

Englit 1610
Spring 2007
Saffron, J.

SYLLABUS

Topics in Genre: Photography of War, Conflict, and Protest

Instructor: Jennifer Saffron, MFA

ENGLIT 1610, Class Number 20064

Wednesdays, 10am – 12:25pm, 207 David Lawrence

Course Description:

Photography of War, Conflict, and Protest will examine and chronicle the role that photography has played as a mediator of war and pain from the Crimean War to the recent conflicts in Iraq, the Middle East, and Rwanda. Images of battle, refugee camps, genocide, the Holocaust, and war protests will be examined through the photographs of those such as Kevin Carter, Nick Ut, W. Eugene Smith, Eddie Adams, Chris Hondros, James Nachtwey, Fazal Sheikh and others. Points of inquiry: What is it to image suffering? What does the repercussion of mass chaos and violence look like? How have images of protest been used to form public opinion? What is the history of censorship of war photography? How does the media play a critical role in our understanding of large scale conflict?

Course Guidelines:

1. Your grade will be earned by an even percentage distribution of the following:
 - **Writing Assignments.** This includes papers and a notebook/journal.
 - **Class participation and effort,** including active participation in discussions and good attendance. Each unexcused absence will mark this portion of your grade down by a full letter grade. More than 3 absences = an F for the entire class. Class participation includes punctuality, being respectful and civil to fellow students and the instructor, and the use of appropriate language and behavior. Students will adhere to the Academic Integrity Guidelines and the Student Code of Conduct.
 - **Midterm and final presentation.**
2. You are expected to be at all classes unless you have an emergency. If you are requesting a pre-excused absence, please call Professor Saffron ahead of time at (412) 266-4424 and arrange to receive the assignment. Students with pre-excused absences must turn in their assignments on time, regardless of whether or not they will be in class. Students who miss more than one class in a row due to illness need to bring a doctor's note.
3. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 624-7890 as early as possible in the term, and to speak with Professor Saffron.
4. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh policy on Academic Integrity will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the Professor Saffron. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam, or paper will be imposed. Complete Academic Integrity Guidelines are at <http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>
5. No late assignments will be accepted, unless you have an emergency. This class includes reading, writing, visits to the library, and visits to exhibitions. Extra credit assignments will be offered; extra credit is equal to ½ of one writing assignment. Papers are to be 1.5 spaced with 11 or 12 point font. **Do not email papers or leave them in the faculty mailbox** unless instructed to do so. Bring your notebook to every class, as we will have periodic in-class writings.
6. Office Hours are 12:30 – 2:30 on Mondays in 433 Cathedral of Learning, and by appointment. Email jensaffron@comcast.net or call (412) 266-4424 to make appointments.

Course Sessions (15 sessions)

Notes: Students will be expected to attend screenings, exhibitions, and lectures as necessary. Please bring your journal to class. All paper assignments will be given to students, in writing.

January 3, 10 **The Photograph, the Camera**

Inquiry: What are the formal qualities that make up a photograph? How can we interpret images? What is the "collective image bank?" How is this different than the "personal image bank?" At what point is something historical?

Discussion: Introductions, review the syllabus. Discuss the history of the camera. Discuss the scope and history of the documentary image. View slides from early wars. Meditation with images on January 10.

Assignment: In your journal, choose an image from one of the websites for class and review/critique the image. Read Barbara Trent interview from *Activists Speak Out*. Read selections from David Levi Strauss's *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, respond in notebook.

January 17 **Censorship and the Media**

Inquiry: What is the history of censorship and the media? What is the role of dissent? How do images reach the masses? What images deserve to be publicly seen and who decides? Is there a such thing as exploitation? Is censorship justifiable? How do the photographic "subjects" fit into this? Small group debate: should there be access to more information?

Discussion: Abu Ghraib as case study. Review history of censorship.

Assignments: Watch *War Photographer*, write review. Read the essay entitled "On Message" and readings from Course Packet, respond in notebook. Plan to visit "To Vietnam and Back" at the Silver Eye Center for Photography, by February 10, and write a review.

January 24 **Father of War Photography: Robert Capa**

Turn in 2-page, typed review of *War Photographer*.

Inquiry: What is "authentic" war coverage look like and how do we know?

Discussions: Discuss *War Photographer*. View Capa's images. Meditation with images.

Assignments: Read excerpts from *Shooting War* and *Camera at War* and respond in notebook.

January 31, February 7 **WWII and Japan**

Inquiry: What does total obliteration look like? What is the image of heroism?

Discussions: View slides of WWII and from the book *Japan 1945*. Discuss images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. View Office of War Information online catalog. View images from Chim, W. Eugene Smith, *Shadows of War*. Meditation w/ images February 7.

Assignments: Attend video screening of *War Feels Like War* and write a 2-page review. Read excerpts from SHOTS by David Fenton.

February 14, 21 **Protest**

Turn in 2-page, typed review of *War Feels Like War*. MIDTERM EXAM on October 17.

Inquiry: Who is the subject "against"? How does the theater of protest play into the drama of the images? How have images served dissident movements?

Discussions: View images of WTO, Vietnam, Women's Suffrage and current war protest imagery. View images by David Fenton, Letitia Battaglia, Jindrich Streit, Tina Modotti. To be confirmed: **Audio conference call with photographer Chris Hondros**. Discuss final assignment.

Assignments: Visit www.mediarights.org and other websites, choose images and respond in notebook. 5 – 7 page paper due 2/28. Prepare for midterm.

February 28 **Midterm exam**, first half of class. Second half: **Suffering**

Turn in 5 – 7 page paper

Inquiry: What does suffering look like? Who consumes these images and why? Why do we "need" images of suffering? What is "too much?"

Discussions: View slides from Rwanda, Kevin Carter and Salgado's *Migrations*. Discuss the ethics of imaging suffering.

Assignment: Read Susan Sontag and essays by David Levi Strauss. Respond in notebook.

NOTE: There will be no class on March 7 due to Spring Recess.

March 14 Conflict

Inquiry: What makes something valid as an image of conflict? How do images of war and conflict differ, or do they?

Discussions: View images from Salgado, Tom Stoddart, Natchwey, Sheikh. Meditation with images.

Assignments: In preparation for March 21, visit Geneva Conventions website and write a notebook response. By the end of the term: visit the exhibition "Soul Soldiers" at the Senator John Heinz History Center.

March 21 Israel: the validity of the Geneva Conventions

Inquiry: Are the guidelines for photographers outlined in the Geneva Conventions valid anymore? Who decides?

Discussions: Review Geneva Conventions. View slides from current conflict from various photographers. Small group debate: debate the relevancy of the Geneva Conventions.

Assignment: Continue to develop final assignment research topic.

March 28, April 4 Iraq and Afghanistan

Turn in 5 – 7 page paper

Inquiry: What does the public want to see? What do we see? How are images building current "history?"

Discussions: Special guest speaker: Renee Rosensteel, photographer. View images by Geert van Kesteren, Stephanie Sinclair and others. Compare images by servicemen and images from the media. Revisit discussions about *War Feels Like War*.

Assignments: Submit questions online for a soldier to answer. Read from *Hotel Warriors*, in the Course packet, and respond in notebook. Visit online source on Jay DeFrank. Prepare for final presentation.

April 18 and 25

Final Presentations by students.
