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ENG 5061B-600: Special Topics in Literature and Literary Theory

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Reading and Writing the Iraq War
ENG 5061B, Section 600
Online/Summer 2021

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Caldwell

Email: mcaldwell@eiu.edu

Office Hours:

Virtual: Via D2L chat room or Zoom by arrangement (see below)

Required Course Texts**

The Corpse Washer, Sinan Antoon

Youngblood, Matt Gallagher

Fire and Forget, Ed. by Gallagher and Scranton

Frankenstein in Baghdad, Ahmed Sadaawi

The White Donkey, Maximilian Uriarte

Other texts as posted in PDF format or through links available in D2L course modules.

I. Course Description and Expectations

Course Description

“There were ugly moments and there were hopeful ones, and they made me wonder not only what the Americans were doing to Iraq, but what Iraq was doing to the Americans.”

–Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War*

Among the most recent of U.S.-led armed conflicts, the Iraq War (2003-2011) gives us the opportunity to examine the narratives of war in the 21st century. In this brief 6-week course, we will read fiction and non-fiction accounts of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in the aftermath of 9/11. We will consider both American and Iraqi perspectives in order to get a composite picture of the experiences of many of the people affected by this war. Course texts will draw from a number of genres, including novels, short stories, graphic novels, blogs, journalistic accounts, and film. In addition to making us aware of the current position of the U.S. in the modern global world, the ethical and practical repercussions of nation building, the importance of cultural bias in global decision making, and the re-emergence of nationalism in the U.S., these narratives also allow for an exploration of the rhetorics of masculinity, the ethics of reading, writing, and teaching trauma, the importance of language and media in shaping our attitude towards and our understanding of war, and the evolution of war literature in the 21st century.

The course project will give participants the freedom to tailor the class to fit their academic and professional goals regardless of concentration within the MA. Participants will meet with me early on in the course in order to define goals and establish a plan for a meaningful project.

Minimum Technological Requirements for English 5061**

- Reliable access to the Internet
- Ability to navigate various aspects of D2L, our learning management system
- Ability read documents using Word, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to create and post documents using Microsoft Word or a comparable format

**If you need help with any of these technological requirements, please contact me ASAP.

Course Expectations and Netiquette

Please note that while the timeline for this course offers some flexibility, there are weekly deadlines for coursework. Please be prepared to devote considerable time to the reading, writing, and other assignments listed below. If you need help, you have several options for contacting me. I will answer queries both via D2L email and Panthermail (mcaldwell@eiu.edu), typically within 24 hours, often much sooner. If you have questions, concerns or find yourself falling behind, please **do not wait** to contact me.

Regarding course netiquette, I ask you to observe the following policies:

- 1.) Be considerate of other discussion participants when interacting via the discussion board or any other electronic form for the duration of this course. Remember that often a writer's intention and tone can be lost in electronic formats. Err on the side of too much courtesy rather than too little.
- 2.) Dismissive, malicious, or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.
- 3.) You are *absolutely* welcome to express your own ideas and opinion *and* to agree *or* disagree with your peers, I ask only that you do so courteously.
- 4.) If you do not respect your classmates or your tone is inappropriate, you may be asked to redo an assignment and/or lose credit for the assignment entirely. In particularly severe cases, you may fail or be dismissed from the course at my discretion.
- 5.) Read all feedback you receive from me and discuss any questions you have about your feedback. If you are ever in doubt about whether a post violates course netiquette, please email me *before* you post it.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the students will be able to:

1. Discuss and critically analyze literature in a variety of genres and film related to the Iraq War;
2. Analyze both American and Iraqi perspectives on the war;
3. Study and examine context and apply current theories (e.g., as related to trauma, masculinity, etc.) to pertinent primary texts and/or contexts;
4. demonstrate competencies in a topic or theory to enable participation in professional or public setting (such as submit a seminar paper for a conference presentation).

Office Hours

My weekly office hours will be on Tuesdays from 2:30-5:30pm. This is the time I have set aside to have individual meetings with you. Since these are virtual appointments, I will make them in 20 minute increments (e.g., 1-1:20pm, 1:20-1:40pm, etc.). Please use my Calendly link to set up an appointment time. I'm also happy to make appointments at other times by request, and I'm happy to accommodate multiple platforms (e.g., Zoom, D2L Collaborate Ultra, Google Hangouts, a simple telephone call, etc.).

