“When we fight over the meaning of the past, we are fighting over what, today, we choose to care about.”
--Todd Gitlin, journalist and cultural critic

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 cruelty that often accompanies war--what Primo Levi called “useless violence”? 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 (with exceptions noted) at the NYU Bookstore, in paperback; we will read all or parts of each. If you buy used books from the internet, please try to get the correct edition (where specified).

**Martha Gellhorn, The Face of War** (Atlantic Monthly Press) [ORDER FROM INTERNET: ABEBOOKS OR BIBLIOFIND]

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

**Ryszard Kapuscinski, Shah of Shahs**

**Tina Rosenberg, Children of Cain** [ORDER FROM INTERNET: ABEBOOKS OR BIBLIOFIND]

**Timothy Garten Ash, The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89** [ORDER FROM INTERNET: ABEBOOKS OR BIBLIOFIND]

**Peter Maass, Love Thy Neighbor**

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

**Nir Baram, A Land Without Borders**

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

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

Our Schedule:

[Articles will be xeroxed and distributed in advance.]

**Week 1: Introduction: World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Spanish Civil War**
**Week 2:** The Face of War (Spanish Civil War, War in China, World War II, and others)

**Week 3:** Survival in Auschwitz (the Holocaust)/plus: Primo Levi, “Useless Violence”

**Week 4:** Shah of Shahs (revolution in Iran)

**Week 5:** Children of Cain (Latin American dictatorships)

**Week 6:** The Magic Lantern (fall of Communism)

&: FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS DUE

**Week 7 & 8:** We Wish to Inform You (Rwandan genocide)

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

**Week 10:** A Land Without Borders (Israel/Palestine)

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

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

**Week 14:** Concluding Thoughts/

&: FINAL PAPERS DUE

Assignments:

Each week, three to four students will write a three to four page (750-1000 word) response paper to that week’s readings, some of which will be read in class and become part of our discussion. (In your response, try to distinguish between thoughts and feelings—both are important, but they are not the same.) Each student will write a total of three response papers during the term. Late papers will not be accepted.

Each week, each student will bring in to class, typed, a sentence selection, two questions, and a “surprise” (I’ll explain this in class). These will be collected each week.
Final paper: Your final paper of 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 at least one other work--an essay, a journalistic report, a fiction or nonfiction book, a novel, a poem, a play, a painting-- 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’ or 'docx' format. (No Google docs, please!) Your final paper will count for 45% of your grade; class participation will count for 20%; response papers for 35%.

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. Please note: There is a lot of reading in this course!

Class participation: Everyone is expected to attend every class. If you are ill, of course, or have a true family emergency, you will be excused from class: but please email me on the day of the class, or before, if that is the case.

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.

No phones, no laptops in class.

Plagiarism is bad. Do not do it. It will result in a failing grade for the entire course.