EIU 4106G-021: War stories

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Current Assignment

Hemingway stories for Tuesday; plus War Poems handout and poems from NBW.

On Killing for Thursday and Friday.

Next hand-in date: Reserve research topic by Friday 7/18.

Check this space regularly. • • • Last update: 7/3/2003

INSTRUCTOR: John Kilgore. Office: 3331 Coleman Hall. Hours: M-F 4-5. Other hours by arrangement. Phone: (217) 581-6313 (office); (217) 345-7395 (home). E-mail: cfjdk@eiu.edu. Please feel free to call my home at reasonable hours. I prefer that you NOT visit me with questions just before class begins; just after is fine.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Attendance and participation (10%)
- Extensive assigned readings.
- Oral report (10%)
- Draft of Term Paper (10%)
- Term Paper of about 3500 words (10 pages) (40%).
- Final Exam (30%)
- University-mandated assessment exam.

I reserve the right to depart somewhat from these percentages.

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ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. Will count approximately 10% of your grade in the course. Beginning with the first meeting, I will pass around an attendance sheet which you must sign. At the end of the term, I will assign a participation grade according to the following scale: 1 absence—A; 2 absences—B; 3 absences—C; 4 absences—D; 5 absences—F; more than 5—further, proportional declines in your course grade (your attendance grade becomes a negative number). I will raise the basic grade a bit if I think your contributions to class discussion have been especially good.

Note that you have one "free" absence. Use this if you have to, but otherwise keep it as insurance. I will listen sympathetically to excuses, but I will not normally award attendance credit for any session which you have missed. An approved "excuse" entitles you to just one thing: the option of making up for the missed day by doing a significant extra assignment. See me in my office to make arrangements for make-ups, and check with me later to make sure the work has been duly credited. (Hint: It's easier just to be here. Honest.) Note: it is your responsibility to find and sign the attendance sheet at each session, to arrange for make-ups if necessary, and to check to see that make-up work has been duly credited.

ORAL REPORT. Will be a 5-10 minute talk, delivered in the eleventh or twelfth class meeting (out of 17 total) in which you discuss the progress of your term research project. Present your findings concisely, clearly, and vigorously, clearly relating your project to the ongoing concerns and questions of the course. Grades will be assigned based on the resourcefulness of your research, its overall usefulness to the course—a difficult thing to judge, admittedly—and the effectiveness of your delivery. Be as creative as you like in planning your presentation; the worst sin of any speaker is to be boring. Speak clearly, forcefully, and enthusiastically, resisting the compulsion, felt by many in the presence of a peer audience, to mumble, shrug, fidget, and say little of substance.

DRAFT OF TERM PAPER. Will come due on Friday before the oral report. This must be neatly typed, but may be unfinished and rough, as I recognize that you may find it hard to do much writing until you have finished your research. Suggested length is about 5 pp. The grade you get at this stage amounts to just 10% of the course total; it matters less in itself than the chance to get input and suggestions from me prior to handing in the final product, which counts for 40%.

TERM PAPER. Is the major assignment for the course, accounting for 40% of the final grade. By the end of Week 1, you must commit to your topic, which you will NOT be allowed to change. Choose an option from the list at the end of this syllabus, or after reading the list, invent a topic of your own that seems similar in spirit and design. You MUST obtain approval for your project in either case, as no more than 2-4 students will be allowed to work on any given topic. The idea here (in addition to averting conflicts over research materials) is to let everyone take off in a different direction from our common class discussions, becoming especially knowledgeable in some particular, small area we have touched upon together.

Though I will sometimes refer to this project as a "research paper," it should essentially be a persuasive paper that happens to be researched and information-rich. Another way to think of it is as a class report on steroids. The key is to focus, focus, focus, letting the argument drive the research rather than vice versa. Give information because it is directly relevant and necessary to your argument; not just because you happen to have found it. I will be very impatient with "data dumps" of materials only loosely related; of long reviews of introductory material that ought to be assumed and omitted; of any vagueness in your thesis or argumentative position; of impersonal, textbook-style prose that conveniently fudges the question of what thoughts are original with you; of "padding" by means of unnecessary or insufficiently edited quotes; and especially, always, of any failure to deal conscientiously with your sources.

I understand that you are not an expert (neither am I) and am not asking you to become one; I ask only that you go out and find a reasonable amount of information not already included in assigned readings, and that then (this is the hard part), you work that information into a report or argument of your own that remains substantially personal in tone and outlook.

