

Berkey
Writing War, Fall 2013

Writing Project #3: Writing Wartime Today

- **Prospectus/Literature Review Due:** Post to class blog by beginning of class on Thursday, November 14
- **First Draft Due:** Thursday, November 21 (bring 2 copies to class; also post to Sakai Forums)
- **Anonymous Peer Review Due:** Monday, November 25, by noon
- **Second Draft Due:** Tuesday, December 3 (bring 2 copies to class for peer review)
- **Final Draft Due:** at the beginning of your section's exam period; check the Registrar for specific times (post to Sakai Forums page)

Your Final Project

What does it mean to write war today? How have technological changes, literacy advancements, demographic shifts, and contemporary politics affected the writing and representation of war? What is newly possible? Who writes war today and why? What are the major genres of war writing today? What are the emerging myths of today's wars and how do they relate to previous wars' enduring myths? These are some of the questions of our final writing project. Having encountered literary, historical, and academic sources and located our own critical voice in their broader conversation, we will now extend our thinking into the contemporary moment. Because the scholarship about the literature of recent American wars remains in its infancy, our final project gives us the opportunity to contribute to the emerging scholarly conversation in original ways.

The final writing assignment of this project asks you to write a paper of **8-10 pages** that develops an analytical argument about *a particular genre/medium/form of contemporary war writing*. There are three main goals of this project:

- 1) Engage in original research about contemporary war writing
- 2) Develop an argument about your chosen genre/medium/form of war writing through the analysis of 2-3 primary texts
- 3) Situate that argument in a larger scholarly conversation that you identify through your individual research

Some questions to consider include: How is war represented today? In what ways do new visual, electronic, and digital formats transform the representation of war? In what ways are blogs changing the relationship between the war front and the home front? How do contemporary U.S. writers represent Iraq, Afghanistan, or the Middle East, and how do these representations relate to writing by Iraqi or Afghani authors? What responses do contemporary writers (American, Iraqi, Afghani, etc.) have to the media landscape of 21st century war? What is the relationship between "official" representations of war by the corporate media or government and "unofficial" representations by soldiers, spouses, or civilians? In what ways do contemporary writers (male and female soldiers, spouses, Iraqi civilians, etc.) respond to dominant cultural ideologies of gender, race, and/or nation?

While you are welcome to use one or more of the texts from the course, you will also need to develop your argument by analyzing texts of your own choosing. These may include blogs, memoirs, short stories, novels, or poems by soldiers, military spouses, DoD officials, news organizations, or Iraqi civilians, or they may include graphic novels, comics, documentaries, or major motion pictures. This paper asks you to think carefully about *genre/form/media* in your writing; because new communications media are constantly reshaping the terrain of writing and representation, you will need to carefully define and delineate the characteristic features of the particular form/genre/medium you are examining.

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Step 1: Literature Review

In preparation for the final paper, you will craft a short prospectus that sketches your plans for your final project. To prepare for the prospectus, you will first write a review of the relevant scholarship on your chosen genre of war writing. Literature reviews are a required part of grant and research proposals and often comprise a chapter in theses and dissertations. Their aim is “to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles” (University of Wisconsin Writing Center). Literature reviews help you situate your own ideas within the context of what is already known about your topic by surveying the field of scholarship and identifying common threads or schools of thought, gaps and inconsistencies, and further questions.

To prepare your literature review, you will first need to identify a genre/medium/form of war writing and possible areas of research interest. Using the databases we will learn about in our library session with Carson Holloway on October 31 in Lilly Library, you should conduct preliminary research in your genre and areas of interest. Some particularly important databases for our purposes are: MLA International Bibliography, Literature Online, and Communication and Mass Media Complete.

As you conduct your research, you may find it helpful to write a brief summary of each source. As we did in our synthesis workshop during Project #2, you may also find it helpful to use a table/chart to map how the different sources relate to/contrast with one another. Keep the following questions in mind:

- How are your sources similar/different in terms of methodologies, philosophies, claims, choice and interpretation of evidence, reliability, etc.?
- Do you observe gaps in the research or areas that require further study?
- Do particular issues or problems stand out? Do you want to compare texts in general or hone in on a specific issue or question?

Once you have conducted your research, the literature review should critically analyze the relevant scholarship you have identified. As you compose your review, remember that literature reviews are both informative and evaluative. Begin your review with an introduction that defines your topic/genre, explains why you are writing the review, and makes some central claims about the current state of scholarship (e.g. trends, debates, gaps, etc.). The paper should proceed by synthesizing the scholarship you've read, organizing the relevant literature by common denominators (methodology, claims/conclusions of authors, philosophies, choice and interpretation of evidence, etc.). In addition to comparing, contrasting, and otherwise relating your chosen texts, the body of the paper should summarize individual studies and articles with as much or as little detail as each merits according to its comparative importance in the literature. Conclude your literature review by summarizing the significant contributions to the field of study and pointing out any gaps in the research, remembering to maintain the focus established in the introduction.

