Why is the first book in the Western literary tradition, *The Iliad*, a book about war? Perhaps because civilization gives rise to both conflict and narrative. Yet the horrors of war push the limits of storytelling, test the boundaries of representation—whether literary or visual. This interdisciplinary seminar investigates the relationship between war and cultural production from the early twentieth century to the present. While representations of armed conflict are attempts to register and work through the traumas of war, they also shape public consciousness and memory after the fact. What philosophical, psychological, ethical, and aesthetic questions are raised when we reimagine military events? How does war provoke writers, directors, and visual artists to innovate in their respective media in order to represent violence, ruin, and death? We will consider fictional and non-fictional texts, feature films and government propaganda documentaries, painting and photography. Our central focus will be World Wars I and II, but the seminar also takes a long view by incorporating more contemporary conflicts, including the American involvement in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

**Course requirements & grading**

Preparedness and *active* class participation 10%
Two reading/viewing response papers (3 pp. each) 30%
Paper proposal (1 p.) 10%
Outline and annotated bibliography (3 pp.) 15%
Final paper/project (10-12 pp.) 35%

**WEEK 1: War and Memoir**

Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War* [excerpts] (35 pp.)
Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (1915) (20 pp.)
Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “How a century-old war affects you” (CNN.com, 2014)

**WEEK 2: Film Aesthetics and Trench Warfare**

Lewis Milestone, dir., *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)
Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) [excerpts] (30 pp.)

**WEEK 3: Writing and Staging Battle**

Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel* (1920) [excerpts] (60 pp.)
G. W. Pabst, dir., *Westfront 1918: Vier von der Infanterie* (1930)
Pierre Sorlin, “War and Cinema: Interpreting the Relationship” (10 pp.)

[RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE]
WEEK 4: Trauma on the Homefront
Rebecca West, Return of the Soldier (1918) (85 pp.)

WEEK 5: Women on the Front Lines in World War I
Ellen LaMotte, The Backwash of War (1916) (75 pp.)

WEEK 6: Picturing War
[class visit to the Museum of Modern Art]
Otto Dix, War portfolio
Dada
War photography
Jan Mieszkowski, Watching War (2012) [Ch. 3: “Looking at the Dead”] (50 pp.)

WEEK 7: Research and Writing Workshop
[RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE]

WEEK 8: War and Satire I
Karl Kraus, The Last Days of Mankind [Epilogue: The Last Night] (1918/1922) (60 pp.)
Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud, “Why War?” (1933)

WEEK 9: War Propaganda
Svend Noldan et al., dir., Sieg im Westen [Victory in the West] (1941)
Siegfried Kracauer, “Propaganda and the Nazi War Film” [1942] in From Caligari to Hitler, pp. 273-331

WEEK 10: The Air War
Hans Erich Nossack, The End: Hamburg 1943 (1948) (60 pp.)
Humphrey Jennings, dir., A Defeated People (1946)
[PAPER PROPOSAL DUE]

WEEK 11: Women Reporting World War II
Lee Miller, Martha Gellhorn, Margaret Bourke-White: selected essays and photographs (50 pp.)
Michèle Midori Fillion, dir., “No Job for a Woman”: The Women Who Fought to Report World War II

WEEK 12: War and Satire II
Bertolt Brecht, War Primer
Oliver Chanarin and Adam Broomberg, War Primer 2
[OUTLINE & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE]

WEEK 13
Tim O’Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story” [from The Things They Carried] (15 pp.)
Ang Lee, dir., Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk

WEEK 14
Phil Klay, Redeployment [excerpts] (40 pp.)
Kathryn Bigelow, dir., The Hurt Locker (2009)