HIST 4009: Film, Fiction, and Power in the American Century  
Mondays through Thursdays / 9:00 a.m. – noon / Lowenstein 307  
Dr. Christopher Dietrich (cdietrich2@fordham.edu)  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, noon to 1:00, and by appointment

“The whole drama of history is enacted in a frame of meaning too large for human comprehension or management.”

-Reinhold Niebuhr, 1952

Course Objectives
The goal of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of how visual and written representations of American power have influenced, challenged, and even transformed the U.S. relations in the world. With their capacity to reach millions in accessible forms, films and fiction do more than tell stories or entertain audiences. They have the unparalleled means to shape values and beliefs about power. They convey the social mores of the period in which they were produced. They address attitudes not only toward the practice and nature of American power, but also toward associated topics, including the morality of war, definitions of heroism, the depiction of enemies, and the ethical responsibility of individuals.

What sorts of themes do authors, screen-writers, and directors try to sell in the marketplace of popular culture? How do they reflect relations of international power? What do these reflections on power reveal about American society, its politics, and its place in the world?

Trying to answer these and other questions can tell us a great deal about the politics of foreign policy. The course will explore the relationship of the written history of U.S. foreign relations to selected works of film and fiction. In doing so, it examines the ways in which visual and written representations of the past compete with and complement the hindsight of historical interpretation. The course examines the links between foreign relations and popular culture, the intersection of politics and aesthetics, and the ways in which major issues in U.S. foreign policy—such as power, justice, war, and peace—have been discussed in film and fiction.

Class will meet four times each week during the summer session of 2016. I will lead class discussion. Rather than a recapitulation of the readings and screenings, the discussion will consist of interpretations of major developments, in a roughly chronological sequence, and detailed explorations of particular topics. Students will participate actively in discussions.

Readings and Screenings
We will screen twelve films in class during the course of the semester. In addition to the screenings, we will read 4 novels and several documents available on BlackBoard. Readings will be drawn from primary and secondary sources, from the fields of film studies, international history, and critical theory. All required books are available at the University Bookstore.

Books

Movies
“The Deer Hunter” (1978)
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)
“Bataan” (1943)
“Casablanca” (1942)
“The Stranger” (1946)
“Dr. Strangelove” (1964)
“The Spy Who Came in From the Cold” (1965)
“State of Siege” (1972)
“The Green Berets” (1968)
“Apocalypse Now” (1979)
“The Hurt Locker” (2009)
“American Sniper” (2013)

**Requirements and Grading**
The course is envisioned as a springboard for your own, independent research in the future. Thus, there are four requirements:

1. **A Thematic Essay on the literature of the War on Terror** (8-10 pages). Due on the last day of class. You will finish the course with a rich understanding of the major theoretical and historical debates of the new literature on the War on Terror. This final essay should map out the development of a particular theme or themes in the War on Terror novels assigned in class (Fountain, Klay, and Powers). For this essay, you will work from the required readings and screenings to identify and explore one or more basic themes of American power found in the new literature on the War on Terror, which you will then develop in detail based on the plot, characters, settings, or other literary devices of the novels.

2. **An annotated bibliography** (2-3 pages). Also due on the last day of class. The second assignment is an annotated bibliography identifying at least five future readings on to a topic chosen by the student, related either to film or literature and focused on a particular historical period or moment. The readings should help students ground themselves in the intellectual debate related to the history of your topic, outlining the key questions, texts, and interpretations. The annotated bibliography should also identify the importance of the moment in shaping our understanding of the themes, period and event under consideration.

Each student must meet with the professor at the end of week 2 to discuss the topic and begin to identify the main readings of the annotated bibliography.

3. **Meaningful class participation** is fundamental to University Mission. Each student will be expected to participate actively in classroom discussion. It is imperative that students complete the readings and screenings by the dates indicated. To this end, each student will be required to write four reviews, three on the novels and other readings and one on a movie, during the course of the semester. The reviews are to be no more than one page long and should discuss the main
characters, plot, themes, and arguments of the selection, as well as pose at least three discussion questions to the class. The reviews should also use the historical databases of the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post available at the library. Students will sign up for their reviews on the second day of class. The reviews and discussion questions must be turned in to the professor via e-mail no later than 7:00 p.m. the night before the beginning of the corresponding class.