Your literature review should be **3-4 pages** and will need to survey **at least 5 pieces of scholarship** (not including materials from our class) and should include a working bibliography at the end (with full bibliographic citation for each essay/article/book you've discussed). At least 4 of these texts must be scholarly sources (i.e. peer-reviewed).

Please see the following handouts for help with Literature Reviews:

- Writing Studio: http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/lit-review-1.original.pdf
- University of Wisconsin: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

Step 2: Prospectus

Key to this assignment is listening well to your sources and orchestrating their conversation so that it frames and supports your argument. The literature review should help you do this. As you research your topic and compose your literature review, remember that this is preliminary work, leading initially to a short prospectus that indicates the direction you plan to go with your final paper. While the literature review provides a space to survey the larger scholarly conversation about your topic, the prospectus offers an opportunity to begin to situate yourself in that conversation by articulating your research questions and preliminary claims. **Keep in mind that your argument should emerge from your reading and interpretation of the primary texts.** Your prospectus should include:

- 1) 1 paragraph that clearly articulates the driving issues of your “project,” including
 - a. Your primary texts
 - b. The issues/questions/topics on which you will focus (to sketch these issues, you may draw on your literature review, particularly its introduction or conclusion)
 - c. Your working thesis for the project
- 2) 1 paragraph that sketches how you plan to organize your materials in your final project
- 3) A prospective title

Listening to sources doesn’t necessarily mean agreeing with them: in your final project, you will make an argument that expresses your own conclusions and the prospectus is the space to start to carve out your own space in the scholarly conversation and articulate your argument. You will need, however, to identify common threads, similarities, or differences between your sources in order to determine the most effective organization of your essay. Finally, don’t ignore conflicting evidence or arguments. You will use conflicting evidence (ideas that aren’t exactly the same as yours) to qualify and complicate your initial claim. The result will be a stronger claim that accounts for more of the evidence you’re dealing with in the paper.

Formatting for Literature Review and Prospectus: I have separated these two elements here, but I would like you to submit them as one post to the course blog. You should write the Literature Review first and then the Prospectus. However, please organize them in the following way:

- 1) Title
- 2) Prospectus
- 3) Literature Review
- 4) Bibliography

The Literature Review and Prospectus will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- LitRev Intro: Defines topic/genre and organizes review around a claim(s) that identifies trends, debates, and gaps in the scholarship
- LitRev Body: Effectively summarizes/paraphrases different articles being reviewed; points out similarities and differences within the scholarship; logically organizes material and clearly demonstrates relationships among different articles or schools of thought
- LitRev Conclusion: Identifies significant contributions to the field of scholarship; points out any gaps or openings in the research; explains larger significance of topic and field of scholarship
- Prospectus: Identifies primary texts; defines central concerns and issues of final project; articulates working claim; sketches plan for organizing final project

Step 3: Drafting and Workshopping

In your final paper, **you must use 2-3 primary texts** (blogs, graphic novels, letters, diaries, novels, memoirs, collections of poetry, documentaries, major motion pictures, YouTube videos, collections of photography, etc.) and **6-7 secondary sources**. While you may draw on the course readings, at least 5 of your secondary sources must be from your own research and must be peer-reviewed.

You will take your writing through a series of drafts, beginning with the prospectus. After receiving feedback from your peers on your prospectus, you will craft an initial draft of at least 4-5 pages. You will need to submit this draft to Sakai by **Thursday, November 21; please bring 1 full copy of the draft as well as one copy of your introduction to class on Thursday**. We will use these drafts in a workshop on introductions on Thursday and you will receive feedback from me and one of your peers on these initial drafts. Based on the feedback you receive from me and your peers, you will revise your initial draft into a full 8-10 page essay for **Tuesday, December 3**. Please bring 2 copies of your revised draft to class for a peer review session. Your final paper will be due at the beginning of your section's final exam period. You can find your final exam time on the Registrar's website (<http://registrar.duke.edu/exam-schedules/exam-schedule-fall-2013>).

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR FINAL DRAFT TO SAKAI

The Role of your UWT: As with our first project, you will have the opportunity to meet with our UWT at some stage of the drafting process. Remember that your tutoring session will be most successful if YOU set the agenda and the first aspect of this is deciding the most optimal time for you to meet with our UWT. Would it be helpful to meet while you are crafting your literature review and prospectus? Would it be best to meet before the initial draft for a brainstorming session? Would it be most helpful to meet between the initial draft and the revised full draft so that you can digest the feedback from me and your peers with our UWT? Or would it be more effective to meet as you are making your final revisions? Once you've decided this, remember to arrive at your UWT session with a clear sense of what you want to accomplish during the session. Finally, remember to fill out the pre-tutoring reflection form on Sakai and bring this form to your session.

