

# THE HUMANITIES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR

**Osher NRC**  
National Resource Center  
for Osher Institutes



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# The Humanities and the Experience of War

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Dear Colleagues,

The National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (NRC) is pleased to offer this Digital Workbook for use within the Osher Institute Network, and, in organizations in which humanities content is thoughtfully studied. Each of the four sections of this workbook focus on a particular aspect of *The Humanities and the Experience of War*, a topic of high interest to members of Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLIs) and to countless people beyond this network.

There are 120 OLLIs located at colleges and universities across the US. These programs offer intellectually stimulating learning programs for adults over the age of 50 who explore scholarship simply for the joy of learning. The humanities, and the concepts and events surrounding war are of continual and significant importance to Institute members and their surrounding communities.

The theme and content offered in this workbook were guided by a diverse committee of Osher Institute staff and volunteer leaders. Their skillful counsel resulted in the development of the sub-sections of this workbook through academic examinations by three accomplished professors. The intent is to provide a valuable curriculum resource to guide lifelong learning organizations in the humanistic study of war.

The Osher NRC is grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) not only for the funding to undertake this scholarly work, but also for the myriad resources that have been funded by the NEH during their more than fifty years of distinguished service. You will find the bibliography contained here references many resources in the large collection of books, films, articles and research supported by the NEH to examine human conflict.

We also thank our esteemed colleagues listed to the right for their dedication, scholarship and hard work in bringing this project to its useful current form.

Please use this workbook toward your own study, both in group or private settings. Our hope is that it is enriching and helps you to better understand the complexities of *The Humanities and the Experience War*.

In gratitude,



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Executive Director  
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Combined Resource Materials Bibliography

# Modern Wars, Eternal Questions: Exploring the American Experience of War from Vietnam through the Global War on Terror

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## **Janice L. Jayes, PhD**

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Dr. Jayes specializes in the political and religious conflicts of the Middle East and Latin America with specific interest in the rise of non-state actors and the security challenges posed by climate change. She is a current professor of history at Illinois State University, as well as an instructor for the Osher Institute at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Jayes was a Fulbright scholar in Egypt, and during the past twenty years she has worked in and lectured on the contemporary Middle East and Latin America. Her research and writing projects relate to migration, environmental change and security, and the rise of non-state actors.

## Overview

The following material is designed to support community-led discussion groups in exploring the experience of modern U.S. American wars from the Vietnam era through the present. By reviewing letters, memoirs, fiction and film, groups can explore how these modern wars both reflect and challenge the American tradition.

They can also examine how individuals have met the challenge of communicating these unique experiences to a broader circle through personal and public work. As these community groups may include participants from a variety of backgrounds and generations, and both veterans and the general public, discussion leaders are encouraged to modify the attached materials to best meet the interests of their members.

**Part I:** Introduction

**Part II:** Themes and Suggested Resources

**Part III:** Community-based Approaches and Ideas

**Part IV:** A Bibliography of Resources for Study

## I. Introduction: The Private Experience of War and the Public Forum of Democracy

The private experience of war is impossible to completely convey across generations or even across the invisible lines that separate individual lives, and yet, as both humans and members of a democratic nation, we have an obligation to make the effort and understand the gauntlet others have run. This involves more than trying to understand the immediate tasks and challenges that faced individuals during wartime; it also means trying to understand how the participants' lives may have been permanently altered by the experience, and why they may spend years revisiting or avoiding memories of the experience in an attempt to understand its mark on their lives. It involves also examining what parts of the experience our public culture relives or avoids, as we are all marked by these wars. Sharing and studying these experiences, borne by a few, but at the direction of the nation, are part of the obligation we have towards both humanity and our belief in democracy and a civilian-controlled military.

Approaching this topic of war through the humanities is a natural choice. The humanities offers us a rich tradition for investigating the many ways humans have struggled to communicate across the divides of time, situation and individual lives. Fictions, memoirs, theater, history—all represent efforts to explore shared human questions. They help individuals reconsider not just their own experience, but the place of their experience in a broader human framework. To share the personal experience of war with others is to attempt an ordering of what might have been an incomprehensible piece of personal and social history. By examining personal experiences of war through these works designed to bridge the individual and social gap, we encounter the experience of war as a common challenge, not a private reserve.

The program that follows offers models for engaging in the study of the experience of war that is focused on the American experience in the past half century. Soldiers who have participated in combats from Vietnam to Iraq share several common challenges. They all live in the shadow of the national memories of the “greatest generation” of World War II and struggle to reconcile their own experiences with that idealized cultural icon of war. Yet the wars of the past fifty years adapt poorly to that model, with poorly delineated enemies, battlefronts, and goals. Measures of military progress and timelines are clouded, and the wars proceed with little public awareness of the ordeals transpiring in their name. Americans are comfortable with the legacy of WWII in their culture, but the American relationship with more recent wars is still unresolved. As both individual participants and as a nation we struggle to reconcile the conflicts of the modern era with the expectations created by the legacy of WWII.

Focusing on this era also helps highlight dramatic shifts in the experience of war that should be of concern to all Americans. Changes in technology, in social media, and in the shift to a volunteer army have changed many fundamentals of the wartime experience, and many of the long-term effects on the individual and society are still unknown. This should be a public conversation, not one confined to those in the grip of the changes themselves. Re-examining the experience of soldiers in the last decades, the impact of social, technological, and organizational changes on their experience, and the efforts by individuals and the public to make sense of this experience over years and decades should be a community conversation. Democracy is protected not just by weapons, but by study and debate, and surely this is one of the most important conversations we should be having as a nation.

While the experience of the war may belong to a few, it is the responsibility of us all to examine it.

## II. Suggested Themes and Readings for Studying the Modern American Experience of War

The following material provides suggestions for topics, readings, and questions that can be explored in small group sessions. It is divided into three thematic areas: the role of memory, the blurring of traditional categories in modern wars, and the lingering effects of war on postwar lives. These themes can provide starting points for conversation between different generations and different stakeholders in understanding the experience of war for individuals and for the nation. Each thematic section pairs general remarks on the topic with a bank of discussion questions linked to film and print materials. Specific resources appropriate for the theme are presented and are also compiled in a bibliography at the end of this document. Many of the topics are interconnected (resulting in some replication within question banks), and individual groups are encouraged to choose readings, themes, and questions that best fit the concerns of their audience and choose the materials—films, excerpts, or entire books—that fit their situation.

### Theme 1: The Alchemy of Memory

“We had the experience but missed the meaning...”

- T.S. Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*, (1941)

War memoirs, once written primarily for family posterity or professional records, have been replaced in recent decades by personal accounts designed for public consumption. Since the 1990s, a wealth of memoirs, covering the experiences of Vietnam, the first Gulf War, and now the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been published. Some are highly introspective, some irreverent, and some heroic in style. Other writers have explored their memories through the choice of fiction or drama. These genres provide a wealth of information and insight into individual experiences in wartime, as well as providing a forum for discussing the challenges of communicating that experience to others.

On the following page are some suggestions for initiating discussions with memoirs and fiction in general, as well as specific questions that can be used with suggested resources. Some study communities may decide to focus their meetings on discussing specific works of fiction or memoirs representing different eras of military engagement, or different styles of writing. Other study communities may wish to pair discussion of memoirs and fiction with writing activities based on their own experiences, as is described in Part III. Through all these discussions a common question may be discerned: **How is the experience of war understood and shared across generations and across the divide between participants and non-participants?**

**General Questions**

1. Participant writing offers a priceless resource on wartime experiences, but not a clear-cut interpretation. Writers have different goals and audiences in mind as they compose, and readers bring their own agendas and histories to the encounter. Who was the intended reader of the text? How might readers in different eras or different situations respond to the text? Choose a particular passage (for example, a description of daily life or of a harrowing encounter) and discuss which audience the author intended to reach and how different audiences might perceive the text.
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2. In what ways can memoirs offer unique advantages for understanding the experience of war? Does this make them the best source? What limitations are there on learning about the war experience through memoirs?
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3. How might the content of memoirs differ from the content of letters? Do you think memoirs would be more or less revealing than personal letters? Why, and on what subjects?

One way to start a conversation on this would be to use the documentary film, *The American Experience: War Letters* (PBS, 2001, 60 minutes), which includes letters from the Revolutionary War through the Persian Gulf War, or the film *Dear America: Letters from Vietnam* (director Bill Couturie, 1987, 87 minutes). The Veterans History Project at the Folk Life Center, Library of Congress, maintains a searchable collection of interviews, memoirs, letters, and photographs of American veterans that spans World War I through the 2003-2011 Iraq War.

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4. Participants could also compare letters from the Civil War with styles of correspondence today. In what ways are letters from earlier generations more or less forthcoming and on what subjects? What surprises you in their tone or content? Do you think earlier generations of letter writers shared more or less of their personal perspective and emotions with their reader than correspondents today? How do you think modern technologies of correspondence, like emailing or Skyping, have altered what is shared? Is it that the technology is different or is the line between public and private revelation different today? Which era seems to have letters that are more emotionally truthful, and why do you think that is?
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5. How do common motifs in American literature (journeys of self-discovery, coming of age sagas, return of the prodigal son, etc.) appear in war memoirs? Are there specific motifs that we expect to find in the memoir? What are possible motifs you would expect to find in current memoirs?
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**Questions for Specific Texts**

1. It's probably no coincidence that the boom in war memoirs published in the late 1990s coincided with the advent of reality television and social media. Two memoirs from Desert Storm, Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* (2003) and Joel Turnipseed's *Baghdad Express* (2003), tried to place their experience of becoming a soldier in 1990 in the larger context of finding their identities as young men in America.
  - a. Does this introspective tone reflect the specifics of that conflict (brief and relatively safe for most American participants) or the growing acceptability of these inner-directed preoccupations in American culture in the last two decades?
  - b. Both Swofford and Turnipseed create a distinctly anti-heroic portrait of their war experience. What exactly is new here: Style? Content? Cynicism? Do these anti-heroic memoirs reflect a change in how war is experienced or a change in the acceptability of doubt and cynicism? Would this style have existed without the cultural legacy of Vietnam?

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2. Matt Gallagher's *Kaboom* (2010) and Colby Buzzell's *My War* (2005) both began as and maintained the tone of irreverent blogs on their life in Iraq.
  - a. Is there a pre-Internet equivalent to blogs? Could these have been written or published in an earlier era?
  - b. Many of their complaints about senseless regulations, or the dangerous and misguided orders from out-of-touch officers, have a long history in war literature (Joseph Heller's absurdist WWII novel, *Catch 22*, is a prime example), but how does the immediacy of blog posting affect this tradition?

Gallagher explicitly discusses the fallout from his decision to publish his critical thoughts about the war in a blog post that went viral in the chapter "On Martyrdom, Suicide and Press Coverage" (140-149). This excerpt gives a glimpse of Gallagher's style as well as the context of blog publishing.

In both Gallagher and Buzzell's memoirs there is little sense of order or progress, but merely episodic incidents that make little sense even to those experiencing them. Neither chronology nor overall military strategy are addressed in the memoirs, leaving the reader without the usual guideposts to recounting war.