The essay must be double-spaced, in twelve-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins. The bibliography and reviews will be single-spaced.

3. Along the same lines as above, groups of students will be required to lead class discussion once during the semester. This is an important task, as the students must provide a concise introduction to the texts, pose questions, and lead discussion.

To earn top marks, all assignments must be clearly written, well-organized, contain an argument and analysis, and demonstrate a mastery of the course materials. Grades will be computed in the following manner:

Thematic Essay: 35%
Annotated Bibliography: 15%
Reviews: 40%
Discussion Leadership: 10%

Class Policies
1. Attendance is mandatory.
2. Do not arrive late or leave early.
3. Cell phones must be turned off.
4. Recording class is not allowed.
5. Late papers will be subject to a penalty of one letter grade per day late. All assignments must be completed to receive a grade for the course.
6. All work must conform to the University Code of Academic Integrity.
7. Fordham University provides upon request appropriate academic accommodation for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact (718)817-0655.

Schedule of Class Meetings

Tuesday 7/5
Introduction: Themes of Power, History of American Power
Screening: “The Deer Hunter” (1978)

Wednesday 7/6
Towards an Interdisciplinary Study of Power
Novel: Vonnegut, Chapters 1 and 2
**Thursday 7/7**  
*Can War be Good? Great?*

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Vonnegut, Chapters 3 to 5

**Screening:**  
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)

**Monday 7/11**  
*On the Senselessness of War*

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Vonnegut, Chapters 6 to 8

**Screening:**  
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)

**Tuesday 7/12**  
*Hollywood and Its Soldiers: The Good War*

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Vonnegut, Chapters 9 and 10

**Wednesday 7/13**  
*The Good War, Part II*

**Reading:**  

**Screening:**  
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)

**Thursday 7/14**  
*Containment and the Cold War*

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Powers, Chapters 4 to 6

**Screening:**  
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)

**Monday 7/18**  
*Reading and Watching Containment*

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Powers, Chapters 7 to 10

**Screening:**  
“All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930)

**Tuesday 7/19**  
*Atomic Culture: Threat and Destruction*

**Reading:**  
Wednesday 7/20  
*Reflections on Peace, War, and Power in the Atomic Age*

**Novel:**  
Klay, pages 1 to 72.

**Thursday 7/21  
The Spy Thriller: Trust and Authority**

**Novel:**  
Klay, 73-128.

**Reading:**  

**Screening:**  
“The Spy Who Came in from the Cold” (1965)

**Monday 7/25  
To War in Vietnam**

**Reading:**  

**Screening:**  
“State of Siege” (1972)

**Novel:**  
Klay, 129-212.

**Tuesday 7/26  
Vietnam and America**

**Novel:**  
Klay, 213-270.

**Reading:**  

**Wednesday 7/27  
America and Vietnam**

**Novel:**  

**Reading:**  

**Screening:**  
“The Green Berets” (1968)

**Thursday 7/28  
The Legacies of Vietnam**

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Fountain, pages 1 to 73.

**Screening:**  
“Apocalypse Now” (1979)

**Monday 8/1  
The Dream Factory in the Late Cold War**

**Reading:**  

**Screening:**  
“The Hurt Locker” (2009)

**Novel:**  
Fountain, 74-138.

**Tuesday 8/2  
On Interventionism**

**Reading:**  

**Novel:**  
Fountain, 139-216.
Wednesday 8/3  From the Cold War to the War on Terror
Screening: “American Sniper” (2013)
Novel: Fountain, 217-249.

Thursday 8/4  The War on Terror
**ALL COURSE ASSIGNMENTS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS FINAL CLASS, NO EXCEPTIONS**