II. Course Assignments and Grading Distribution and Scale

Brief Descriptions of Assignments (detailed descriptions and rubrics on D2L)

1. *Discussion Forum*: Most weeks you will be required to post a response to a question I will pose to you in my online lecture. Your response should engage substantially with the texts we are reading or viewing that week. Whenever possible, bring specific ideas/evidence into your posts and cite the source/s for your ideas/evidence. Posts can make an argument, raise a question, point out an ambiguity, challenge an idea you encountered during the week, etc. Original posts are due by Thursday by midnight; substantial responses to at least 2 other participants are due by Sunday at midnight. While quality is infinitely more important than quantity, original posts should be roughly between 500-750 words; responses should be at least 150 words. See the "Rubric for Evaluating Quality of Participation in Discussion Boards" for more detail on expectations.

2. *Independent Project OR Class Paper + Final Exam*: You will have two choices for your more formal written work for this semester. You can either design an individual project, which may be research and analysis of a specific text/issue, an applied pedagogy project, or a creative project; OR, you can choose to do a shorter length (7-8 page) research paper on a short text from a list I will give you and a final exam. The final exam will take place on July 23rd. You should meet with me or email me by the end of the second week of class to confirm your choice. For more detailed instructions, see the assignment sheet.

Grade Distribution

Grades will be made available via D2L Gradebook. If you have any questions about your grade at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Assignment	Points	Final Grading Scale	
Discussion Forum Posts and Responses (5 of each [10 total], 10 points each)	50	90-100	A
Final Project	50	80-89.9	B
OR		70-79.9	C
Research Paper + Final Exam	25 each (50 total)	60-69.9	D

Total Points possible	100	Below 60	F
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Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). The English Department's policy on plagiarism states the following:

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards.”

To put this another way: plagiarism absolutely will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarists will be reported to the Office of Student Standards and will fail the course. If you are confused about plagiarism at any point in the semester, it is your responsibility to ask me about it before you turn in an assignment.

Outline of Course Content
 ENG 5061B / Summer 2021
 Caldwell

Module & Dates	Topic Covered	Reading	Assignment
Module 1: Course Introduction and D2L Orientation 6/14 – 6/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Historical groundwork • Voices of the War • Rhetoric of War 	Selected readings from the following texts posted on D2L except as noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldwell PowerPoint • President Bush, speech, 2002 (link on D2L) • <i>Baghdad Burning</i> (selection) • <i>The Forever War</i> (p. 114-133) • <i>Night Draws Near</i>, (prologue; p. 131-150) • “We are all Americans Here” in <i>Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk</i> (p. 108-138) • <i>American Sniper</i>, prologue (p. 1-6) • <i>Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq during World War II</i> • <i>America’s War for the Greater Middle East</i>, ch. 13 & 18 (p. 239-269; 358-372) • Map of the Middle East • <i>Once Upon a Time in Iraq</i> (film) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L post with responses
Module 2: Youngblood 6/21 – 6/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the American War Novel in the 21st century? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldwell PowerPoint • <i>Youngblood</i> • Gallagher article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L post with responses • Meet with Dr. Caldwell to discuss your final

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War and masculinity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hutchings, "Making Sense of Masculinity and War" (D2L) 	<p>project option; or email her with choice of option 1 or 2</p>
<p>Module 3: The Corpse Washer</p> <p>6/28 – 7/4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming of Age in Iraq 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldwell PowerPoint • <i>The Corpse Washer</i> • Selection from <i>Night Draws Near</i>, posted on D2L 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L post with responses
<p>Module 4: Adapting the War: Frankenstein in Baghdad</p> <p>7/5 – 7/11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting Trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldwell PowerPoint • <i>Frankenstein in Baghdad</i> • <i>This is Iraq</i> (D2L) • "Kill Yourself" and "Communiques (I)" in <i>The Forever War</i> (D2L) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L post with responses • Proposal or Abstract due for independent project or final paper, respectively, by 7/9
<p>Module 5: The White Donkey and other voices of PTSD</p> <p>7/12 – 7/18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic history • Trauma and its after effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caldwell PowerPoint • <i>The White Donkey</i> • Selected stories in <i>Fire and Forget</i>: "Tips for a Smooth Transition," "Redeployment," and "The Train." • <i>Chute, Disaster Drawn</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L post with responses
<p>Module 6: Independent Project</p> <p>7/19 – 7/23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent work/research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete final project; prepare for final exam (if applicable) • Conferences with Dr. Caldwell as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project/final paper due 7/23 • Final exam on 7/23 (only if you chose option 2)