

Bravo, "Armed and Unarmed Resistance"

Stephan and Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works"

March 13 Spring Break**March 20 Anti-Colonial Resistance**

The Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo, 1966) DVD 4659
 Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 232-233, 238-246, 251-260
 Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 152-156, 172-200
 O'Leary, "The Battle of Algiers at Fifty"
 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-21
 (refer back to Bravo and Stephan)

Short Paper Due**March 27 Cold War**

The Manchurian Candidate (Frankenheimer, 1962) DVD 2034
 Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 1-4, 26-39, 54-62, 70-77, 82-84
 Carruthers, "The Manchurian Candidate and the Cold War
 Brainwashing Scare"
 Sorlin, "The Cinema: American Weapon for the Cold War"

April 3 Vietnam

Apocalypse Now (Coppola, 1979) DVD 69
 Boulanger, "PTSD"
 Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 1-6, 91-136
 Dittmar and Michaud, *From Hanoi to Hollywood*, 1-15, 145-158
 Department of Defense, *Why Vietnam?* (1965)
 Loehr, "The Fresh Kill"

April 10 The Balkan War

No man's land (Tanovic, 2001) DVD 2914
 Kosmidou, *European Civil War Films*, 92-99, 109-116
 Gow and Tilsley, "The Strategic Imperative for Media
 Management"
 Gibbs, *Do No Harm*, conclusion
 Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, x-14

April 17 Civil War in Lebanon

Lebanon (Maoz, 2009), clips DVD 42768 BLU
West Beyrouth (Doueiri, 1998) VCA 10774
 Hochberg, "Soldiers as Filmmakers" (parts on *Lebanon*)

Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 232-263
 Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema*, xvii-xxv; 25-28; 34-36; 48-50; 57-68

April 24 The Iraq War

American Sniper (Clint Eastwood, 2015) DVD 38764
 Review Boulanger on PTSD
 Stoler, "Imperial Formations" (optional)
 Kamalipour, "Language, Media, and War"
 Fawn and Hinnebusch, *The Iraq War*, 1-18
 Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 277-287, 290-309
 Ben-Ghiat, "American sniper,"
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/09/opinion/ben-ghiat-american-sniper-hero/>

May 1 Drone Warfare

Eye in the Sky (Gavin Hood, 2016) DVD 43673
 Benjamin, *Drones*, 127-148
 Gusterson, *Drone*, 59-81
 Satia, "Drones: A History from the British Middle East"
 Beauchamp, "Can Drone Pilots be Heroes?"

May 8 Presentations and Round-Up