Communication 310

Mass Mediated Construction of a Warrior Culture and the Cultural Consequences
Special Topics in Communication
9 am - 12:30pm  M-F  1/2-1/16
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Davis 305
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Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History. In it, history evaporates. It is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from.

- R. Barthes, Mythologies

Course Overview:
This hour course will explore popular cultural texts and their relationship to the ideological debate over the meaning 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 a discussion of the conflict’s historical evolution in its colonial manifestation, liberation movement, and the multifaceted American Intervention. Although the genesis of the conflict can be traced to at least the nineteenth century, we will spend most of our time looking at the more familiar eras, which served as grist for the popular culture industry. Therefore, 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 examine the history of the POW/MIA myth and how it contributes to current socio economic class divisions.

Required Texts:
Recommended text: We will read about 1/3 of this text.

Readings from:
Conroy, T., & Hanson, J. (2008). *Constructing America's war culture: Iraq, media, and images at home*. Lanham: Lexington


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*

For semiotic analysis techniques:

[http://www.slideshare.net/MediaStudiesSaltash/semiotics-for-beginners-as-level](http://www.slideshare.net/MediaStudiesSaltash/semiotics-for-beginners-as-level)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEgxTKUP_WI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEgxTKUP_WI)

Films not shown in their entirety should be viewed by students after class in library or HUB or Ranger lab.

**GRADES**

Short test 10%

Class participation and non-graded presentations 10%

Final group Presentation 20%

Final Test 20%

Final Project 40% Annotated Bibliography (10%) paper outline (15%) paper (15%)