The Journalism of War, Revolution, Genocide, and Human Rights

Undergraduate Honors Seminar: FRSEM-UA 384 - 001

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In this course we will read some of the key journalistic works on war, revolution, genocide, and human rights that have been written in the past 100 years. We will attempt to answer certain questions: How, and why, has the nature of war changed in the past century? Why do some revolutions, such as those in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism, largely succeed, while others, such as those of the Arab Spring, fail so miserably? How do we understand senseless, sadistic violence--what Primo Levi called “useless cruelty”? Why do sufferers of violence and oppression so often become perpetrators of it? What is the difference between war and genocide, and why did the latter emerge in the 20th century? Why has terrorism re-emerged with such vengeance in the past two decades? What are “human rights”--another invention of the 20th century--and how, if at all, have they become a reality?

All these books will be available at the NYU bookstore, most in paperback; we will read all or parts of each. If you buy used books from the internet, please make sure you get the correct edition (where specified).

**George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia [Harcourt Brace/Harvest]

**Martha Gellhorn, The Face of War (Atlantic Monthly Press)

**Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz (Touchstone/Simon&Schuster)

**Ryszard Kapuscinski, Shah of Shahs
**Tina Rosenberg**, *Children of Cain*

**Peter Maass**, *Love Thy Neighbor*

**Philip Gourevitch**, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*

**Lawrence Wright**, *The Looming Tower* [2006 edition, if possible]

**Robert F. Worth**, *A Rage for Order*

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**Our Schedule:**

[Articles will be xeroxed and distributed in advance.]

**Week 1:** Introduction

**Week 2:** *Homage to Catalonia* (Spanish Civil War)

**Week 3:** *The Face of War* (World War II, and others)

**Week 4:** *Survival in Auschwitz* (the Holocaust)

plus: **current dispatch**: Holocaust

**Week 5:** War in Vietnam [*articles will be distributed*]

plus: **current dispatch**: Vietnam today

**Week 6:** *Shah of Shabs* (revolution in Iran)

plus: **current dispatch**: Iran

**Week 7:** *Children of Cain* (Latin American dictatorships)

plus: **current dispatch**: Latin America

**Week 8:** *We Wish to Inform You* (Rwandan genocide)

plus: **current dispatch**: Rwanda

&: final paper proposals due

**Week 9:** *Love Thy Neighbor* (Bosnian War)

plus: **current dispatch**: Balkans
**Week 10:** Lawrence Wright, “Letter from Gaza,” *New Yorker*; Susie Linfield, “Letter from Israel,” *Boston Review*; David Remnick, “Seeds of Peace,” *New Yorker*; (Israeli-Palestinian conflict) [all will be distributed]

**plus:** current dispatch: Israel/Palestine

**Week 11 & **Week 12:** The Looming Tower (9/11 terror attacks)

**plus:** current dispatch: terrorism

**Week 13 (Nov. 29):** A Rage for Order (Arab Spring); Articles on ISIS

**plus:** current dispatch: Mideast

**Week 14: (Dec. 6):** Film//Concluding Thoughts//

&: FINAL PAPERS DUE

Assignments:

Each week, three students will write a three-page (750-word) response paper to that week’s readings, which will be presented in class and become part of our discussion. Late papers will not be accepted.

In addition, each week, one student will present a current article on the country or topic that we are studying that week. Please xerox and circulate your article to the class in the week preceding your presentation. You will submit a short paper--500-750 words--explaining the argument of the piece your chose, why you chose it, and how it connects to that week’s readings.

Final paper: Your final paper of 2,500 to 3,000 words will be a critical analysis comparing at least two of the works we have read this semester. (A critical analysis differs from a comparison; we will discuss the difference in class.) You can, and indeed should, bring other works into your discussion. An annotated bibliography and fact-checking copy must accompany your paper. We’ll discuss all this in class.
All assignments must be double-spaced and in a ‘doc’ format. Your final paper will count for 30% of your grade; research proposal and annotated bibliography for 10%; class participation will count for 20%; article presentation and response papers for 40%.

**Readings:** Thoughtful, critical reading is the basis of this class. All students must do all the readings for each week; some additional readings will be added as the semester proceeds.

**Class participation:** A seminar is a collective endeavor that works best when everyone (that means you!) participates. Class participation--a thoughtful discussion of the readings and the issues they present--is expected each week. Please do not use cellphones or computers in class.

**Plagiarism:** Don’t do it. It will result in a failing grade for the entire course.