Everyone will meet with our UWT between Monday, November 11, and Wednesday, December 4. Your UWT will send out a reminder email about signing up for these sessions. Please sign up for your session no later than November 10 so that you and your UWT can arrange your schedules accordingly. Be sure to write down the correct location and time when you make your appointment. Failure to show up for your UWT conference will result in an absence in the class and you will lose your opportunity to meet with your UWT for the final project.

Successful essays will include the following:

- A complex argument that is clearly articulated early in your essay and gives the paper a clear focus
- Textual evidence from 2-3 primary texts—in the form of direct quotations and references to your texts—which you analyze/interpret in order to support, develop, or complicate your argument; use proper MLA in-text citations
- Analytical application of secondary sources: paper uses at least 6-7 secondary sources, striving to put them into conversation with your analysis and each other (by forwarding, countering, testing, or otherwise using them to develop your argument); paper frames your sources appropriately and uses proper MLA in-text citation
- Cohesive organizational structure: developed paragraphs; clear, focused topic sentences; appropriate transitions between paragraphs and ideas; an introduction and conclusion
- Other Details: Title and bibliography; few grammatical, typographical, or spelling errors

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Possible Media/Genres and Texts: This is not an exhaustive list; please search beyond this list.

Novels

David Abrams, *Fobbit*
Kevin Powers, *The Yellow Birds*
Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*
T. Geronimo Johnson, *Hold It 'Til It Hurts*
Roxana Robinson, *Sparta*
Lea Carpenter, *Eleven Days*
Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*

Poetry

Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet and Phantom Noise*
Hugh Martin, *The Stick Soldiers* and *So, How Was the War?*
Carol Mirakove, *Occupied*
Sam Hamill, Ed., *Poets Against the War*
Margaret Rozga, *Though I Haven't Been to Baghdad*
Dunya Mikhail, *The War Works Hard* and *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea*
Sinan Antoon, *The Baghdad Blues*
Elyse Fenton, *Clamor*
Warrior Writers Project (www.warriorwriters.org)
Vijay Iyer and Mike Ladd, *Holding it Down: The Veterans' Dreams Project* (music and poetry)

Story Collections

Siobhan Fallon, *You Know When the Men are Gone*
Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher, *Fire and Forget: Short Stories from the Long War*

Memoirs

Brian Castner, *The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows*
Heidi Squier Kraft, *Rule Number Two: Lessons I Learned in a Combat Hospital*
Donovan Campbell, *Joker One: A Marine Platoon's Story of Courage, Leadership, and Brotherhood*
Sebastian Junger, *War*
Nathaniel Fick, *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer*
Shannon Meenan, *Beyond Duty: Life on the Frontline in Iraq*
John Crawford, *The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell: An Accidental Soldier's Account of the War in Iraq*

Blogs (mostly book versions)

Colby Buzzell, *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*
Jason Christopher Hartley, *Just Another Soldier*
Matthew Currier Burden, Ed., *The Blog of War*
David Stanford, Ed., *The Sandbox*
Matt Gallagher, *Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in Savage Little War* (more of a memoir)
Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq*
IraqiGirl, *Diary of a Teenage Girl in Iraq*
Salam Pax, *Baghdad Blog*
milblogging.com (an index of military blogs)

Email

Michael Keller, *Torture Central: Emails from Abu Ghraib*
Alesia Holliday, *Email to the Front: One Wife's Correspondence with her Husband Overseas*

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Photography (combat and other)

Benjamin Lowy, *Iraq | Perspectives*
Ashley Gilbertson, *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot: A Photographer's Chronicle of the Iraq War*
Devin Friedman, Ed., *This is Our War: A Soldier's Portfolio*
Michael Kamber, *Photojournalists on War: The Untold Stories From Iraq*
Stacy Pearsall, *Shooter: Combat from Behind the Camera*
Eugene Richards, *War is Personal*
Kael Alford and Thorne Anderson, *Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq*
Sascha Pflaeging, *When Janey Comes Marching Home: Portraits of Women Combat Veterans*

Documentaries

Restrepo
Combat Diary: The Marines of Lima Company
The Ground Truth
The War Tapes
Standard Operating Procedure
Gunner Palace
Baghdad ER
Soundtrack to War
Boots on the Ground

Films and TV shows

Battle for Haditha
Hurt Locker
Generation Kill
Over There
Zero Dark Thirty
Homeland

Graphic Novels

David Axe, *War Fix* and *War is Boring: Bored Stiff, Scared to Death in the World's Worst War Zones*
Anthony Lappe, *Shooting War*
Brandon Jerwa, *Shooters*