War and Media Theory
Syllabus

Allen Feldman
Associate Professor
af31@nyu.edu

Department of Media, Culture and Communication
New York University

Michel Foucault inverted Machiavelli when he declared, “politics is war pursued by other means.” The question of “other means” raises the issue of the mediatic infrastructure of war and the cultural-political framing of warfare as the media of history. Foucault’s statement highlights the largely untheorized relation between political violence and the technological under the rubric of a philosophy of means. Communication studies traditionally focus on how war is propagandized by mass media. In contrast, this seminar proposes that war is an encompassing mode of political communication and ex-communication in itself by which media is militarized and violence is mediatized. I propose that a theory of modern war is in effect a philosophy of media.

Both September 11th and the Shock and Awe bombings of Iraq epitomized the temporal simultaneity of the global war event in which the technological representation of war—the truth claims of real time reportage and the perceptual affect of space/time compression—were part and parcel of the actual prosecution of military violence. Full spectrum dominance was equivalent to, and as strategically important, as territorial conquest.

We will examine how modern warfare has generated new visual cultures, new media networks, and new modes of witnessing and archiving the traumatic. This seminar proposes that the visual technology of war and the technologies of event dissemination are linked problems in the political history of representation. The triangulation of person, place and time as the basis of perceiving history can only be accounted for by a history of mediated perception--a history increasingly characterized by military technologies and a militarized visual culture, and their fashioning of the modern sensorium and modern memory. The seminar will examine the thesis that the “informatization” of contemporary consciousness can only be understood through a media theory of war.

Seminar Requirements and Grading:

- Consistent attendance and participation in class discussion: 20%
- Mid-Term Paper Proposal Session with Instructors 20%
- In-Class Presentation: 20%
- Term Paper based on 10 seminar readings and related class discussions: minimum 20 double spaced pages not including footnotes and bibliography: 40%

Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete the course will be able to demonstrate:
• advanced understanding of research methodologies, vocabularies and procedures appropriate to M.A. level work in Media Studies and Visual Culture

• advanced skills in the application of critical and interpretive vocabularies

• Learn to write a critical literature review

• developed research, writing and communication skills

• self-reflexivity as a research practitioner

• developed ability in identifying and addressing research objectives

• knowledge of a range of specific critical vocabularies, debates and concerns focused on visual communication, visual culture, media, technology, cultural studies, and human rights studies.

Course Resource Materials:

1. Course Documents Section Blackboard Course Site.

Sessions and Readings

Weeks One: The Evidentiary Image: The Rhetoric of the Real

The Battle of Algiers Film Screening

Required Readings:


Week Two: War and the Mediatics of Power
**Week Three: Scopic Regimes**

**Required Readings:**


Mendieta, Eduardo, 2004 Imperial Geographies and Topographies of Nihilism: Theatres of War and Dead Cities CITY, VOL. 8, NO. 1, APRIL


**Weeks Four and Five: The Visual Structure and Crisis of the War Event**

**Required Readings**


Mitchell, WJT, 2007 Picturing Terror, Critical Inquiry Winter 33 99 277-290,


**Weeks Six and Seven: Disfigurement and Shock**

Doherty Brigid, 1997. We are All Neurasthenics” or, The Trauma of Dada Montage, Critical Inquiry 24, Autumn, pp. 82-132. Blackboard Document


Weeks Eight and Nine: The Technological Uncanny


Derrida, Jacques, 1984, No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives, Diacritics Vol, 14. no2, Nuclear Criticism, Summer: 20- 31 Blackboard Document


Weeks Ten and Eleven: The Aesthetics and the Archive of Trauma


Weeks Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen: Student Presentations and Seminar Review