- a. Is this a result of new forms of war or merely a new form of writing (personalistic and postmodernist in style) about war?
  - b. If you were writing about events in your life would you prefer to provide the strategic or chronological context or leave it out? How important is this context to what you want to communicate? Do you think it would give a writer or reader more perspective on the experiences if they were placed in a larger context, or would it distract from the experience of the writer? Participants may wish to discuss this based on a specific incident from their own life or in relation to a specific incident within the memoirs.
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3. Many writers (Marlantes, Wolff, Buzzell, Klay, O'Brien, etc.) have produced both memoirs and fiction based on their war experiences.
- What can be done in fiction that is different from what can be done in a memoir or essay?
  - Which do you think has been a more effective form of communication for you in learning about the experience of war?
  - Which is your preferred format for reading?
  - Which format might you choose if you were writing about your experiences and why?
- 
4. While blog-based accounts resulted in instantaneous memoirs, other soldiers have taken decades to compose their thoughts on their experiences. Karl Marlantes's memoir, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (2011), was written thirty years after his service in Vietnam, and only a few years after his lengthy novel *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War* (2009). In *Matterhorn*, Marlantes paints a gritty fictional narrative of a platoon pursuing a costly and senseless campaign, while the memoir is organized thematically around themes like guilt, numbness, and rage.
- How do you think the thirty-year gap between Marlantes's service and his novel and memoir affected what he created?
  - Is it even fair to call *What It Is Like* a memoir? It certainly describes personal experiences, but the organization reflects the author's desire to explore philosophical and moral challenges within war rather than to create a narrative account of his service.
  - How effective is this form of writing in communicating his views in comparison to a narrative memoir?
- Any one of his chapters, such as "Guilt" (48-60) or "Killing" (26-47), could be used as a basis for discussion.
- 
5. The same questions could be asked about the work of Tobias Wolff, who began publishing short fiction stories in the 1970s, but did not complete a memoir (*In Pharaoh's Army: Memories of the Lost War*) until 1994. In a 1996 interview with *Bomb* magazine, Wolff was asked about the "personal moral accounting" evident in the memoir. Wolff stated, "It's not so much about the immorality of the war itself, but about how a normal person is complicit in the folly of his time." The statement implies that cultural context is a driving factor in individual choices, but Wolff does not approach the "folly of his time" directly in his memoir and seldom follows chronological sequence.
- How do you think Wolff's style helps him communicate his message about personal moral accounting and the spirit of an era?
  - How would the memoir be different if he had not interspersed pre-war and post-war material throughout the account of his time in Vietnam?
  - Participants might look at a particular chronological break and ask why the author chose to juxtapose the different moments. Would you choose a style that proceeded chronologically or one that chose juxtapositions to tell of your experiences?
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6. Tim O'Brien also reworked his Vietnam combat experience several times through memoir and fiction. In contrast to Marlantes and Wolff, O'Brien published a memoir only a few years after his 1969-70 service (*If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home*, 1973), then returned to the experience twenty years later in two works of fiction. O'Brien remarked that his motivation for returning to the subject of Vietnam in his writing was his frustration with American ignorance of the Vietnam War.
- Why do you think he chose fiction rather than non-fiction for this task?
  - Which would you choose if the goal was to address public ignorance of the war?
- 
7. O'Brien's style in his novel *Going after Cacciato* (1978) has been described as "magical realism" in mixing realistic descriptions with improbable events. O'Brien doesn't just fictionalize the experience, he creates impossible situations that his characters accept as normal (walking away from the war to Paris, falling "up" out of a maze of Vietcong tunnels, etc.).
- How effective is this technique in conveying O'Brien's war perspective?
  - Is there an incident or feeling from your experience that you could imagine presenting with surreal elements? Why would you decide to use or not use unrealistic elements in your account?
- 
8. The first chapter of *The Things They Carried* (1990) was originally published as a short story and can be read in isolation.
- What do you think O'Brien wants Americans to understand about the war from this story?
  - Which of the items mentioned seems most suggestive to you of the inner world of the different soldiers?
- 
9. What do memoirs gain or lose with the passage of time between the experience and the writing? Which memoirs do you prefer? Those written immediately or those composed decades later? How do you think your style of memoir writing might change over time?
- 
10. Even if the memoir never reaches the public domain, can it be useful to the author? What do you think was the goal of Buzzell or Gallagher in writing their blogs before they were reworked as memoirs? Would you write for yourself or for the public? Would you have a specific individual or audience in mind?
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11. Since 2001 memoirs describing the specifics of military training and actions have proven popular with the American public (*No Easy Day* by Mark Owen, *American Sniper* by Chris Kyle, *Lone Survivor* by Marcus Luttrell, and so on). Do these help the public understand or distort the vision of the war experience by concentrating on action-oriented stories? Why do you think people read them and what does this mean for creating broader American awareness of the war experience?
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12. In a September 2016 speech, Army Special Operations Command General Raymond Thomas criticized the rash of memoirs from former Special Operations soldiers as damaging to the mission and security of his troops (“Top U.S. Special Operations General: ‘We’re hurting ourselves’ with all these movies and books,” Thomas Gibbons-Neff in the *Washington Post*, September 15, 2016). The article provoked a lively discussion in the comments section online as hundreds of readers responded. Some agreed with the general and lamented the loss of stoic silence, others noted that social media had changed the equation between the public and the military, and that it was impossible to maintain secrecy in modern warfare.
- What do you think? Is the rash of instant memoirs more a product of technological change or a product of changing cultural norms?
- 
13. While General Thomas outlined the dangers of tell-all memoirs, others have noted that there may be advantages to the flood of accounts on bookstore shelves. In the age of a volunteer army, many soldiers (and memoirists) complain about public apathy towards their mission.
- Can these action memoirs help dispel public ignorance, or are they merely a new form of reality TV?
  - How does the commercial market preference for certain kinds of memoirs influence the role that memoirs might play in public debates?
- 
14. What about the less cinematic experiences in deployment, like the boredom and escapism of soldiers in *Soldier Girl*, or Turnipseed’s months of driving supply trucks.
- Is the public interested in these stories without humor?
  - What does it do to the public’s view of the military to be exposed more often to the high drama stories of deployment than the mundane tasks and challenges of life in the service?
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15. Memoirists often compare their experiences to family and national traditions of war. Brian Turner’s *My Life as a Foreign Correspondent* is one of the most historically grounded of the modern memoirs. Turner cannot discuss or think of his experience in Iraq without placing it in the context of family memories of service in WWI, WWII, and Vietnam. Anthony Swofford also describes the curious fascination of later generations of soldiers with the movies of the Vietnam War. In interviews with veterans, Trish Woods also finds frequent references to earlier conflicts.
- What do you think will be the legacy from the current wars and what parts of that will be remembered in popular culture? What parts will be forgotten?
  - How will memoirs contribute to building this legacy?
-

16. Do female soldiers have the same identification with that cultural legacy of war as male soldiers?  
How do women deployed see themselves in relation to the American experience of war?  
Do you think memoirs authored by women would differ significantly from memoirs authored by men?
- 
17. *Soldier Girls* is not a memoir, but a collective biography of three female soldiers. It describes a constant environment of sexual harassment (from fellow American soldiers more than local personnel), sexual misbehavior, racism, and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Would you expect the content described here to be treated in a different manner in a first-person memoir?
  - How might the passage of time affect the way the women spoke of these issues if they had been interviewed twenty years after the events, rather than during the war?
  - What if the women had been officers (rather than enlisted) concerned about their careers?
  - How important is this material for understanding the experience of Americans at war and how likely is it to be debated among a broader audience of Americans?
- 
18. Michele, one of the women profiled in *Soldier Girls*, finds that writing a college paper on the history of Afghanistan helps her regain control over her own memories (p. 206). Marlantes and O'Brien revisited their war years in Vietnam by writing both memoirs and fiction.
- What is it about these activities that might be therapeutic?
  - Are there other activities that might offer similar opportunities to those struggling with unresolved feelings about their experiences?
- 
19. Can reading the memoirs of others offer similar comfort? How do you think it would affect veterans if they find their experiences have been shared by others? How might it affect them if their experiences seem invisible in the national memory of the war?
- 
20. What is the role of the modern war memoir? Does it fill a therapeutic role that might have been filled by religious or other traditions in earlier eras? Is it a product of a social media-based culture of oversharing? Does it play an important role in improving public knowledge of the experience of soldiers or does it merely provide entertainment and skew the picture of service? What kind of memoirs would best serve the need of building an informed democratic citizenship? Is this different from what kind of memoirs might best serve the needs of those who served?
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**Theme 2: Blurring Lines**

For many years Americans had the luxury of thinking of war as an activity that took place “over there” on a clearly defined battlefield and with clearly defined beginnings and endings.

Popular culture treated military service as a chapter apart from normal civilian life, and, while the entire society was affected by the passage through war, the experience itself was imagined as a delineated departure from the norm of peacetime. For both the individual and the community, war was an encapsulated experience that reappeared only in tidy revivals on holidays.

Yet this has never been the reality of war. The lines are rarely so easily drawn between war and peace, combatant and non-combatant, or front and home, and this has only increased in American engagements since the Vietnam era. In Iraq and Afghanistan, victory has, as in Vietnam, been both elusive and ill defined. Not only is “the front” porous, but the front may be found among drone operators at domestic air bases, where technology has given those who live in physical safety a front-row seat to the destruction they participate in. Or the front may include a Skyped conversation relayed across the globe to a kitchen table in Indiana. And in an age of war with non-state actors, the categories of combatant/non-combatant are both muddled and dangerously hard to read. We are in an age of unending war and everywhere war.

There are many ways to explore the ways in which the blurred lines of modern war affect those who experience it. Memoirs, like those of Marlantes, Gallagher, and Buzzell, illustrate the physical and psychological strain of uncertainty and the impossibility of reducing decisions to black-and-white-moral choices in a war against irregular forces. The biography *Soldier Girls* traces the painful efforts by three soldiers to manage home-front responsibilities while deployed to Afghanistan in 2004 and then Iraq in 2008. The 2014 film by Andrew Nicolls, *The Good Kill*, portrays the deterioration of the pilot’s family and professional life as he shuttles between drone fighter pilot responsibilities by day and civilian life at night. Soldiers have unprecedented access to communication and the comforts of home today, but there are also hidden costs to be borne for these changes that erase the boundaries between home and front.

*General Questions*

1. How much of the American tradition of seeing war as a discrete experience can be explained by geography and the good fortune of having avoided major military action within the country for over 100 years? How much of this tradition reflects the romanticization of earlier wars that downplays the physical, temporal, and moral confusion that soldiers may have experienced during the conflict?

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2. How important is technology in disrupting older divisions between home and front, and in what ways is this healthy or unhealthy for the soldier and the society?

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3. How important is the distinction between battling state enemies and non-state enemies in the war experience of the soldier? What is new in this experience at the level of the soldier? What parts of the experience of battling irregular forces would earlier soldiers recognize? What might be significantly different?

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**Questions for Specific Texts**

1. In *What It Is Like to Go to War* Marlantes recounts a scene repeated in many war memoirs: that of seeing a family photo on the body of an enemy soldier after a battle. For Marlantes, it was the glimpse of the life of his enemy apart from the war zone that made him regret his opponent's death for many years. The situation at the moment of the encounter required the death of one of them, but he could imagine a time past the end of the war where they might have returned to different roles. The pictures broke the barrier that Marlantes had established in his mind between an enemy (anonymous in his uniform) and a fellow human with a life apart from the war. More recently, wars against un-uniformed, irregular forces cause similar cognitive stress as enemies are encountered in the context and even clothing of their regular life.
  - a. How do memoirs and stories show this moment of the broken barrier?
  - b. Does it make enemy combatants more human or cause greater frustration with opponents who do not follow the rules of war?
  - c. How would this affect troops in different situations in different ways—for example troops completing neighborhood foot patrols vs. troops involved in drone missions who often observe their target's daily patterns?

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2. In his memoir *What It Is Like to Go to War* (completed decades after his service in Vietnam), Karl Marlantes discusses the need for rituals that divide life at the war front from normal life in the chapter "Temple of Mars" (pp. 1-25). "It is bad enough," he states, "that we send our youth off to fight wars ill prepared for the spiritual and psychological consequences of combat. Add to this the fact that combat is becoming increasingly intermingled with the ordinary civilian world" (18).
  - a. What do you think of Marlantes's claim that the intermingling of the civilian and the combat worlds can cause not just stress, but spiritual damage? Why?
  - b. Does it help soldiers to preserve family and community ties at home, or does it create expectations that cannot be met?
  - c. Does it weaken soldiers' ability to bond with each other on the warfront and provide psychological support through the sharing of unique experiences?
  - d. Why does Marlantes frame this as a spiritual issue rather than a morale issue?

