Communication 310

_Hollywood’s Vietnam:_
Special Topics in Communication
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**Course Description**
This ten-day 31/2-hour course will explore the relationship of Hollywood films to the history of the Vietnam War. Texts will include the films themselves as well as a sampling of the debates they inspired within various communication theoretical frames and how these debates contrast with and complement a critically acclaimed historical text.

Our examination of the war will include viewing the “war movies” in-class and contrasting those filmic stories with an acclaimed historian’s documented history of the conflict. The first three quarters of the course will cover different eras of the American Vietnam War. The last quarter will reflect on the experience of the war veterans, especially as it relates to perceptions of Vietnam veterans’ social mobility and how this perception relates to today’s cultural divide.

The goal of the course is to analyze how popular culture appropriates history, repackages it, and through marketing that product as an historical representation, creates a popular history that can be used to construct a specific political consensus. In addition, we will look at the history of the POW/MIA myth and how it contributed to current class divisions.

Along with class participation and a traditional test, a group project will be an important part of the final grade. Working in a group of four or five, students will detail how meaning was made in a Vietnam War film near the end of the semester. They will show clips of the film and, using scholarly essays as evidence, present to the class their view that the film reinforces or refutes information from the history text. The student audience members will be required to fill out a short critique of each presentation.

A final student paper will choose a short veteran’s oral history and decide which film he would choose to explain his war experience to others.

**GRADES**
Short test
Class participation and non-graded presentations
Final group Presentation
Final Test
Final Paper including bibliography and outline.

Readings from:
Recommended text: We will read about 1/3 of this text.
Films for viewing and analysis may include *China Gate, The Green Berets, The Deer Hunter, Apocalypse Now, Coming Home, Born on the Fourth of July, Uncommon Valor, Rambo II, Ashes and Embers, Cutters Way*
Films not shown in their entirety should be viewed by students after class in library or HUB or Ranger lab.