All papers should be typewritten (or computer printed), double-spaced, and generally legible.
covers, use reasonable margins and fonts, and make sure the bibliography (or "Works Cited") and notes (if any) are in some reasonable approximation of MLA or APA format. Check the Writing Guidelines for another course of mine, Children's Literature, for a more general discussion of writing in college courses; the sections on audience and on research may be especially relevant.

Since this is a Senior Seminar, you will be using your term paper (assuming it passes) as your final submission to the Electronic Writing Portfolio. Accordingly, I require that the paper be accompanied by a completed EWP submission form and a clearly labelled diskette with an electronic copy of the essay.

Term papers are due Monday, August 6, at the beginning of class.

FINAL EXAM. Scheduled for the final class meeting period, will be a comprehensive exercise designed to ascertain that you have done all course readings with good retention and have a good grasp of major course themes. Objective questions will ask you to identify authors, works, characters, terms, and quotations. Essay questions will ask you to analyze concepts, interpret passages, and demonstrate basic familiarity with works on the syllabus. The exam will be open-book, open-note.

CHAT ROOM. Accessible through this page, will be available for a few days in advance of the exam. Check the "Current Assignment" board above for announced dates. Log on, post your questions, see what answers your classmates give, see what help you can offer in exchange. I may listen in and contribute answers or questions of my own. To participate you will need to have a WebCT User ID and know the basics of how to use the program. Take a little time with the "Student Starter Kit" to get this figured out.

LATE WORK POLICY: I will do what I can, but the accelerated pace of the summer session will make it very hard to accept late work. You must get in touch with me via e-mail or telephone in advance of any missed deadline if you hope to have an extension. Otherwise late papers will be penalized one full grade for each calendar day of lateness and will receive no written commentary.

Please be aware that the penalty for plagiarism or cheating—which I trust I will not have to impose—is automatic failure of the course. See me if you have any questions about this policy.

I will be more than happy to make reasonable accommodations for any student with a documented disability. Please contact me if you will need such an accommodation; or call the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services, 581-6583.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *War Poems* (Handout)
- Grossman, *On Killing*
- Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Stanely Lombardo
- Pressfield, *Gates of Fire*
- Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I; Henry V*
- Shaara, Michael, *The Killer Angels*
- Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*
- Several movies to be screened in class: *Full Metal Jacket, Patton*, and BBC productions of *Henry IV, Part One* and *Henry V*.

Note: we will be reading just excerpts from most of the larger volumes.
SCHEDULE

Note: Please complete the readings for each session before the class meets. As the course gets underway, try hard to READ AHEAD of the schedule. You will have a hard time keeping up at the end of the term if you do not make a head start on the longer readings. To keep track of changes, make a habit of bringing a hard copy of the syllabus to class with you, and check the posted online version periodically.

1) M July 14  Introduction

   Questionnaire. Film clips from Saving Private Ryan and Star Wars.

2) T July 15

   Hemingway, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (p. 3) and "Soldier's Home" (p. 143).

3) W July 16

   Full Metal Jacket -- watch in class.

4) TH July 17

   Discuss FMJ.
   Grossman, On Killing. Read the following: pages 1-156; 249-306; 323-332.

5) F July 18

   On Killing. DEADLINE FOR RESERVING RESEARCH TOPICS

6) M July 21

   The Iliad. Read the following: Books 1, 6, 9, 19, 21-22.

7) T July 22

   The Iliad

8) W July 23


9) Th July 24

   Gates of Fire

10) F July 25

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Patton – watch in class. **FIRST DRAFT OF TERM PAPER DUE**

11) M July 28

Discuss Patton. Reports.

12) T July 29


13) W July 30

*Henry V*. Assessment exam.

14) Th July 31

Movie excerpts: *Henry IV, Part I; Henry V; Band of Brothers*. Watch in class.

15) F August 1

*The Killer Angels*. (Read all.)

16) M August 4

*The Killer Angels*. **TERM PAPERS DUE**

17) T August 5


18) W August 6

Final Exam

**RESEARCH PROJECTS**

The following are samples and suggestions only. Many, many other projects are possible, and you are quite free and welcome to propose your own if you prefer it to any of those listed below. No more than two students may work on any one topic from this list, with the exception of

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numbers 1 and 7, which will permit up to 4 each.