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3. While the entire novel is excellent, the first chapter of Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, can stand alone as a portrait of a platoon in Vietnam torn between intrusive memories of home and immediate necessities. At the conclusion of the chapter the Lieutenant burns all his mementos of home to avoid dangerous distractions to his job.
- What do you think of the Lieutenant's act of destruction? Is it an act of mourning? An act of anger? Or simply, as he says, an act of self-discipline?
  - How are these images more disruptive to the Lieutenant than propaganda images of home life that were used to motivate soldiers during WWII?
- 
4. Do the well-equipped bases of the modern warfront, stocked with familiar American entertainment and food, create daily culture shock for those in a warzone or lessen the strain of deployment? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the new conditions of the warfront?
- 
5. How does the modern ability for soldiers, even in warzones, to stay in touch with their home- front identities and responsibilities affect their ability to manage the demands of war? The collective biography, *Soldier Girls*, emphasizes the stress that attending to home front responsibilities added to females deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Do you think women and men experience this differently? Why?
- 
6. Troops are certainly exposed to more of the strains of home life than in the past, but families are also exposed to greater daily knowledge of the war zone experience.
- Does this increase or decrease strain on families?
  - How should this seemingly irreversible shift be addressed by support services for families?
- 
7. Many memoirs focus on the war years as a unique moment, but *Soldier Girls* examines its subjects' lives before, during, between, and after deployments.
- What are the advantages of the *Soldier Girls* approach of seeing the war experience as part of the trajectory of life before and after? Are there any disadvantages to this approach?
  - Do you think it is important for a memoir to provide information from pre- or post- deployment? Which do you think is more important and why?
-

8. How much of the “misbehavior” described in *Soldier Girls* (sexual harassment from fellow soldiers, drug and alcohol abuse) do you think is a response to the stresses of the war environment? To the living conditions within the military? Or does it reflect patterns established in home front culture before the war? Is the modern service situation (repeat deployments, volunteer army, constant communication with the home front and family) relevant in exacerbating or reducing these issues? Does the army have more or less of a separate culture from the broader American public in the modern era?
- 
9. In *Soldier Girls*, one of the women notes that many soldiers lied to their families about their R and R breaks. The soldiers didn’t want to go home “and deal with everyone else’s emotional needs” (p. 212), and chose instead to escape from both home-front and war-front pressures by taking their leave in a third locale.
- What do you think of this choice from the view of the soldier? From the families?
  - Is this a healthy attempt to create boundaries for the war experience or unhealthy escapism from responsibilities?
- 
10. Marlantes, like other authors, stresses that soldiers at war fight for their fellow soldiers, not for abstract concepts or distant goals. They fight to support and protect each other. *Soldier Girls*, however, noted that redeployment saw the women serving with reconfigured units that had little common history or cohesion.
- How might this affect the stress of their experience?
  - How does this compare to the Vietnam-era practice of moving new arrivals in to replace casualties in established units?
  - How do you think this practice, developing in response to the demands in Afghanistan and Iraq and the limits of a volunteer army, will affect the experience for soldiers?
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**Theme 3: Pride, Guilt, Nostalgia and Regret—the Many Long Shadows of War**

The war experience doesn't end with the soldier's return to civilian life; the individual, their family, and the entire society remain permanently changed by military service, just as they would remain changed by any significant life event.

While a sense of personal growth and nostalgia for the camaraderie of service have long been recognized in popular culture treatments of post-war life, not all war legacies are so positive. Since the Vietnam era there has been greater attention paid to the lingering psychological and emotional burdens from military experience, so much that screening for PTSD and related conditions has become a standard part of debriefing and demobilization. Unfortunately the common perception still sees and treats the negative legacies of military service as an issue to be addressed at the individual level, as if it were evidence of an individual failure to reconcile with the experience. Positive legacies, in contrast, are treated as the norm. The reality is that there is no magic method to compartmentalize the war experience and both positive and negative effects linger long after the service is concluded.

As a society we are all affected by the experiences that our individual members endured. Broadening discussion and awareness of the transformations, both positive and negative, brought about by wartime service is both a responsibility and an act of empathy for those soldiers, families, and communities directly affected by war. Their words reflecting on the ways in which they have been transformed by the experience of war offer a launching pad for this discussion. Some of the topics that may be explored include the varieties of positive and negative transformations service brings about, the different challenges of physical vs. psychological and emotional injuries, the long-term social challenges of veteran disabilities, the obligations of the military and the society in addressing not just treatment, but the prevention of PTSD and other war legacies, and the different perspectives of veterans based on their age, gender, or chronological distance from the experience.

*Discussion Questions*

1. The interview “War turns you into what your mother wishes you would never be,” (in Trish Wood’s collection, *What Was Asked of Us*, 268-281) reflects on the transformation needed to operate on the battlefield.
  - a. Is it possible to go to war and not be transformed?
  - b. What transformations do you think are permanent and which might be temporary?
  - c. In what ways does the wartime experience differ in terms of transforming individuals compared to other significant life experiences like having a child, going to college, or suffering illness?

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2. In the post-Vietnam era, emotional, physical, and psychological scars from the war experience were discussed in the context of criticism of the Vietnam War itself (Ron Kovic’s 1976 autobiography *Born on the Fourth of July*, the Lanford Wilson play *Fifth of July* (1978), and the film *Coming Home* (1978) are good examples of this) and seen as an indictment of military policy. In more recent years psychological wounds have received greater attention, but as the price soldiers have paid for a patriotic sacrifice.
  - a. What do you think of this shift?
  - b. Does it make it harder or easier for soldiers to access treatment?
  - c. Does it make it harder or easier to voice opinions about the war or the war experience?

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3. Elizabeth Samet discussed the condition known as “soldier’s heart” during the Civil War, “shell shock” in WWI, and PTSD today in her book, *Soldier’s Heart*, and notes that the condition is consistently seen as an “illness” distinct from physical injuries.
  - a. What do you think about the distinction between physical and psychological wounds in general?
  - b. Who is considered responsible for the wound and who is responsible for the recovery in addressing physical and psychological injuries?
  - c. How do you think this compares with the broader social treatment of physical vs. mental health issues in the U.S.?

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4. A frequent theme in short fiction from recent wars is the struggle for soldiers and families to adjust to both physical and mental health conditions upon return. The stories in Siobhan Fallon’s *You Know When the Men Are Gone* and the collection *Fire and Forget* (edited by Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher) include several characters struggling with physical and psychological challenges. These stories provide many discussion opportunities, but certainly one theme would be the exploration of the different family, individual, and social effects of the two different kinds of injuries.
 

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5. The PBS film *Debt of Honor* (2015) examines the way advances in military medicine have ensured the survival of more troops, but expanded the need for more services for and recognition of disabled veterans. Disability is not just an individual issue, but a family and community challenge.
- What do you think about the perceptions of physical vs. mental health wounds among veterans?
- 
6. Family relationships are not only affected by both kinds of injuries, but the stories suggest that pre-war relationships can contribute to stress for returnees. Veteran Michael Poggi's story "Shallow Hands" (in *Operation Homecoming*, 343-351), takes us inside the mind of a vet struggling with anger and alcohol on his return, while Fallon, spouse of a deployed soldier, looks at the same experience from the perspective of the wife in "You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming" (189-207) and "Inside the Break" (103-130).
- What is it about pre-war relationships that causes stress for veterans?
- 
7. How do the writers see the utility of current services for troops to ease readjustment? Where do they show the need for improvement in the current system? Aaron Randolph's 2013 play, *A Green River*, not only shows the impact of his PTSD on his family, but includes scenes with his VA appointed counselor and his PTSD evaluation that are worth discussing. Helen Thorpe's collective biography, *Soldier Girls*, describes one woman's struggle to be recognized as suffering from PTSD for years after injury from a roadside bomb ("Happy Bomb Day," pp. 353-370).
- How did her war experiences affect her after service, and how did she feel about the military's handling of her physical and emotional injuries?
- 
8. On returning home from Afghanistan, all three women in *Soldier Girls* experienced panic attacks while shopping for their families in large stores (Part III, chapter 1, "Welcome Home, Dad," 235-257).
- What do you think it was about that moment?
  - Do you think there was a different common trigger moment for men? In other eras would the trigger have been different?
  - How would these episodes affect family members?
- 
9. *Soldier Girls* also discusses one significant stressor for women troops, the threat of sexual abuse from fellow soldiers both at U.S. and overseas bases. Some of the women were counselled to carry a knife even while in the shower, and all three reported hearing of rapes.
- How would soldiers who suffer anxiety and PTSD from these or similar aggression from fellow soldiers suffer differently from soldiers whose PTSD was related to fear of enemy attack?
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10. The term “moral injury” is now frequently used in describing events that provoke psychological and emotional stress. Witnessing or participating (intentionally or unintentionally) in activities that violate personal moral standards leaves its own wounds that can persist through an entire lifetime. Karl Marlantes, writing decades after his service in Vietnam, devotes several chapters of his memoir (Chapter 2, “Killing,” could be used in isolation) to the burden of guilt and regret in the lives of veterans. Marlantes describes moral injury not as an inescapable side effect of war, but as a risk that could be addressed like any other risk to a soldier’s life. Militaries, he argues, have a responsibility to provide moral training to accompany physical training. If one is to be taught to kill, one must be taught how to think about killing within war. While soldiers in the midst of battle may feel that normal ethics cannot apply, in later years they will review their actions and question their decisions. Marlantes points to his own combat experience and memories as an example and recounts his wish that he had more consistently opted for tactics that achieved objectives at the lowest human cost for his own and enemy troops. At some point, he argues, the war will be settled, and as either victors or vanquished individuals should be able to return to their previous lives. Demonizing the enemy makes combat easier in the short term, but it makes recovery from the moral injury of war more difficult in the long run.

- a. What do you think of his argument?
  - b. What do you think of the possibility of instituting the training he recommends?
- 

11. Training is also an important topic in *Soldier Girls*, which describes the confusion felt by the unit in Afghanistan and later Iraq. The three women profiled had little sense of the cultural or political situation of the country, or of the dangers they faced. (*Soldier Girls*, Part II, Afghanistan, (125-231) is composed of five chapters on the deployment to Afghanistan.)

- a. What kinds of training might have been appropriate? How might it have changed their experience for better or worse?
  - b. How did they form their ideas about their mission in Afghanistan and about the local situation?
  - c. Do you think their lack of cultural training affected their physical or mental health?
- 

12. Many writers link emotional and psychological post war difficulties to the lack of boundaries between the war zone and home front in modern wars. In his first chapter, “*Temple of Mars*,” Marlantes argues that every culture has rituals for marking the separation of the world of combat from ordinary life and spiritually preparing soldiers both to enter that world and then to set it aside upon return.

- a. Do we have social, personal, or institutional rituals that mark off life at war?
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13. Drone warfare creates its own intimacy and blurred boundaries that are nothing like the detached video game mentality feared by early critics, a topic explored in Mark Bowden's article, "Killing Machines." Pilots, analysts, and other crew spend long hours tracking individuals and observing communities and are also responsible for evaluating the damage (including identifying the deceased) after a strike. PTSD, depression, and anxiety among drone crews are common. The opening 20 minutes of the 2014 feature film, *The Good Kill*, which follows the effects of stress on a drone pilot and his family based in Las Vegas, illustrates this dilemma well, although the entire film is excellent if time allows.
- Do drones significantly alter the chances of "moral injury" among troops?
  - Is it good or bad that U.S.-based drone pilots live with their families?
  - What is the "combat zone" in an age of drone warfare, and what kinds of injuries do pilots and crews face?
- 
14. In the first chapter of Tim O'Brien's Vietnam novel, *The Things They Carried* (1990), the Lieutenant burns all his mementos of home as dangerous distractions
- How do the physical and emotional mementos from their home life affect the soldiers in O'Brien's work?
  - Is the home front a source of strength or pain for each—and why?
  - How might their experience have been different in an age of cell phones and Skype?
  - Do you think the characters in O'Brien's work would have welcomed that contact? Under what conditions?
- 
15. In *No Man's Land*, Elizabeth Samet also is preoccupied with the need to problem of boundaries, but she argues that literature is the best method for delivering therapeutic prevention against PTSD. Education through literature, she argues, offers troops an important chance to address "war vertigo," that sense of dislocation provoked by rapid shifts between the war zone and the home front that have become routine in modern warfare. War and homecoming literature allows individuals to connect with others who have struggled with similar feelings of regret and isolation over the centuries. By allowing individuals to hold first an internal dialogue as they respond to the writing of others and then providing a safe place for a dialogue with others as they discuss the war experience and homecomings portrayed in writing, literature develops skills for examining complex emotions. Chapter 2, "Between Scylla and Charybdis: Coming Home" (29-82), examines many patterns (adrenaline quests, a sense of being an impostor, intrusive memories, second guessing) described in writing from the *Odyssey* on that were familiar to her returning students.
- What do you think of her proposal? Does it make sense to you? Could you imagine it being implemented?
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16. Another possible contributor to stress among soldiers is the invisibility of the war in popular culture, and the resulting absence of a national narrative on the war. In her sociological treatment of the mental health cost of recent wars, Marguerite Bouvard explores the unique challenges of a volunteer army faced with lingering conflicts. The chapters “Homecoming and Parallel Lives” (47-71) and “The High Rate of Suicides” (123-151) both argue that the isolation soldier’s experience upon return is sharpened by the invisibility of the war effort in the larger culture. Like soldiers from WWII, these troops have seen traumatic events and experienced persistent, debilitating stress, but they suffer both from the lack of closure or a shared national experience. In the interviews included in *What Was Asked of Us*, Tricia Woods finds similar opinions, as such as that voiced by Daniel Cotnoir in “I didn’t get my happy ass blown up... That is what winning is now” (282-3). Siobhan Fallon’s story “You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming” (189-207) portrays a returned husband whose worries about his men left behind affect his ability to reenter family life.
- How different do you think return for these soldiers would be if a clear victory had been achieved and they had not continued to worry about comrades left in danger?
  - Would a more obvious national narrative of the war, such as existed in WWII, help soldiers’ mental health post deployment?
  - Would it make any difference to soldier’s mental health if the experience of military service was shared by more people across the broader culture?
  - Would a clear victory alleviate some cases of PTSD or are the two unrelated?
- 
17. Marlantes is looking back on his experience from a distance of forty years. Do you think younger soldiers, or soldiers in the midst of combat could be trained to think with his long view? Compare a chapter of his highly philosophical (but also graphically descriptive) memoir with the memoir of a younger soldier, like Gallagher’s *Kaboom*.
- Do the differences reflect differences in the eras? In the ages of the writers? In personality?
  - Could younger soldiers benefit from the insight of older veterans or would exposure to advice like that of Marlantes cause its own difficulties?
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18. Marlantes is one of many memoirists throughout history who express lingering sorrow from actions they personally took while at war, but expressions of collective guilt are also common in modern memoirs. For example, Anthony Swofford and Joel Turnipseed were unscathed by the short four days of combat that made up Desert Storm, but both were preoccupied in their memoirs with their sense of guilt at the excessive casualties inflicted by American air power upon an army in retreat and at the undercurrents of racism that they witnessed, especially in the treatment of Iraqi prisoners.
- Has increased access to alternative sources of information on the war, and perhaps additional perspectives on the military actions (including military crimes), altered the experience for soldiers?
  - What traditions and places are there for expressing personal guilt and collective guilt? Which do you think would be more debilitating to the soldier? To the soldier’s family?
-



