EIU 4106-001: War Stories

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EIU 4106-001
War Stories
Fall, 2006
Dr. Kilgore
T TH 5:00, CH 3150

General Information

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A study of war itself and the way stories, plays, poems, and films about war have interpreted it to us. With Dave Grossman's On Killing and Stanley Kubrick's film Full Metal Jacket, we will contemplate the ways that society steels men (and more recently women) to fight, and how ideals of courage, discipline, honor, etc. seem to arise from the military predicament. Then we will trace themes of combat and devastation through works by Homer, Shakespeare, Michael Shaara, Tim O'Brien and others, supplemented by a sampling of war poetry through the ages. Along the way we will find time for some riveting if rather ghastly films, e.g., Patton, Dr. Strangelove.

Is Homo sapiens fundamentally aggressive, or is war an alien institution into which history has trapped us? How does the evolution of arms affect the social definition of courage and heroism? How do various writers resist or endorse the social contract that obliges the soldier to fight? How does the status of the modern sports hero parallel that of the ancient warrior? What are the links between sexuality and violence? We will wrestle with these questions throughout the course, but finally your answers will be your own. Be ready for some serious mind expansion and a journey to the dark side. Requirements include a research paper, a mid-term, a final, a class presentation.

http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~jdkilgore/Litclas/warstor/06FA/Syl0608.htm

8/15/2006
INSTRUCTOR: John Kilgore. Office: 3331 Coleman Hall. Hours: T TH 3-4, W 11-4. Other hours by arrangement. Phone: (217) 581-6313 (office); (217) 345-7395 (home). E-mail: jdkilgore@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.

Feel free to e-mail me, even with fairly complex questions and chunks of papers-in-progress. If I don't have time to answer, I'll say so.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Attendance and participation (15%)
- Assigned readings
- Research proposal and defense (5%)
- Term Paper of about 3500-5500 words (10-15 pages) (45%)
- Final Exam (35%) 
- Various ungraded but required bureaucratic items: submission of your term paper to the Electronic Writing Portfolio; assessment of speaking skills following research proposal defense; completion of online survey by 12th week of the semester; Watson-Glazer Critical Thinking exam, to be completed in class. All of this is a bit of a pain, but at least vaguely well-intentioned. See www.eiu.edu/~assess for further explanation.

I reserve the right to depart somewhat from these percentages.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- War Poems (Handout)
- Azar Gat, "Evolutionary Theory and the Causes of Hunter-Gatherer Fighting" (online); William Manchester, "Okinawa: The Bloodiest Battle of All." (On Reserve at Booth.)
- Grossman, On Killing
- Homer, The Iliad, trans. Stanley Lombardo
- Shaara, Michael, The Killer Angels
- Hemingway, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway
- Fussell, ed., The Norton Book of Modern War (NBW)
- O'Brien, The Things They Carried
- Several movies to be screened in class: Full Metal Jacket, Patton, and Dr. Strangelove.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. Will count approximately 15% 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.

Note the special conditions governing attendance late in the term. You will have chosen to be in one of two research groups. Group 1 hands in their papers on Thursday, October 31, and meets to discuss them on November 7, 9, and 14, with Group 2 excused from attendance on those three dates. Group 2 hands in their papers on Thursday, November 16, and meets to discuss them on November 28 and 30 and December 5, with Group 1 excused from attending on those dates. If you want to attend even when not required to, that's fine.

READINGS. Are not terribly extensive, but should be done with care, as you will be tested thoroughly on them on the final exam. Try hard to read ahead early in the term, to make time for your research project and paper. In all cases be sure to complete readings before the class meeting in which they are discussed, as you will get little from the discussion otherwise. Note that the works assigned for the course include three movies. These will be screened partially in class; you are welcome to visit the Reserve Desk at Booth Library to see the rest of each film, but questions on the final, in basic fairness, will pertain only to the portions we have seen together.

TERM PAPER. Is the major assignment for the course, accounting for 45% 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. 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. Imagine your classmates as your audience, and use that criterion, too, to make decisions about what to include or exclude. 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 tangents; 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 (this is the hard part) you then work that information into an argument of your own that remains substantially personal in tone and outlook. Another way of saying the same thing is that, in the small area you have defined for yourself, you need to become an authority compared...
to your classmates here. When you know enough to speak comfortably and usefully to the rest of us for ten pages, your research is done—even though you will and should still have dozens of unanswered questions.

Format. Since you will be submitting your paper for group discussion, you must provide twelve copies. Copies cost money, so I take the unusual step of allowing you to use small fonts (11 or even 10 point—no smaller) and to single-space. But leave reasonable margins, and skip an extra space between paragraphs (following the format you see in front of you here). Avoid covers, and make sure the bibliography (or "Works Cited") and notes (if any) are in some reasonable approximation of MLA or APA format. Pages must be numbered. 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 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 labeled diskette with an electronic copy of the essay.