1. How natural is war? Do we make war primarily due to historical and cultural factors (overpopulation, competition for resources, and a resulting history of warfare and the need to prepare for it, with preparedness itself becoming a *casus belli*), or because of instinctual factors (innate aggressiveness on both the individual and group level)? Don't feel you must settle this huge question once and for all, but collect and present evidence bearing on one side or the other. Try to relate your conclusions, whatever they are, to Grossman's thesis that killing is completely unnatural, accompanied always by powerful trauma on the part of the killer.

Some particular research areas you might want to consider:

- **Primate studies.** Do our nearest relatives in the animal kingdom engage in war or in warlike behavior? If so, that suggests that war is genetically programmed in us, too. Authors whose works you may want to look for: Jane Goodall, Judith Harris.
- **Anthropological studies.** Do preliterate, preindustrial societies tend to be warlike or peaceful? Find examples from around the world and from different eras.
- **History and prehistory.** Does recorded history provide instances of long periods during which little or no war has occurred? How about the archeological record? Or do prehistoric societies seem to have been warlike? Collect and present a wide range of examples.
- **Testimonies to "the joy of war."** Collect examples from both literature (starting with works on our syllabus!) and from nonfictional memoirs. If battle can be a thrilling, ecstatic experience, doesn't this argue that it is somehow natural and "right" for us? Relate the question specifically to works on the syllabus.

2. Honor in the Trenches: Hemingway and World War I. Read up a bit on Hemingway's life, especially the first three decades, and then learn a bit about why the carnage of World War I was so ghastly, so repulsive, and so completely unexpected. Find out what is meant by the critical catchphrase "code hero." Then re-read the two stories on our syllabus and all the poems, and notice how Hemingway seems to be refusing the lesson of, say, Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est," that war is nightmare and honor a tawdry lie. Hemingway still seems to believe that there is "one right thing for a man to do," and that finding one's courage, as Francis does in "Short Happy Life," is a deeply meaningful thing to do. Others disagree. Explain in detail, weaving together and contrasting the perspectives of different authors, setting the whole against the backdrop of the advent of mechanized warfare in World War I.

3. The logic of basic training. Starting with the detailed portrayal of boot camp in *Full Metal Jacket*, and drawing on Grossman's book wherever appropriate, give a detailed analysis of the nature and methods of basic training. Is the portrayal in the movie substantially accurate? If so, how did the military ever arrive at such an odd set of rituals and practices? What is the point and purpose of such things as the skin-close haircuts, the chanting, the constant verbal abuse, the running references to homosexual intercourse, the constant marching? Why does the culture of the military place such emphasis on physical conditioning, in an era when muscle power is basically insignificant to the outcome of battles? How can it simultaneously encourage cigarette smoking? What historical experiences of warfare seem to underly such practices? Does the training regimen make sense—and did it work in Viet Nam?

4. Homer's tactics. Finish reading the *Iliad*—a big "research" project in itself—then try to understand the nature of the combat Homer is depicting. How "true to life" do these battles seem? In terms of weaponry used, tactics employed, casualties suffered, conventions observed, and so on, how well does it correspond to what is known historically about warfare in this time and place (the west coast of Asia Minor in the second millennium BC)? How consistent does his account of tactics seem? The topic is huge and elusive, though fascinating. You will probably need to be
content with partial, tentative, carefully limited conclusions, unless you hit paydirt with an authoritative article that addresses just these questions. But see "single-source trap," below.

5. Sport and War: Homer's Heroes as Jocks. Finish reading *The Iliad*, then do some shrewd searching through such publications as *Sports Illustrated*, looking for behaviors and attitudes which parallel those of Achilles and the other warriors. To what extent does the modern sports hero seem to occupy a niche—and display values and behaviors—that seems similar to those of the ancient warrior? Can the service performed by the athlete be compared to that of the war hero? At what point does the analogy break down?

6. How deadly was phalanx warfare? Does Pressfield's depiction of the Spartan phalanx as a sublime killing machine, grinding the Persian ranks into a mountain of dead flesh, finally submitting the Spartans themselves to "100% mortality," square with the known historical facts? Granted that Leonidas's picked force perished to the last man in this battle, what might the outcome of a more typical battle have been? Widely different opinions seem to exist here: contrast Pressfield's vision of slaughter to Grossman's reminder that Alexander's armies suffered just 700 casualties (supposedly) during 13 years of fighting wherein they conquered most of the "known world." Is Pressfield to some extent buying into the kind of falsification that Grossman decries, presenting killing and dying as too easy? Address the question in part by finding out the casualty figures for some known battles in this era, noticing what proportion of soldiers deployed were killed or injured. Be sure to finish reading at least the second half of the novel.