19. In *Baghdad Express*, Joel Turnipseed is painfully aware that “he has pulled all-nighters [in college] that lasted longer than the war,” but both Turnipseed and Anthony Swofford (*Jarhead*) struggle to readjust to civilian life after Desert Storm.
- Does this reflect the war experience or other life challenges among the demographic group in the new volunteer army?
  - Which kinds of soldiers do you think are most likely to struggle upon return?
  - Do you think the volunteer military of today is significantly different from earlier militaries in this regard?
- 
20. The short and beautifully written memoir, “Taking Chance,” by Michael Strobl (in *Operation Homecoming*, 355-365) describes Strobl’s experience escorting the body of Chance Phelps from Dover to his hometown in Wyoming, to a service at the local high school, and to his final burial in the town cemetery. In describing this long, many-staged trip across America, Strobl describes the responses he meets along the way.
- Why do you think Strobl volunteered for this task, and did his experience meet his expectations?
  - At times he seems surprised by his reception—what in particular surprises him and does that surprise you?
  - His writing style is extremely spare. How might that reflect Strobl’s emotional state and how might it reflect the mission?
  - What do you think he hoped to accomplish by writing about the journey?
- 
21. In her short story “Leave” (in *You Know When the Men are Gone*, 159-187), Siobhan Fallon provides a chilling portrait of a husband who sets out to investigate his wife’s life with the same methods he used to uncover militia ties among suspects in Iraq.
- In what other ways do wartime habits carry over into home life and how does this affect relationships?
  - Is this a military or a personal problem and how can it be addressed?
- 
22. Some post-deployment problems may have their basis in pre-deployment patterns. Thorpe’s *Soldier Girls* exposes the pervasive problems of alcohol and drug abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the U.S. both before and after deployment. Any one of the five chapters in Part II on the deployment to Afghanistan (125-231) would provide plenty of material for discussion.
- Does the deployment experience contribute to post-deployment problems?
  - At what point should these issues be addressed?
-

### III. Suggestions for Structuring Community Discussions on the Experience of War

The American experience of war affects the entire nation, not just its veterans, but each community will have its own mix of concerns and investment in the topic. Many OLLI members have experienced service themselves, or been affected by the war experiences of their generation, while student populations may include recent or future veterans struggling to understand the experience of their own generation.

Bringing different generations and stakeholders together expands the perspectives that can be shared and lays the foundation for a stronger societal awareness of the challenges and sacrifices paid by active participants. Fortunately, there is plenty of room for flexibility in the creation of community groups to explore the topic, and ample opportunities for letting participants take control of setting the agenda for discussions.

Osher Institute communities could, for example, invite members to an open discussion of forming a study group and share some or all of the ideas within this report as possibilities for exploration. A brief discussion of the ways in which this exploration could evolve in the community could be followed by asking participants to rank five or more of the questions, resources, or formats that most appeal to them. An OLLI facilitator can then select readings or films to help concretize the discussion and arrange for the participation of speakers or participants from outside the OLLI circle.

In addition to discussions of the topics, resources, and formats, discussion groups will want to directly examine the question of evaluating the advantages and difficulties of including those who directly experienced the war with community members who did not in common groups. The experience of war affects veterans in ways that can never be completely shared, but leaving the discussion of that experience only to that demographic fails to involve the entire community in examining this important topic. How will Osher Institute communities reach out to both break the isolation of this experience from the broader society and yet respect the unique perspective of those who participated? What concerns do different participants have regarding this challenge? Openly addressing this question early in the project is important for nurturing productive encounters.

Some of the formats that may be used include public showing of and discussion of films, roundtable book groups that compare the fiction and memoir literature from Vietnam with more recent wars, or more formally moderated groups that rely upon a facilitator or a panel of discussants to focus exploration of topics. Because of the nature of this project, OLLI communities may wish to move activities to more public venues, like local libraries or schools, rather than regular Osher Institute facilities.

Some communities may choose to pair reading and discussion activities with guided writing activities in which both veterans and non-veterans confront the challenge of shaping memories and ideas into words.

Local theater companies, or simply willing participants, might stage readings or even full productions of plays like *A Green River*, to be followed by moderated discussions.

In short, there are as many ways to explore this issue as there are parties with an interest in this topic, and the most important task is to begin the discussion.

#### IV. Suggested Resources

- **Abrams, David.** *FOBBIT* (Black Cat Press, 2012). From the beginning line of this novel, Abrams skewers the military who remain in the shelter of the Forward Operating Bases in Iraq among the fast food comforts of home. “They were Fobbits,” he states, “because, at the core, they were nothing but marshmallow.” Abrams’s novel is both hilarious and heartrending, a serious look at the inequities and the irrational in the American war in Iraq disguised as a comedy.
- ***American Experience: War Letters*** (PBS, 2001). Using letters from the Revolutionary War through Desert Storm, this one-hour film explores themes common to all wars, including the disorientation of enlistment, fear, homesickness, and shock.
- **Bouvard, Marguerite Guzmán.** *The Invisible Wounds of War: Coming Home from Iraq and Afghanistan* (Prometheus, 2012). Bouvard’s book is motivated by the need to improve social and medical services for veterans. It critiques the way the U.S. has allowed the price of war to be paid for by a small number whose struggles are largely invisible to a society that thinks of going to war as a voluntary, and therefore, private decision. Bouvard reviews the demographics of the volunteer army, the growing demands on the army after 2003, and the largely ignored psychological impact on troops.
- **Bowden, Mark.** “Killing Machines: How to Think About Drone Warfare,” *The Atlantic* (Sept. 2013), details the hidden psychological costs of drone warfare for operators. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/09/the-killing-machines-how-to-think-about-drones/309434/>
- **Buzzell, Colby.** *My War: Killing Time in Iraq* (Putnam, 2005). Buzzell joined the army after 9/11 and served in Iraq 2003-2004. He grew frustrated with what he considered the lack of interest in the Iraqi situation at home and maintained a blog on his experiences. The blog became the basis for his memoir.
- **Carroll, Andres, ed.** *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families* (Random House, 2006). This anthology of short pieces (1-10 pages) is the result of an N.E.A. project to sponsor writing workshops on bases that encouraged troops and their families to channel their thoughts into poems, memoirs, fiction, or letters. The initial call for participants was overwhelmed by responses and the project immediately quintupled in size, including U.S. and overseas participants. The work included represents a variety of experiences and views, including thoughts of parents and spouses as well as troops on both mundane and searing memories. Writings are grouped into sections focused on the entry into the world of the military, contact with locals, base life, effects on families and marriages, confronting the reality of injury and death, and the strains and joys of coming home. An entire discussion series could be based around this volume alone or pieces could be used individually.
- **Castner, Brian.** *The Long Walk: A Story of War and the Life that Follows* (2012). Castner’s technically detailed account of his three tours in the Middle East in an Explosives Disposal Unit and his later struggles to leave the experience behind him create a perfect portrait of PTSD. The American Lyric Theater’s decision to commission an opera based on the memoir (the work by Jeremy Beck and Stephanie Fleischman premiered in Sarasota in 2015) attest to the relevance of his story. Almost any excerpt from the book would illustrate examples of the inability of the author to keep the past in the past.
- ***Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*** (Director Bill Couturie, 1987). This 87-minute film sets the reading of actual letters home from the war against films made by soldiers for themselves and their families. The films, showing informal scenes of daily life among the troops in Vietnam, differs significantly from more familiar newsreel footage.

- **Fallon, Siobhan.** *You Know When the Men Are Gone* (New American Library, 2011). This collection of short stories follows the lives of husbands and wives in a fictional unit at Fort Hood through the strains of deployment and return. Fallon's writing draws attention to the effect of deployment on those left behind, and the strain on marriages created both by long absences and angry returnees.
- **Fountain, Ben.** *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (2012). Fountain's novel is built not around the grisly three-minute battle that made the main character famous, but around the unanticipated way this battle was captured by an embedded news team, which led to Lynn being whisked home to star in a hero's welcome ceremony at a Dallas Cowboys' game. Most of the novel follows Lynn on this curious interlude from his war experience—but flashbacks reveal the full incident to viewers. There is a lot to discuss about the discrepancy between Billy's view of his actions and what the public sees in his actions, and how other individuals hope to profit from marketing the soldiers. The novel was made into a film by celebrated director Ang Lee (2016), who used a controversial high frame-per-second film speed. Both the film speed and the topic left many reviewers feeling the film was powerful but disorienting.
- **Gallagher, Matt.** *Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War* (Da Capo Press, 2010). A raw memoir of the author's experience in counterinsurgency patrols in Iraq from 2007-2009. The author began writing the memoir as a blog while still serving in Iraq.
- ***The Good Kill*** (Director Andrew Nicoll, 2014). In the way this film takes the viewer behind the scenes in its portrayal of drone strikes it resembles tell-all, technical memoirs like *No Easy Day*. But the director's focus is on the way drone crews suffer psychological strain from witnessing the human victims of their actions (including the mistakes) in a way that was impossible in an age of jet bombing. Although the entire film is recommended, the first 20 minutes of the film could be used in isolation.
- **Heller, Joseph.** *Catch 22* (1961). A funny but dark comedy based on the author's experience on a U.S. airbase off Italy during WWII. In many ways, the novel, with its absurdities and traumas that are revealed only in stages to the reader, prefigures the tone of Vietnam era literature.
- **Klay, Phil.** *Redeployment* (Penguin, 2014). Klay's collection of short stories provides a survey of the boring and the heart-pounding experiences in Iraq and on the home front.
- **Kyle, Chris.** *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* (Morrow, 2013). Kyle's detailed account of his experience opened a window into an unfamiliar world for many readers. Kyle's tragic murder in 2013 after his return was one thing that made the book more famous, as did Clint Eastwood's decision to rework the book as a film (*American Sniper*, 2015). One unrecognized facet of the book is Kyle's description of his efforts to meet the needs of both his family and fellow soldiers upon his return from duty.
- **Luttrell, Chris.** *Lone Survivor: The Untold Story of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10* (Little, Brown, 2007). Another behind-the-scenes account of a specialized unit, this book also proved enormously popular and subsequently served as the basis for the movie *Lone Survivor* (2014).
- **Marlantes, Karl.** *What It Is Like to Go to War* (Atlantic, 2011). This memoir of the author's experience is organized not chronologically, but thematically, as he reflects on how his understanding of the experience of combat has changed after forty years. The chapters, centered around themes like guilt, numbness, and morality, intersperse incidents from his service with philosophical reflections and can be used independently for discussion.