Term papers are due Thursday, November 2 from Group 1; Thursday, November 16 from Group 2.

FINAL EXAM. Scheduled for Tuesday, December 12 at 5:15 PM, will be a major exercise, accounting for 35% of your course grade. It will be comprehensive (note that we have no midterm) and will aim to ascertain that you have a good grasp of all the films and readings in the course and of ideas raised in class discussion. Essays by other students in your group are part of the assigned readings for the course and will be covered in some way. 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, so make up your mind to keep good notes all term long.

During the last two weeks of the course, we will conduct an online review designed to prepare you for the final. I will invite you to submit questions by e-mail (with "Final Review Question" on the subject line). I will then post your name and the question to this site, together with my reply. So notice that the final is going to be hard for me, too!

LATE WORK & MISC: There are only two real hand-in dates for this course, both of them for work that will be distributed to the rest of the class, so it seems quite reasonable to expect you to meet both deadlines. In the case of a real emergency, get in touch with me as soon as you possibly can, and we will work something out. Papers that are late without adequate excuse 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.
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) August 22, 24  Introduction


2) August 29


Sign up for conference. Choose Research Topic.

3) September 5, 7


4) September 12, 14


5) September 19, 21

Class discussion of research paper proposals.

6) September 26, 28

The Iliad. Lombardo's Introduction and Books 1, 6, 9.

7) October 3, 5

The Iliad, Books 19, 21-22. Conferences on research projects.

http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/~jdkilgore/Litclas/warstor/06FA/Syl0608.htm 8/15/2006
8) October 10, 12

Shaara, *The Killer Angels*.

9) October 17, 19


*Patton* screened in class on Thursday.

10) October 24, 26

O'Brien, "If I Die in a Combat Zone," NBW 741-755. "How to Tell a True War Story" (from *The Things They Carried*).

11) October 31, November 2

Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, excerpt TBA.
Research Papers Due from Group 1 due on Thursday. Hand in twelve copies.

12) November 7, 9

Presentation and review of papers, Group 1. Only Group 1 required to attend.

13) November 14, 16

Presentation and review of papers, Group 1. Only Group 1 required to attend on Tuesday.

**Thursday: Dr. Strangelove screened in class--both Groups attend.**

Research Papers Due from Group 2 due on Thursday. Hand in twelve copies.

14) November 28, 30

Presentation and review of papers, Group 2. Only Group 2 required to attend.

15) December 5, 7

Tuesday: presentation and review of papers, Group 2. Only Group 2 required to attend on Tuesday.

**Thursday: Review. Dr. Strangelove. Both Groups required to attend.**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, December 12, 5:15 PM.**
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 three students may work on any one topic from this list, with the exception of numbers 1 and 7, which will permit up to 5 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. Take Azar Gat’s essay as your starting point, then look at responses to him and at his sources. 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. Check out Robert O’Connell’s book, Ride of the Second Horseman, which seems to argue that prehistoric humanity was basically matriarchal and pacifistic. (Note that Gat says something very different.)
- 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.

1-3 writers.

2. 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? 1-2 writers.

3. The demographics of war. Who fights in war, and why? Select one to three wars that especially interest you, and find out everything you can about the backgrounds of the soldiers who fought it, with the ultimate goal of shedding some light on that eternal mystery, the soldier's motivation. Are the soldiers in your era rich or poor, young or old, volunteers or professionals? What alternatives if any do they have to the military life? How dangerous is that life compared to the civilian life they have left? What are their odds of survival, and what rewards await them if they do survive? What role do patriotism and other forms of idealism play in their motivation? Are they genuinely lethal when they do fight, or does their role often consist (as Grossman would suggest) mainly of "display"? Note that for one reason or another, many soldiers never do see battle. 1-2 writers.

4. Women in War. What role is appropriate for women in the modern U.S. military? Start by learning in some detail what the current policies for women's participation are in one of the four branches of our military—and how well those policies seem to be working. Then take a position and defend it against counter-arguments. If, for instance, you advocate female participation in the infantry, what is it about the current rationale for excluding them that you find insufficient? (And you might want to ask whether you can picture women participating in Pickett's Charge or the Battle of Okinawa, both of which are graphically described in our reading this semester.) If you oppose any expansion of women's role, why do you think women could not do what men have always done? Note that women's participation in war, historically, has been quite limited, and that there must have been some reasons for this; depending on your position, you will want to say either that those reasons remain valid, or that they no longer are if they ever were. Note that the ultimate issue here should not be "What is fair to the soldier?" but "What will give us the most effective military?" A hot-button topic for people who thrive on intellectual combat. 1-2 writers.

5. Homer's Tactics. Finish reading the Iliad, 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 Homer's account 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 description 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. 1-2 writers.