7. Homosexuality in Ancient Sparta: What Pressfield Doesn't Tell Us. Learn everything you can about the tradition of man-boy love in ancient Sparta, then relate this to the novel, and (perhaps) to the larger topics of military morale, camaraderie, and militarism. Why is Pressfield, in a novel which purports to give a detailed account of Spartan culture, absolutely silent on this fundamental issue, and does his silence seem justified? Does the addition of this element of the historical truth, so odd and uncomfortable from the modern point of view, cast a new light on the martial idealism that Pressfield celebrates? What questions does it raise about the nature of militarism and "phallocentrism"? Is it an accident that the most militaristic and militarily effective of the ancient Greek city-states was also the one in which homosexuality was most practiced and encouraged?

8. Sins of the Cinema. The camera's need to show warfare in personalized, dramatic terms—with close-ups, recognizably heroic gestures, and mass outcomes visibly influenced by individual action—tends to lead to a persistent falsification of the realities of combat. Watch, in addition to the movies required for this class, a number of other war movies, then select just 2-4 for close scrutiny. Look at the battle scenes and appraise what is (in the most literal sense) realistic and what is not, doing research as needed to support your contentions. Is there historical justification for the scene in which Patton stands fearlessly in the middle of the street, shooting with a pistol at the German fighter planes, while machine-gun bullets trace a path right up to his feet? For Henry V leading a charge on horseback (!) through the breached wall of Harfleur? How realistic and probable are such moments? You might also want to consider, e.g., the opening of *Saving Private Ryan* or the close of *Gallipoli* or some other scene of your choice as a contrasting example—battle scenes that hold to a higher standard of historical realism.

9. Shakespeare's armaments. Read *Henry IV, Part I* and re-read *Henry V*. Learn what you can about the two great battles depicted here—Shrewsbury and Agincourt—and generally about weaponry and associated tactics in this era. Then appraise the military accuracy of Shakespeare's account—admittedly an unfair criterion in many ways, but nonetheless an instructive one. Why is there no mention at all, in either play, of the decisive weapon used in both battles? What different connotations tend to attach to new weapons (pistols, mines, cannons) and older ones (sword, horse, armor)? How realistic is the emphasis on individual challenges and confrontations within the larger battle? Why is there no real discussion of mass tactics? Does even great literature participate in the kind of falsification Grossman warns against, prettifying war while encouraging fundamental misconceptions about its very nature?
10. The Shaara Trilogy: Read *The Last Full Measure*, Jeff Shaara's excellent sequel to his father's novel. Do a little bit of background reading to learn how this novel and *Gods and Generals* came to be written so long after *The Killer Angels*. Then (your main task), compare and contrast the visions of war in the two novels. Is Michael's vision of combat more heroic than Jeff's? Does he believe in glory, sacrifice, triumph, and other martial values and catchphrases more fully than his son? Or is this impression more a function of the sharply different designs of the two books, the one concentrating on just the four days of Gettysburg, the other detailing the nearly two year time span from Gettysburg to Appomatox? Give carefully chosen comparisons and contrasts in support of your argument.

11. Shaara's interpretation of Gettysburg. Read as many historical accounts and analyses of the Battle of Gettysburg as your time permits. Then evaluate Shaara's account of what happened. Is his thesis, that Lee basically failed to understand the nature of warfare in the industrial age, shared by others? Does he seem to be correct in his representation of Longstreet as a passionate opponent of Lee's strategy, in particular of the attack on the Union Center on the third day? What other interpretations of the battle are feasible?

12. Winning and losing in Vietnam. Vietnam remains to this day a war that many Americans cannot understand, at least on the level of easy, compact understanding that cultural mythology affords in the case of such wars as World War II and even the Civil War. We are told that American troops "won" nearly every battle of any size; and yet we lost the war. How was this possible? Why did victory prove so elusive for the country that had defeated Germany and Japan in World War II and fought the Korean War to at least a draw? In answering, explore the complexity and ambiguity of what "victory" could even mean in the case of this war, with its unsettling but clear analogies to our recent engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. Why does "winning" tend to mean something different when a First-World country fights a Third-World country? Why do the Third-World countries, paradoxically, tend to win? Finally, how does the *My Lai* massacre illustrate the breakdown of conventional military logic in this kind of encounter?