- **Marlantes, Karl. *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War* (2009).** Marlantes's novel provides a gritty picture of the sacrifices endured by soldiers in Vietnam both in struggling to capture and in then being ordered to abandon a distant base. His descriptions of the conditions are vivid and disturbing and based on the author's combat experiences. The novel is excellent, but its length may make it difficult to use in some settings.
- **O'Brien, Tim. *Going After Cacciato* (1978).** O'Brien won the National Book Award for his novel about a soldier who decides he has had enough of the war and simply walks away. The increasingly improbably novel follows his squad as they pursue him across Asia to Paris.
- **O'Brien, Tim. *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973).** A memoir based on the author's 1969-70 experience in Vietnam and his increasing awareness of the costs of the war for both Americans and Vietnamese.
- **O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried* (1990).** O'Brien's novel, also based on his experience in Vietnam, represents the third reworking of his war experience through memoir and fiction. While the entire novel is excellent, the first chapter, "The Things They Carried," can stand alone as a portrait of a platoon torn between memories of home and immediate demands on their attention.
- **Owen, Mark. *No Easy Day: The Autobiography of a Navy SEAL: The Firsthand Account of the Mission that Killed Osama Bin Laden* (Dutton, 2012).** A vivid, cinematically told account of the preparation for and execution of the Bin Laden raid in 2011. A good example of the highly technical and confessional memoirs of the past few years.
- **PBS film, *Debt of Honor* (2015).** This 55-minute film on the challenges faced by disabled veterans can be found on the PBS site: <http://www.pbs.org/veterans/stories-of-service/stream-tv/a-to-z/debt-of-honor/>
- **Randolph, Aaron. *A Green River* (2013).** The play, *A Green River*, follows the struggle of a soldier suffering from PTSD as he works to readjust to home, marriage, and starting a family while dealing with intrusive memories from service in Iraq. The writing process and rehearsal challenges were examined in the 30-minute film "The Making of 'A Green River,'" available through WQPT and PBS and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYHcXZiA2H8>. The script could be presented as a read-through and discussed in a group setting.
- **Samet, Elizabeth. *Soldier's Heart: Reading Literature through Peace and War at West Point* (Picador, 2007).** Samet's book describes her experience teaching English at West Point since 1997 and her growing conviction, based on return visits from former students, that literature provides an intellectual training that helped many of them survive the psychological and moral strain of their service. She makes an excellent case for the argument that literature is relevant to the full training of a soldier, offering not only opportunities to practice close analysis and weigh different perspectives, but an important sense of community with others who had faced similar through the centuries. Chapter 3, "Books are Weapons" (59-92), can be used in isolation.
- **Samet, Elizabeth. *No Man's Land: Preparing for War and Peace in Post-9/11 America* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2014).** In her follow-up work to *Soldier's Heart*, Samet looks at how literature helps soldiers with the difficulties in shuttling from home front to war zones that has become the norm, or 'No Man's Land,' of modern war.
- **Scranton, Roy and Matt Gallagher, eds. *Fire and Forget: Short Stories from the Long War* (Da Capo, 2013).** This volume gathers some of the best short fiction from new writers (Turner, Fallon, Gallagher, Buzzell) in one place. All of the stories are worth reading and discussing.

- **Swofford, Anthony. *Jarhead*** (2003). Swofford's well-written memoir focuses on his participation in the first Gulf War at the age of 20. Although the book was made into a movie (Director Sam Mendes, *Jarhead*, 2005), the movie lost the self-deprecating charm of the memoir. Swofford found he was poor material for the Marines, and even more poorly equipped to deal with homecoming. It's a coming-of-age story more than a war memoir and Swofford, the son of a Vietnam vet, is at his best when evaluating his place in the American military tradition and American culture.
- **Thorpe, Helen. *Soldier Girls: The Battles of Three Women at Home and at War*** (Scribner, 2014). Using interviews, emails, and Facebook, Thorpe followed three women in the Indiana National Guard through enlistment, training, and a double deployment overseas. It is a long book for a community class, but choosing any one of the five chapters in Part II on the deployment to Afghanistan (pp. 125-231) would provide plenty of material for discussion on sexual harassment, the limited engagement with Afghan culture, and the difficulty of separating the home front responsibilities from the war zone in an era of email, cell phones, Skype, and multiple deployments. Part V, Chapter 2 ("Happy Bomb Day," pp. 353-370), can also be used in isolation as it describes one woman's struggle back home with symptoms of PTSD after being injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq.
- **Turner, Brian. *My Life as a Foreign Country: A Memoir*** (Norton, 2014). The author's experience in Iraq early in the occupation is only the starting point for this memoir that examines an entire generation's place in the American war tradition. Memories of family links to WWI, WWII, and Vietnam serve as reference points for taming his own intrusive memories of Iraq. This is less a memoir than a collage of war memories that still guide troops today.
- **Turnipseed, Joel. *Baghdad Express: A Gulf War Memoir*** (2003). Turnipseed's memoir grew out of an article written for GQ in 1997 on his short experience driving trucks during Desert Storm. The memoir concentrates on the difficulties of an individual adapting to the group logic of the military, and the distinctly unheroic experiences of watching the destruction of retreating Iraqi forces. Turnipseed's style has been described both as post-modern and post-Vietnam and an excerpt would certainly illustrate this.
- **Veterans History Project, American Folk Life Center, Library of Congress.** (<http://www.loc.gov/vets/about.html>). This searchable collection of interviews, memoirs, letters and photographs of American veterans spans WWI through the 2003-2011 Iraq War.
- **Wilson, Lanford. *The Fifth of July*** (1978). A gay, paraplegic Vietnam Veteran is at the center of this play set in rural Missouri. In this play the Vietnam War is seen as only one of the ways the U.S. had betrayed its promises.
- **Wolff, Tobias. *In Pharaoh's Army: Memories of the Lost War*** (1994). A memoir of the author's experience in Vietnam. Previously the author had explored his experience through writing short fiction. "Casualty," (14-32) in the short story collection *The Night in Question* (1996), is a good choice for a conversation on survivor's guilt.
- **Wood, Trish, ed. *What Was Asked of Us: An Oral History of the Iraq War by the Soldiers Who Fought It*** (Little, Brown and Co., 2006). There are more than thirty interviews with soldiers, chaplains, medics and other support staff. The interviews range from 2 to 15 pages and provide reflections on second guessing actions, living under constant strain, the sobering reality of violence, etc.
- **Woods, Chris. *Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars*** (Oxford, 2015), "Game Face On: The Intimacy of Remote Killing" (pp. 169-190). While the entire book does an excellent job tracing the history of drone warfare, this chapter is especially effective in highlighting the unanticipated pain of drone crews through interviews.

# Wars in Recent American History: The Home Front

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## **Peter N. Stearns, PhD**

Professor and Provost Emeritus, George Mason University

Dr. Stearns is also a current instructor for the OLLI at George Mason University. Professor Stearns has written widely on world and emotions history, including two popular textbooks. Other books include *A History of Shame* (forthcoming), *The Industrial Turn in World History* (forthcoming), *Guiding the American University: Challenges and Choices*, *Doing Emotions History*, *Gender in World History*, *Satisfaction Not Guaranteed: Dilemmas of Progress in Modern Society*, *Childhood in World History*, and *American Fear: The Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety*. Before coming to George Mason University, Professor Stearns taught at the University of Chicago, Rutgers University, and Carnegie Mellon University. He served as vice president of the American Historical Association, Teaching Division, from 1995 to 1998. He was founder and editor of the *Journal of Social History* from 1967 to 2015.

## Major Theme

This course focuses on changes and continuities in the experience of American civilians during major wars since 1941. While this is a somewhat unusual approach to the history of war, it is one that can be both engaging and meaningful.

It has the advantage of being able to draw on several interesting visual presentations, including Ken Burns's work on World War II, and also on a few provocative articles—along with a larger array of potential background reading for those interested.

The course invites participants and other community members to reflect on World War II through the filter of various media presentations as well as more directly on Vietnam and more recent conflicts in the Middle East.

Home front activities can be viewed through a number of facets. There is the economic aspect, as wars affect (or seek to avoid affecting) jobs, taxes, incomes, and consumer activities. This is a fairly familiar feature of World War II, but deserves attention in the more recent conflicts as well. Economics can spill over into social relationships: How does war impact gender relations, race and social class relations, even noncombatant age categories (like children)? Wars also engage civilians emotionally, and this category will embrace deliberate efforts at manipulation and propaganda and the ways news is received, the media role, and the nature of contacts between civilians and military personnel.

The course will focus particularly on World War II, the Vietnam War, and the cluster of Middle Eastern conflicts (including Afghanistan) since 1990.

World War II presents the home front in its fullest engagement, with discussions of the idea of total war and the earlier experience of World War I. The sheer scope of involvement has encouraged a certain amount of mythmaking, which is in itself of interest—particularly focused on the enthusiasm for and trust in government. Vietnam turned out to be quite a different experience, and the analysis will include the nature of and reasons for the differences. Finally, the past 25 years constitute yet another set of cases—including the sheer duration of war or near-war involvement, the implications of war without a military draft, and efforts to avoid some of the tensions that ultimately had affected the Vietnam conflict.

Change over time—that quintessential historical issue—is central to these presentations, as the three major episodes of war are compared, changes identified and, to the extent possible, discussed and explained. Another key theme involves the implications of civilian activities and attitudes for the conduct of war itself and for the experience of military personnel and veterans. Finally, with particular reference to the Middle Eastern conflicts, home front experiences raise questions about policies going forward: Are there better or worse ways to help organize and guide civilian involvement? Has the United States learned how to conduct war cheaply from a civilian standpoint, and is this a good development?



## Overview

The sketch is intended as a brief introduction to the examination of changes and continuities in the American home front during World War II, the Vietnam War, and the cluster of wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan since 1990. The sketch reflects my views of what some of the main issues are and what can usefully be discussed.

It's worth beginning by noting that the most immediate home front experience, prior to the three clusters we are exploring, was in World War I. American entry into this war was abrupt, though it had been prepared for by growing tensions with Germany. It was a quick immersion into the demands of a contemporary major war, with recruitment of new workers into factories accompanying the unprecedented drafting of eligible young men into the armed forces. New taxes were imposed. Extensive propaganda villainized the enemy—and in the process made the lives and identities of many German-Americans very unpleasant. The interesting result was a fairly quick, though costly, victory, a probably exaggerated sense of the credit Americans should take for that victory, and a widespread belief that the experience should not be repeated, that the nation should find a way to isolate itself from these kinds of engagements in the future.

World War II is a second example of what some scholars call a total war. It was obviously far more important in the American experience because it lasted longer and, with demanding military fronts both in Europe/North Africa and in the Pacific, presented some unusual challenges. The total war idea shows in the economic mobilization necessary, which altered many cities and changed the experience of many women and minorities. As before, major propaganda was used to stir emotions and inspire active loyalty, seen as essential both for stability back home and to provide direct encouragement to the fighting forces. A key question, then, is: How does the home front experience illustrate what total war is all about? What emotions were engaged, and how were some potentially disruptive emotions—like excessive grief—managed or discouraged?

Another key question about World War II involves our potentially nostalgic vantage point, shaped by popular concepts such as the “greatest generation.” Do we overdo the unity and confidence of the home front? What are some obvious complications, including the objectionable treatment of Japanese Americans and also other signs of trouble in some major cities? Were Americans really as excited and reluctantly enthusiastic about the war as some presentations suggest? Were they as confident in their government—and if so why? And if not, how should we modify the picture?

A third set of questions, related both to the total war idea and to the nostalgia, involves the connections between home front and battlefields. Did the military feel supported and believe that some home front sacrifices at least partially justified their own sacrifices? Did home front enthusiasms and propaganda make it harder for returning troops to explain their experiences and fit back into civilian life?

And finally, the American public came out of World War II with a different set of attitudes from those that had emerged in World War I, reducing the impulse to try to go it alone in the future. How much do the home front experience and the ways it was managed by the government and other political forces help explain this shift?

The Vietnam War offers quite a different set of home front experiences, including massive open dissent that was *not* primarily based on direct domestic hardship (unlike home front instabilities in deprived German and Russian cities during the later stages of World War I). It's worthwhile to compare the way the war began and was presented to the public with the dramatic events of Pearl Harbor. Changes in the nature of the media and the immediacy of their presentations of violence to and by the military deserve careful attention, prompting a different set of emotions and moral responses compared to those of World War II. World War II had also involved some obvious sacrifices on the home front, however cheerfully endured. How did this compare to what was demanded during Vietnam? The overriding topic is surely the emergence of new kinds of home front dissent and disagreement and how this related to the larger war effort, including the experiences of the military. There may be a few confusions to address here, or at least to discuss, including the reception that veterans received or thought they received when they returned home. And always, as with World War II, there is the question of lessons learned, or lessons that should have been learned. How did home front reactions and also the memory of the war itself help explain subsequent American policies?

Regional wars from the Gulf War onward were even more limited than the Vietnam engagement. A first question, not easy to answer, involves simply discussing how the home front was affected at all.

Did social conditions change? What, if any, was the economic impact? How did changes in military recruitment affect civilian experience and response, compared to Vietnam? Again, the media and the way they were managed deserve extensive attention. My sense—and it should be debated—is that the media were much more cleverly organized in these more recent wars, “embedded” but also controlled, as part of arrangements that affected emotional responses back home. How do domestic grief, guilt, and anger compare to the home front experiences during Vietnam? Some new rituals developed during this war period, including elaborate recognitions of the military at public events and unprecedented use of the word “hero.” What did these changes express and what was their result? Another question risks being political, so it should be discussed rather than definitively answered: Why has significant home front dissent not emerged, despite that fact that arguably the wars (at least since 2003) have gone at least as badly as Vietnam did? Soon after the Iraq war bogged down, a poll asked Americans how many casualties were acceptable in a conflict of this sort. The answers ranged from none to no more than 5,000. Why did this interesting hesitation not clearly get expressed in antiwar efforts?