6. 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? 1 writer.

7. Homosexuality in Ancient Sparta and Thebes. Learn everything you can about the tradition of homosexual love in ancient Sparta and Thebes, then relate this to the topics of military morale, camaraderie, and militarism. 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? Does it seem true, as Plato argued, that men will fight more bravely if their lovers are fighting with them? If so, does the exclusion of gays from the modern U.S. military make sense? You might want to take a look at a short science fiction novel, Joe Haldeman's The Forever War. It's lots of fun, and at one point Haldeman pictures a society in the distant future reverting to the Spartan model. 1 writer.

8. Grossman and the critics. Grossman makes some decidedly unorthodox and controversial claims: that most soldiers in most wars are unable to, and do not, kill; that those who do are forever burdened with guilt; that soldiers in the Civil War and other wars usually shot to miss. How have such claims been received by military experts and historians? Track down as many reviews and other sources as you can, and give us a survey of the critical response. Then add your own considered assessment of the validity of Grossman’s arguments. If you like, you may narrow your focus to just ONE claim, e.g. his account of Civil War firing rates. 1-3 writers.

9. 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 realistic and what is not, doing research as needed to support your contentions. Engage with specific questions like: 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 in Kenneth Branagh’s film? 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. 1-2 writers.

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. 1 writer.

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? Bruce Catton’s Glory Road, something of a literary classic in its own right, might be especially worth investigating here, but will probably take the bulk of your research time if you decide to read it; a detailed comparison and contrast of the two works, supported by a few additional sources, will be quite acceptable.

12. Shaara vs. Remarque: the anti-heroic and the neoheroic. Read Erich Maria Remarque’s All Quiet on the Western Front, one of the most devastating critiques ever written of the heroic martial idea. Then analyze the ways in which Shaara, at the unlikeliest of historical moments (1970, in the midst of the Vietnam debacle) subtly rebuilds the myth Remarque has tried to restore. Use secondary sources as appropriate, but make a sharp contrast of the two great novels the backbone of your argument.

13. 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 three stories on our syllabus, 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.

14. 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?

15. Grossman’s assessment of domestic violence and crime. Again, he makes some sweeping claims here, and posits what may be a simplistic cause-and-effect relationship between violent entertainment and real violence. Do your best to isolate these claims and submit them to independent verification. Is it true that an "epidemic of violence" is gripping all industrialized countries including Canada and Great Britain? Has that trend continued since 1995, when Grossman’s book was published? Is there in fact a strong consensus of psychologists that video games and violent movies lead to violent actions? You might want to spend much of your research time with Grossman’s later book, Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill.

16. War Machine. Acquaint yourself with the various types of seige equipment
used in the ancient world and the Middle Ages. Then **build and test your own**
ballista, trebuchet, catapult, battering-ram, or seige tower, using whatever
materials are easiest to find. Write a 5-8 page construction diary, giving some
historical background on your machine, then detailing the problems you encounter
and solve as you build it. Your workshop contribution will consist of the diary, plus
a live-fire demonstration of the machine itself, out in the Quad. **2 writers, who
must agree to work as a team and accept the same grade.**

17. Captive Women. Apparently bride-stealing (as it is euphemistically called) is
a widespread practice in "primitive" societies, as evidenced by continuation of the
practice in some hunting and gathering peoples up to this day. Find out whatever
you can about the experiences of women captured in this way and write a
descriptive essay and report that responds to at least some of the questions a
modern inevitably has: on what terms do the women consent to be "stolen"? What
alternatives do they have? Do they come to accept their new status, or do they
attempt to escape? Do they hate their captors or learn to regard them as genuine
husbands--or a little of both? In what ways does marriage in more "civilized"
societies seem like captivity by another name? Notice that Homer's Helen and
Briseis give us literary examples, which it may be quite appropriate for you to bring
in by way of comparison. Note too that early American literature is rich in "captivity
narratives."

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Some Additional Research Guidelines

- **TOPIC:** Must be chosen and declared by September 5, earlier if possible. 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 on a Notes page just
  before the Works Cited page.

- **SCOPE OF RESEARCH:** As a general, tentative guideline, aim to read about
  100-200 pages beyond what is already required on the syllabus; or 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, so that you 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
A mechanical paraphrase of two or three sources, or a decent job of research poorly presented. Instructors sometimes give students the benefit of such doubt. Not me. I don't believe that doing so is really a favor to the student, who learns to write horribly tedious, murky prose, or to anyone who must read his or her work in the future.

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.

***

Miscellaneous Links

Some Relevant Links:

- Why "suicidal fighting" is necessary to the growth of states
- Gettysburg tour
- High Water Mark Painting
- Photos of the dead
- Casualties in Wars of the Twentieth Century.
- Map of Vietnam
- My Lai massacre
- My Lai massacre2