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Some Additional Research Guidelines

- TOPIC: Must be chosen and declared by F 7/18. You may NOT change your topic once you have chosen it.

- FORMAT: Standard MLA or APA Style for text, notes, and bibliography. I.e., give internal references for all quotations, then include a bibliography ("Works Cited") as part of the paper. Other kinds of notes should be given at the end of the text, not the foot of the page.

- SCOPE OF RESEARCH: As a general, tentative guideline, aim to read about 100-200 pages beyond what is already required on the syllabus;
about 8-12 sources. But the far more important criterion is intrinsic: read enough to satisfy the particular needs of the topic you have defined for yourself. Be extremely shrewd and demanding in deciding just what you want to read, and why. Look carefully at the dates of books and articles, and don't waste time on sources that are out of date. Define your topic in such a way that the research plan, too, is sharply defined. Avoid at all costs the kind of aimless reading that causes you to dump a heap of essentially unrelated, undigested information in your reader's lap.

For our purposes, "research" means anything you read that is not already required reading in the class. The moment you learn something that the person in the next desk doesn't know, you have started to be an authority relative to the rest of us. Don't make the mistake of thinking you must somehow become more knowledgeable than the experts you are reading before you can write. Research by its nature is unfinished business. Do a reasonable amount, then write up what you have. Imagine your paper as a report to your classmates, and start writing!

You are welcome to use internet sources, but be careful! 90% of what is out there is unreliable. You will need to use all your critical acumen to sift through the junk to what is useful and valid. In general, printed sources tend to be more reliable than web sites. Be sure to include date captured for internet sources, and keep a hard copy in your notes for the paper.

• In writing, be in command of your sources; use them selectively and shrewdly, not massively and mechanically. This is your paper, not theirs; inventing and defending the thesis is your job, not theirs. Quote your sources directly, summarize them succinctly, take issue with them, discuss and analyze them, and always cite them adequately; but avoid merely paraphrasing them. Clarify your own role by saying "I," "my own opinion," etc. as needed. "Scrapbook papers" and "data dumps" will meet with a very chilly reception. See below, "Pitfalls."

• For most topics, start your research with journal articles, reading the most recent first, preferring scholarly journals to newspapers and mass-circulation magazines, and recent articles to dated ones. Avoid book-length studies; you don't have time to read them cover to cover, and if you try you risk being swallowed whole by another author. See below, "The Single-Source Trap."

• ORGANIZATION OF PAPER: Will depend on the nature of the particular project, but in general should not be much different from that of any good essay. The crucial criteria are that the paper have a clear and interesting thesis, that the thesis be developed and supported throughout, that everything in the paper be clearly related to the thesis. The main difference here is that you will be armed with considerably more information than usual, and so will be proving the thesis more copiously and with more sophistication.

PITFALLS
Do your best to avoid the following common errors:

- **The Scrapbook Approach (or "Data Dump").** The paper is so full of quotes and paraphrases, many of them poorly assimilated to the thesis, that overall coherence and interest are lacking. The paper feels padded and directionless. The reader falls asleep. Avoid by cultivating a firm, definite sense of your own purpose and thesis.

- **The Single-Source Trap.** Halfway through the project, you discover an article that says everything you wanted to say. Abashed and intimidated, you quote this source thirteen times in your own essay, making the reader wish he could be reading it instead of your paper, which seems to have no ideas of its own. Avoid by finishing your research early on, defining your topic clearly, digesting your sources completely, and citing a variety of sources.

- **The "All About" Approach.** The paper has no real focus and consists mainly of background information that is readily available from many sources. Rather than pursuing a thesis, it seems to drift and free-associate. Avoid by focussing on your thesis and argument, declining all tangents.

- **Vague Attribution.** The paper is full of information whose nature and origin is unclear. Though citations occur with some regularity, they tend to be vague, and the paper shows an enormous preference for paraphrase over direct quotation and explicit summary. As a result the reader can't tell, from one sentence to the next, whether he is reading your opinions, someone else's, or common background knowledge. Only the most meticulous reader can tell whether the paper is a mechanical paraphrase of two or three sources, or a decent job of research poorly presented. A fair grader will assume the former to be the case.

Avoid by talking directly about your sources, using various methods of citation as appropriate (short quote, long quote, summary, etc.), and by taking a more personal tone, explicitly distinguishing your own conclusions, opinions, doubts, and confusions.

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