The cumulative historical record from World War II to the present yields many questions about change and continuity. Change would seem to predominate, for example, in the ways the media connect the home front to the war. And what about emotions? All wars impose grief on the home front. Is this a constant, or have there been significant changes here as well? All modern wars connect the troops to the home front, helping to motivate or discourage. Is there a pattern of change or continuity as a result of the developments in communications from letters to contemporary texts and emails? And what about domestic knowledge about the war itself: What changes are there in the nature and volume of war news? How do changes in psychological understanding of war as well as its material burdens affect domestic response? Are there “better” or “worse” ways of knowing about what is really going on “over there”? Questions about home front “sacrifice” loom large: What sacrifices were involved in each of the war periods? How did they change? How did they affect connections between the home front and the military (including returning veterans)? Other shared topics require some subtle historical thinking. Women on the home front, for example, are a key component in all the wars. But the three war clusters we’re examining here had different impacts on women—some possibly “liberating,” others more painful. And by the most recent set of conflicts, women were more heavily engaged in military activities directly (and this is not to ignore important earlier roles). How does this affect both genders?

Are there other issues in the home front experience over 70 plus years? We have as a nation moved away from extensive political discussions of wars in advance or formal congressional approval; apparently the American public has gone along with this. But does this situation generate a healthy home front response, or does it create a sense of initial, somewhat reluctant acceptance followed by limited support or outright dissent? What should the criteria be in evaluating a constructive home front?

## Course Description

This course analyzes how the American people reacted to major wars over the past 70 plus years, with primary focus on World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Desert Storm/Iraq/Afghanistan “terror” wars since 1990 and 2001. The differences among the three wars (or clusters of wars) should promote audience involvement and discussion.

Most OLLI members directly experienced two of the wars, and presentations from interested members, as well as the recruitment of relevant faculty experts, should form an active part of the discussions of both the Vietnam and the contemporary wars. At the same time, there are some standard topics that will run through the entire course and can help organize comparisons:

1. How did the home front react to initial news of the war, and how did this reaction condition later developments?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the war’s social and economic impact, if any? What has changed or remained the same in real or imagined home front sacrifice?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How did the government seek to manipulate public opinion, if at all?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What was the media role in the war?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What were the emotional experiences of the home front—particularly in handling grief and fear?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How did home front reactions condition the ultimate impact of the war and both domestic and foreign policy directions once peace was established? (This will be speculative, of course, for the contemporary period).  
\_\_\_\_\_

As these questions suggest, examining the home front involves a cluster of related topics, all focused on how American noncombatants experienced but also affected the war effort. How were civilians, those still in the United States, affected by and involved in war? Media activities are intimately connected to the home front overall: How did they get their news? What were their attachments to those in combat? Home front engagement clearly relates to the economy: How, if at all, did war affect jobs, incomes, and consumer markets? The economic and emotional ways government tried to guide those at home constitute a critical aspect of home front experience. How did these demonstrate gaps between official goals and civilians’ reactions?

## Session 1. Overview: The Home Front as Historical Topic

In this discussion, guided by a faculty visitor, participants will talk about what home fronts are all about and why they are significant. The idea of “total war” can be presented in its implications for government policy, for economic mobilization, and for emotional conditioning, as evidenced first in World War I and then in the next global conflict. The total war concept contrasts with the kinds of regional wars represented by Vietnam and the recent/current conflicts, and discussion can anticipate some of the differences that result for home fronts. Finally, the session should help organize some presenter groups from the Osher Institute participants for future sessions, who will be expected to help guide the further discussion sessions on Vietnam and on Afghanistan/Iraq (sessions 5 and 7 on the following pages).

Note: The total war concept will be important to establish, not as a model but as a series of questions. As developed by Raymond Aron [See “For Further Reading” on page 15] and others, total war is a product of contemporary capacities for mobilization. It impinges on the home front more than on the military itself. Total war reflects the state’s ability to command and allocate resources, reorganize the economy and the labor force, and deploy increasingly effective propaganda to engage the whole population in war participation, with all the tensions and vulnerabilities this entails.

## Sessions 2 & 3. World War II

### Material

- Assigned sections of Ken Burns's NEH-sponsored *The War* (2007) <http://harpers.org/sponsor/thewar/about-the-war/about-ken-burns/>
- Bob Woodruff, "The Homefront," (2015) PBS documentary <http://www.pbs.org/video/2365487435/>

### Supplemental Material

- Dir. Michele Midori Fillion, *No Job for a Woman* (2011) <http://www.neh.gov/veterans/films/no-job-for-a-woman>; Dir. Loni Ding, *The Color of Honor: The Japanese American Soldier in WWII* (1987); Dir. Connie Field, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980)

Burns' material, especially sessions 1 and 2, encourages discussion of the following: the public mood when the war began; attitudes toward and approaches by the government and FDR; the emotional mood, including excitement and "stoicism"; economic and social impact, including for women and key minorities. During Session 2, participants should also discuss possible problems and deficiencies with the Burns approach and the whole "greatest generation" excitement, groups and individuals that might not have fit the dominant patterns and the implications of the home front experience for American policy going forward.

### Discussion Questions

1. What was the initial reaction to news of the war, and how did this help condition home front responses going forward?  
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2. What were the dominant attitudes toward the government and the leadership at this time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What were some of the key emotions of the home front response: excitement, fear, grief?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What were the main media approaches to war news and to the home front itself?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the economic and social impact of the war?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Does the concept of total war help explain the ways the home front was organized and responded?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What, if any, were the main home front divisions? (Assess the Burns presentation in this light.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How did the war experience and the war's end condition home front attitudes going forward into the Cold War and Vietnam?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Sessions 4 & 5. Vietnam

### Material

- Thomas Beamish and others, “Who Supports the Troops? Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the Making of Collective Memory,” in *Social Problems* 43 #3 (Aug., 1995): 344–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3096852>. This is an accessible article that will promote (probably vigorous) discussion
- Dir. Peter C. Rollins, *Television’s Vietnam* (1985)
- Dir. J. Vecchione, A. Hoyt, M. Smith, and B. Palling, *Vietnam: A Television History* (1983), especially segment 11 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/>

### Supplemental Material

- NEH-supported video on the making of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: <http://www.neh.gov/explore/american-icons-the-Vietnam-veterans-memorial>

During the Vietnam War, the home front ultimately turned sour. Session 5 should explore why this happened and what the consequences were both for the war itself and for subsequent US policies. Session 4 should compare Vietnam, particularly the earlier years of the war, with World War II: What was the public mood when the war began? What approaches were taken by the government? What were the economic and social impacts? Session 5 would focus more explicitly on growing disenchantment and its causes, on emotional reactions including grief, and on lessons going forward. Ideally an Osher Institute subgroup should help organize personal recollections within this framework, including ongoing differences of opinion. Some reference to the NEH podcast on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial might be relevant. Note: some OLLI groups might also want to organize a public session, inviting Vietnam veterans (and, possibly, protesters) to discuss their experiences and reflections; this could include Osher Institute members, but could deliberately reach beyond.

### Discussion Questions

1. How did the arguments for the war compare to those in World War II?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Comparing the two conflicts, what were the main changes in media presentations?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why and how did many Americans turn against the war? What role did home front response play in government policy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Compare the home front emotional experience (fear, grief, but also perhaps shame) to that of World War II.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why is there disagreement about how veterans experienced the home front climate? Is there a way to resolve this disagreement?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What sacrifices did the home front experience from the Vietnam conflict?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How did the making of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reflect home front issues and emotions?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Sessions 6 & 7. Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq

### Material

- Michelle Kendrick, "Never Again Narratives: Political Promise and the Videos of Operation Desert Storm," *Cultural Critique* 28 (Fall, 1994): 129-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354513> Note: this article also lists available videos

### Supplemental Material

- Charlotte Biltekoff, "The Terror Within: Obesity in Post 9/11 U.S. Life," *American Studies* 48#3 (Fall, 2007): 29-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40644148>

Presentations here must be particularly sensitive to ongoing political issues, with openness to the civil expression of differences of opinion. It will be useful to compare Vietnam to the contexts of these recent wars, including the implications of ending the draft and other changes in military policy, including policy toward the press. Is the "home front" idea even relevant for contemporary regional wars, given changes in ways the wars are decided upon, funded, and managed? Note: Some Osher Institute groups might want also to organize a public session, inviting Iraq and Afghan war veterans (and, possibly, critics of the wars) to discuss their experiences and reflections; this could include OLLI members but deliberately reach beyond, in this case, to different age groups.

### Discussion Questions

1. How did the American government work to produce a different home front reaction from that developed during Vietnam?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What were the key changes in media roles and presentations, and how might this have affected emotional reactions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Comparing this home front to earlier ones, how can the role of sacrifice (or lack thereof) be assessed? How, if at all, did the war change "normal" life at home?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Compare emotional experiences such as grief and guilt with their counterparts in the earlier wars.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Have there been changes in the home front reception of veterans? How can these be explained and also evaluated?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Session 8. Changes and Continuities in the Home Front

This session will draw on all the previous discussions to talk about major changes in the ways wars affect the American home front and also any continuities around such questions as how wars are funded; how governments seek to maintain public support and morale; how grief and fear are handled, particularly concerning casualties and veterans' return.

### Discussion Questions

1. Are there any significant commonalities among the three home front experiences assessed in previous sessions?  

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2. What have been the main changes in the nature and roles of media?  

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3. What have been the main changes in the role of, but also reactions to, government, including changes in public confidence and changes in partisanship?  

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4. Over the past 75 years, have Americans been exposed to too many wars? Has the public become jaded or disaffected?  

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5. Are there any key lessons from home front experiences over the past 75 years? Are there past best practices that might be revived? Clear problems to be avoided in future?  

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## Community Partnerships

Both the National Endowment for the Humanities and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute stakeholders consider the sharing of joint lecture topics in community spaces a high priority. OLLI-community partnerships are appealing to both internal (university-based) and external (community-based) partners.

In this course proposal, we present eight lectures on the topic of *The Home Front* using National Endowment for the Humanities materials as well as a variety of other notable sources. In addition, we propose several examples of partnerships that, although in some cases are specific to the Washington, DC region, may be used as an example for any Osher Institute program to augment, as needed, based on the availability of similar partners.

The process of forming OLLI-community partnerships is useful for the purposes of reaching a wider and diversified audience; generating intergenerational exchanges; sharing experiences, emotions and impressions; and creating a forum for public discussion. These partnerships often provide necessary organizational support to facilitate great programming, which in turn benefits OLLI members and the larger community. Based on the course materials, the following organizations could be potential partners:

- University department (all)
- University-based Office of Military Services
- University-based Government Relations Office
- United Services Organization
- Office of Military Personnel
- Veterans services agencies
- Veterans organizations
- Non-profit groups
  - Local historical society
- County/state community outreach agencies
  - Area agency on aging
  - 50+ programs
  - Public libraries
- Public/private community centers and religious organizations
- Local media/entertainment outlets
- Corporate partners
  - AARP

In developing this course we identified several approaches to formatting events, including: lectures, panel discussions, audience interaction using discussion prompts, and film viewing. Although venues and format may vary, in the lecture series developed each session lasts 85 minutes and occurs at the same time/day once a week, for eight weeks. In preparation for this lecture series, organizers should identify and recruit Osher Institute member veterans and community members to participate by contributing to guided discussions in several sessions.

### **Examples of Partnerships and Public Events Could Include:**

#### *Session 1*

- **Partner:** History department and/or political science department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
- **Lead Instructor:** Faculty expert
- **Lecture:** “Significance of home fronts and associated implications” (60 minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** 25-minute open mic Q&A

#### *Session 2*

- **Partner:** Historical society
- **Lead Faculty:** History department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
- **Venue:** Film projection and auditorium
- **Lecture:** View excerpts from Burns’s material (60 minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** Use prompts to elicit discussion of: the public mood when the war began; attitudes toward and approaches by the government and FDR; the emotional mood, including excitement and “stoicism”; economic and social impact, including for women and key minorities (25-minute open mic Q&A)

#### *Session 3*

- **Partner:** Historical society
- **Lead Faculty:** Woman and minority studies faculty and/or history department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
- **Venue:** Film projection and auditorium
- **Lecture:** View excerpts from Burns’s material and *The Homefront* (PBS 2015 documentary). (60-minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** Use prompts to elicit discussion of possible problems and deficiencies with the Burns approach and the whole “greatest generation” excitement, groups and individuals that might not have fit the dominant patterns, and the implications of the home front experience for American policy going forward. (25 minute open mic Q&A)

**Session 4**

- **Partner:** Office of Military Services and National Park Service
- **Lead Faculty:** History department faculty
  - Invite veterans, University students and community members
- **Venue:** Military installation or local Vietnam memorial site
- **Lecture:** In the context of the home front, compare Vietnam, particularly the earlier years of the war, with World War II (60 minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** In five sub-groups of attendees and Osher Institute members, use prompts to elicit discussion of the public mood when the war began; approaches taken by the government; the economic and social impacts (Ten-minute breakout with five minutes for each sub-group open mic summary)

**Session 5**

- **Partner:** Office of Military Services and National Park Service
- **Lead Faculty:** History department faculty
  - Invite veterans, University students, and community members
  - Invite Vietnam veterans (and, possibly, protesters)
- **Venue:** Military installation or local Vietnam memorial site
- **Lecture:** Focus more explicitly on growing disenchantment and its causes, on emotional reactions including grief, implications for military (60-minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** In five sub-groups of attendees and Osher Institute members, organize personal recollections within this framework, including ongoing differences of opinion (Ten-minute breakout with five minutes for each sub-group open mic summary)

**Session 6**

- **Partner:** Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
- **Lead Faculty:** History department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
  - Invite Iraq and Afghan war veterans (and, possibly, critics of the wars)
- **Venue:** Veterans of Foreign Wars Lodge
- **Lecture:** Using article and video resources: Compare the contexts of the recent wars with Vietnam, including the implications of ending the draft and other changes in military policy, including policy toward the media. (60-minute lecture).
- **Discussion:** In five sub-groups of attendees and Osher Institute members, organize personal recollections within this framework, including ongoing differences of opinion. (Ten-minute breakout with five minutes for each sub-group open mic summary)

**Session 7**

- **Partner:** Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and/or Newseum, Washington DC (or similar local institution)
- **Lead Faculty:** Journalism department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
  - Invite Iraq and Afghan war veterans (and, possibly, critics of the wars)
- **Venue:** Veterans of Foreign Wars Lodge or Newseum (or similar local institution)
- **Lecture:** Using articles and video resources: Presentations here must be particularly sensitive to ongoing political issues, with openness for civil expressions of differences of opinion. Compare the contexts of the recent wars with Vietnam, including the implications of ending the draft and other changes in military policy, including policy toward the media. Is the “home front” idea relevant for contemporary regional wars, given changes in ways the wars are decided upon, funded, managed? (60 minute lecture)
- **Discussion:** In five sub-groups of attendees and Osher Institute members, organize personal recollections within this framework, including ongoing differences of opinion. (Ten-minute breakout with five minutes for each sub-group open mic summary)

**Session 8**

- **Partner:** Veterans Administration
- **Lead Faculty:** History department faculty
  - Invite University students and community members
  - Invite war veterans (and, possibly, critics of the wars) and their families
- **Venue:** City Hall or other community venue
- **Lecture:** This session will draw on all the previous discussions to talk about major changes and continuities in the ways wars affect the American home front, discussing such questions as how wars are funded; how governments seek to maintain public support and morale; how grief and fear are handled, particularly around the experience of casualties and veterans’ return. (60-minute lecture)

## Further Reading

The following studies may be of assistance to faculty in this Osher Institute course and should be made available to student groups as well:

- Aron, Raymond, *The Century of Total War* (New York: Doubleday, 1954)
- Bannerman, Stacy, *Homefront 911: How Families of Veterans are Wounded by our Wars* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2015)
- Carroll, Andres, *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*. (New York: Random House, 2006)
- Cohen, Stan, *V for Victory: America's Home Front During World War II* (Missoula, Mont: Pictorial Histories Pub, 1991)
- Gray, Willard D., *Home Front: Viet Nam and Families at War* (Xibris Corp, 2008)
- Greenblatt, Mark Lee, *Valor: Unsung Heroes from Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2014)
- Harris, Mark Jonathan, Franklin D. Mitchell, and Steven J. Schechter, *The Homefront: America During World War II* (New York: Putnam, 1984)
- Kimble, James J., *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006)
- Lutz, Catherine, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001)
- MacDermid, Shelley and David S. Riggs, *Risk and Resilience in U.S. Military Families* (New York: Springer, 2011)
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# The Memorial Landscape: Representing the Experience of War in the Cultural Landscape

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## Larry G. Brown, PhD

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Dr. Brown is also a current instructor for the Osher Institute at University of Missouri. He holds a PhD in Policy Studies, and his research and interests focus on cultural geography, North America, Middle America, political geography, geographic education, the theocratic right, Christian Identity (Israel) movement, militant hate groups and their effect on public and educational policy, white supremacy movements in the USA, geography of religion, the use of qualitative research methods in geography, political and religious movements in Latin America, the place of complexity theory in the social sciences and in theology. Dr. Brown has written many books and articles including "Terrorism," with Jackie Eller, in *Social Problems: A Case Study Approach*; "Eco-Laughter," *Storytelling Magazine*; *The Middle East: Prospects for Peace?*; *Monsoon Asia: East Timor Seeks to Become the World's Newest State*; *Kashmir: India and Pakistan's Point of Contention*; *A Shift in Taiwan?*; *Africa: Africa's World War*; "Russian and the Near Abroad: A Newly Revised Russia," in *Update 2000, Essentials of World Regional Geography, Third Edition*; and "Landscapes of Fear" in *The North American Geographer*.



## Major Theme

Humanities study the meaning-making processes of people, helping us to understand one another through language, history, and culture. They further allow us to think critically and creatively, enabling us to solve complex problems and improve our thinking about our world and our social behavior.

It is important to study the experience of war and other experiences of violence in order, hopefully, to lessen the need for violent conflict. This document describes a local community discussion series intended for those interested in understanding the way in which war is integrated into daily life through participation in historic and symbolic representations in the cultural landscape. Memorial landscapes illustrate the processes of social memory and grief manifested in the cultural landscape, and how society participates in the transformation of understanding the deadly nature of war into a more matter-of-fact acceptance of violent history. The following study will guide groups in observation and study of both local and remote sites through examination and reflection on the memorialization of war.

## Overview: Memorialization

During and following a major war or conflict, involved communities establish, maintain, and visit sites that remind them of specific persons, places, and incidents of the war.

These sites can include shadowed (or hallowed) ground sites where battles, massacres, encampments, or troop movements may have occurred. Such sites may also include cemeteries, individual graves, prisons, concentration camps, torture centers, forts, posts, bases, etc. These sites may further locate other significant events of the wars, but especially locate the deaths of numbers of combatants, prisoners, victims (intended or unintended casualties), and those confined, relocated, or disappeared.

These types of memorial sites often include physical memorials, such as statues, plaques, markers, graves, birth sites, parks, and buildings. These physical sites and markers are often used for commemorations, ceremonies, re-enactments, festivals, and a variety of public events. In addition, these sites and their related physical structures and social gatherings become the destination for individual pilgrimage and group visitation to remember, honor, or to protest. Significant public and private resources are required for construction, maintenance, communication, funding processes, archival facilities, and management of the physical as well as the social environment of the sites. As such, these sites assume a certain degree of sacredness and valuing through which both individuals and the larger community participate in war, or at least its remembrance, and become a part of the symbolic urban and rural landscapes.

## Course or Event Description

For this course, one-time event or series of events, visual and documentary presentation of case study sites optimally will include field trips, photograph or art presentations, film screenings, etc. Personal experiences with the sites depicted should be used to stimulate discussion among participants. Discussions will be designed to explore the processes of social memory and grief, the processes of memorialization in the cultural landscape, and the transformation from the deadly nature of war to a more matter-of-fact acceptance of violent history. Discussion can also include the types of transformation of the landscape, such as glorification, penitence, resolution, avoidance, or criticism.

Groups are encouraged to explore sites through field trips, sharing of personal experiences at sites, or published documentation (written, performed, visual material, websites, etc.). It is hoped that a variety of aspects of war-related memorial landscapes will be discussed through numerous specific cases, including student narratives about their experience of a particular location. At the same time, there are some standard discussion topics that should be considered:

### 1. Observation of the Types of Presentation on the Landscape:

#### *Visual, physical presentation*

- Monuments, plaques, statues, paintings, and other icons
- Flags, banners
- Medals, badges, patches, ribbons
- Fireworks displays
- Religious shrines, crosses, and other symbols
- Place names (buildings, bridges, roads, cities, streets, parks, trails)
- Currency
- Souvenirs
- Spontaneous shrines, displays, photos, objects

#### *Ritualized activities*

- Re-enactments of battles, episodes
- Stories, songs, poetry, legends
- Pageants, dramas, musicals, performances
- Holidays, anniversaries, calendars

#### *Educational functions*

- Battlefield presentations
- Museums, libraries, archives
- Affinity groups, historical societies, speakers' groups
- Literature, histories, theoretical understandings
- Maps

## 2. Analysis of the *Purpose* of the Memorization:

- Location of death (battlefields, attacks, massacres, death marches, sieges, civilian casualties, holocaust/genocide sites, cemeteries)
- Military installations, forts, bases, fields, camps
- Remembrance of Individuals (military leaders, heroes, victims)
- Prisons, internment camps, torture sites
- End of war (walls taken down, borders opened, military installations abandoned, treaties achieved, peace, restructuring daily life, new relationships)

## 3. Discussion of the *Functions* of Memorialization and Consequent Behavior

### *Emotional Adjustment*

- Grief processing
- Guilt and blame
- Mystery, transcendent encounter
- Revenge, retaliation

### *Meanings*

- Preservation and protection of sites
- Honoring participants
- Gratitude for consequences
- Lessons learned for future behavior
- Traditions and customs of remembrance

### *Community Establishment*

- Solidarity, support
- Identity
- Enlistment of resources, recovery
- Economic, political, social, and psychological costs
- Institutions for preservation, profit, power, recruitment

## Sites (Themes) and Discussion

A class can select any or all of the following sites (themes) for consideration. They may be considered individually or clustered; for example, some sites may incorporate one, or more, or all of the themes in a series.

Many sites have visitor centers or museums with printed documents that can be viewed or secured, and staff who can be interviewed or enlisted to assist in the production of audio-visual materials. State and national registries of historic sites and parks can also provide a wealth of reference materials. A good starting point is the American Battle Monuments Commission information, found at: [www.abmc.gov/about-us](http://www.abmc.gov/about-us).

1. **Battle sites:** Select several local, regional, national, or global sites. Option to select two or more from different historical periods, or focus on several sites in one war.  

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2. **Graveyards:** Select a military graveyard, or a non-military graveyard that is dedicated to a specific war, or an individual or group of combatants or victims of one war.  

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3. **Prisons and other confinement facilities:** Select one or more sites that housed people associated with the war.  

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4. **Heroes:** Select a military or political figure, heroic citizen or martyr, or other decision/policy-maker, or negotiator who is memorialized in the landscape.  

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5. **Events:** Select an anniversary or holiday that commemorates a declaration of war, an attack/battle, a war-related disaster, a victory, a defeat, a peace negotiation, a treaty, a birthday or the day of the death for a significant person in the war.  

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6. **Place names:** Select several place names of streets, parks, plazas, towns/cities, natural features (mountains, plains, rivers, etc.), buildings, organizations, events, etc.  

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7. **Objects:** Select and view several objects associated with the war (that may be displayed in a museum or other facility, or privately held), such as buildings, weapons, equipment, transportation item, medals, letters and journals, uniforms, political documents, posters, maps, photographs, art (visual or audio), etc.  

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Once one or more sites and/or themes are chosen, the class should be invited to observe through a survey their own neighborhood, community, city, region, state, or another part of the world (they may choose to narrow or broaden the scope of their observation) for their selected sites (themes). While conducting observation through these personal visits, field trips, collecting and viewing audiovisual information about these locations, participants should observe the following:

1. How is history indicated and documented by this site (where, when, what, who)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the spatial arrangement of the site (what is where, what type of presentation)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the visibility, accessibility, and other processes of inclusion for visitors (signage, pathways, parking, facilities, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the style of presentation (basic facts, to encourage honor or devotion, education, and/or preservation, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are the primary messages, dominant visual patterns, or narratives that are put forth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Who has prepared, financed, maintained, or otherwise supported this site?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What public is visiting this site? How are they participants in the site?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How is this site used in any ritualized activities (ceremonies, reenactments, dramas, concerts, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. In general, what is the saturation and/or concentration of memorial landscapes for this area/region?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How does this location fit with the larger picture?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Once sites or themes have been observed classes should report and discuss their observations with one another. Deeper discussion questions might now include:

1. In your opinion, is the historical presentation accurate? What is included or excluded from the information? What is the perspective or bias? What are the stated or unstated purposes? Are these purposes aligned with those who fund or manage the site? Here the class might read appropriate excerpts from Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism* (see the Introduction, “Necessary Tensions” and the Conclusion, “Necessary Changes”); Machin and Abousnnouga, *The Language of War Monuments*; and/or Savage, *Monument Wars* (see chapter 1, “The Landscape of Violence and Tragedy”).  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. To what degree does this site engage those who have a direct connection with participants in this war? How does it engage those without a direct connection?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What emotions might be evoked by this site (guilt, sadness, anger, celebration, resolution, motivation for action, protest, awe, respect, etc.)? How might these emotions vary with time passing, personal involvement, or any other direct or indirect connections to the war?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the communication of the intended narratives of this site? Consider your own experience and your assessment of the experience of other visitors to the site (casual or intentional).  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What might be the ultimate takeaway, meaning, lesson, or assessment of the experience of war from involvement in this site? What is the story of war that is told here? How does this site address or appropriate the violence of war into normal society? Here the class might read and discuss all or portions of Foote, *Shadowed Ground* (see chapter 7, “The Land-Shape of Memory and Tradition”); and Machin and Abousnnouga, *The Language of War Monuments* (see chapters 4-8).  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you estimate and evaluate the financial and social costs of maintaining this site? In your opinion, is it worth supporting? The class may want to look at some of the sites on the American Battle Monuments Commission website, or visit one that may be near to them.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Compare and contrast your experience with this site to other sites or other types of sites.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What other reflections, evaluations or conclusions do you have? Consider both your physical and emotional reactions.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Suggested Resources

- **American Battle Monuments Commission:** [www.abmc.gov/about-us](http://www.abmc.gov/about-us). The Commission is an agency of the executive branch of the federal government. The website gives historical information and descriptions for each site. Its mission includes:
  - Designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining permanent American cemeteries in foreign countries.
  - Establishing and maintaining the 25 permanent American military cemeteries and 27 federal memorial, monuments, and markers where American armed forces have served overseas since April 6, 1917 and within the United States when directed by public law.
  - Controlling the design and construction of permanent U.S. military monuments and markers by other U.S. citizens and organizations, both public and private, and encouraging their maintenance.
- **Bergman, Teresa.** *Exhibiting Patriotism: Creating and Contesting Interpretations of American Historic Sites*. 2013. Drawing on film theory, memory studies, visual communication, and studies of visitors, Bergman analyzes the relationship between visitors and the historic narratives of historic sites. She pays particular attention to the display of American patriotism and the controversies surrounding who is and who is not represented in those sites. Her examples include the U.S.S. Arizona, the Alamo, the Lincoln Memorial, Mt. Rushmore, among other sites.
- **Foote, Kenneth.** *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*. 1997. Through the use of numerous case studies and examples, this book addresses the phenomena of acts of violence that have been transformed into monuments and memorials and, therefore, play an active role in the interpretation of those acts. Foote writes that designation and sanctification occur when events hold some lasting positive meaning that people wish to remember; sanctification includes rituals of consecration. However, a site's treatment may change over time as representations of local, regional, or national identity may change. Foote does discuss the sites that have remained ignored or hidden because they do not fit the contemporary idealized, patriotic vision.
- **Machin, David and Abousnnouga, Gill.** *The Language of War Monuments*. 2013. This book analyzes war monuments by developing a multimodal social-semiotic approach to understand how they communicate as three-dimensional objects. They review how monuments have been studied, their political contexts, iconology, and the continuing discourse on war represented by monuments.
- **Savage, Kirk.** *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. 2009. Savage tells the story of the Mall's plan, the structures that populate its corridors, and the change it reveals regarding national representation. He describes the shift from the nineteenth-century concept of a decentralized landscape, or "ground"—heroic statues spread out in traffic circles and picturesque parks contrasted to the twentieth-century ideal of "space"—in which authority is concentrated in an intensified center, and the monument is transformed from an object of reverence to an expanded space of experience.



## Examples and Ideas for Using the Methodology in Exploring Sites (Themes)

### 1. The Boone County, Missouri, Courthouse Plaza

#### *Background:*

The Boone County, Missouri, Courthouse Plaza, a memorial that lists the names of two Boone County men killed in Operation Desert Storm, was recently moved from the county courthouse plaza and a new memorial was erected to replace the Desert Storm monument. The new memorial is inscribed “In honor of all those who served their country in the Cold War, Southwest Asia, Global War on Terrorism.” The new memorial lists the names of three men killed in action: Patrick Kelly Connor and Steven Paul Farnen, both of whom served in Operation Desert Storm and were listed on the previous memorial, and Sterling William Wyatt, who was killed during Operation Enduring Freedom. After some initial controversy, the new memorial was dedicated with support from local veterans’ organizations. The project cost was approximately \$6,000.

A few years earlier, a Confederate war memorial was removed from the plaza and relocated to a Civil War battle site a few miles away. In addition, during some construction on the area a monument to boys and girls serving in World War I, placed there by the American War Mothers, was unearthed. The plaza has gone through considerable changes in recent years, but continues to be the site for commemorations, holiday observances, and protests. At present, there are several memorials situated there recognizing previous wars.

#### *Participation:*

The class may be invited (individually or as a group) to visit the courthouse grounds and use the observation questions listed above. They would be encouraged to enter the courthouse and ask for additional historical information and maps regarding the plaza. Collecting digital photos of aspects impressive to participants should be encouraged. The group may also benefit from visiting the new locations of the memorials that were moved. After gathering information they can then discuss the site using each of the discussion questions provided above. Discussion should include the variety of uses of the site, while noting the degree to which the general public seems to be aware of the site, given its location on a major automobile and pedestrian thoroughfare. In addition, the class may want to consider how views of the plaza may have changed over the years with the changes in the population and culture of Columbia and Boone County, Missouri.

#### *Potential Partners:*

- Boone County Historical Society
- Boone County Department
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Missouri Humanities Council

## 2. Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, near Springfield, Missouri

### *Background:*

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, Republic, MO, commemorates and interprets the first major Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River and the site of the death of Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general killed in action. Visitors to the battlefield can learn about the people and places important to the battle, and hear the stories from park staff and re-enactors. In addition to field trips to the battlefield, the site provides curriculum resources for teachers and classrooms that can be used in their own setting. Special displays are frequently available, such as a series of 13 steel engravings and prints depicting the death of Union General Nathaniel Lyon in conjunction with the 155th anniversary of the Battle of Wilson's Creek. These prints and engravings are from various sources of the Civil War time period, including publications and publishers such as *Harpers Weekly*, Currier and Ives, and Kurz and Allison. The anniversary of the battle is observed with a special program and ceremony with living history programs depicting Civil War soldier life, musket and artillery firing demonstrations, Civil War medicine, and other related topics.

The Visitor Center provides a park brochure with information about the battle, a self-guided tour, and special events. The Visitor Center is open seven days a week, and contains exhibits about the battle, a 29-minute film, a fiber-optic map program, a bookstore, and a Civil War research library. A paved tour road provides a self-guided auto tour with interpretive stops at significant battle-related locations. In addition, there are walking trails off the tour road and a virtual tour of the battlefield is available. Other features include the Ray House, dating from the 1850s, which served as a temporary field hospital for Southern soldiers following the battle. General Nathaniel Lyon's body was brought to the house and placed in a bed for examination. The bed is just one exhibit in one of the rooms.

### *Participation:*

The class may be invited (individually or as a group) to visit the battlefield and use the observation questions above while visiting the site. They would be encouraged to spend time at the visitor center, tour the grounds, visit the Ray House, and ask for additional historical information, maps, and associated special programs and events. After gathering information and images, they can then discuss the site using the discussion questions provided above. Discussion should include the variety of uses of the site, and changes in meanings for both staff and visitors. The Ray House represents the slave-holding system prior to the war, and has its own significant history. The history of the Civil War itself prompts a diversity of perspectives, and many critical interpretations; it could be fruitful to examine the larger issues connected to why people visit this battlefield with likely links to contemporary politics of the USA.

### *Potential Partners:*

- National Parks Service
- Mid-Missouri Civil War Roundtable
- Missouri Humanities Council

### *Resources:*

History of Battlefield Creek. <https://www.nps.gov/wicr/learn/education/upload/Battle-Overview.pdf>

### 3. The Topaz Museum, Delta, Utah

#### *Background:*

During World War II, the USA forcibly relocated and incarcerated between 110,000 and 120,000 Japanese Americans in camps in the interior of the country, such as the internment camp at Topaz, Utah. Sixty-two percent of the internees were United States citizens. The Topaz Museum was established in 2015 to preserve important sites at Topaz and to provide information to those interested in the history of the camps. The Topaz Museum's mission statement reads:

**“To preserve the Topaz site and the history of the internment experience during World War II; to interpret its impact on the internees, their families, and the citizens of Millard County; and to educate the public in order to prevent a recurrence of a similar denial of American civil rights.”**

The museum is currently exhibiting artwork from Topaz, half of a restored recreation hall, and a typical room for internees. The restored recreation hall was half of the Topaz Boy Scout meeting hall on Block 42. After the camp closed, the government sold the barracks to people who turned the structures into houses and farm buildings. This building was purchased by the Eldro Jeffery family and was used as a storage facility until the family donated it to the Museum. It has been restored to its 1943 appearance with un-taped sheetrock on the walls, masonite on the floor, and tar paper covering the pine boards on the outside walls.

A history of the Topaz camp is available at <http://www.topazmuseum.org/history>. The website states, *“The Topaz Museum Board received a Japanese American Confinement Sites grant to manufacture and install the permanent exhibits for the Topaz Museum which is located at 55 West Main in Delta, Utah, 16 miles from the original site of Topaz. Photographs, artifacts and displays depicting the Topaz internment experience will inform and educate visitors. Further, former internees will take comfort in the fact that the hardships they endured will not be forgotten.”*

#### *Participation:*

The class may be invited (individually or as a group) to visit the camp, or study the information made available online, and use the observation questions provided above. It would be helpful to review other books and articles about the history of the Japanese American internment, including numerous film representations. After gathering information they will then discuss the site using the discussion questions provided above. Discussion could include the connections to larger issues of immigration, treatment of citizens with non-European heritage, and prisoners of war. The history of the Japanese American internment in general prompts a diversity of opinions, perspectives, and shared history, but it would be very important to focus the class attention on how this site represents the longer history and helps visitors or students interpret these aspects of the experience of war.

#### *Potential Partners:*

- Topaz Museum
- National Japanese American Historical Society
- Japanese American Veterans Association

*Resource List Compiled by Topaz Museum:*

- **JARDA Japanese American Relocation Digital Archive:** Images document the places that played a role in the evaluation, relocation, incarceration, and resettlement of Japanese Americans during World War II. <https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/65/jarda-places/>
- ***Rabbit in the Moon:*** A documentary about the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII. <http://www.pbs.org/pov/rabbitinthemoon/>
- **Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of WWII Japanese American Relocation Sites** – 1999 survey of all internment site including assembly centers and isolation sites conducted by the US Department of the Interior. [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/anthropology74/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/anthropology74/index.htm)
- ***Conscience and the Constitution:*** A documentary about a handful of young Japanese Americans who refused to be drafted from the American concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming. <https://zinnedproject.org/materials/conscience-and-the-constitution/>
- **Densho:** Densho's mission is to preserve the testimonies of Japanese Americans who were unjustly incarcerated during World War II before their memories are extinguished. Densho offers these irreplaceable firsthand accounts, coupled with historical images and teacher resources, to explore principles of democracy, and promote equal justice for all. <http://www.densho.org/about-densho/>
- **DEUNDE presents: Art and Survival in a Time of Paranoia**  
*Dust Storm*, listed under "Performance Archives," tells a story of the internment of Japanese Americans during the second world war, using the art of Chiura Obata. <https://www.duendedrama.org/live-performance/dust-storm/>

## Community Partnerships

There are many opportunities for partnerships with organizations that hold analogous missions on the topic of memorial landscapes

### If it is a Memorial Site, Potential Partnerships Include:

- State Park Services—if the memorial is located on state property
- National Park Services—if the memorial is located on federal property
- Local historical societies and preservation organizations. This website is a directory of such organizations that can be searched by state: <http://www.preservationdirectory.com/preservationorganizationsresources/organizationcategories.aspx>
- Local government commissions including city/county historic preservation offices, landmark commissions, economic development offices, and other government offices charged with identifying and designating city/county landmarks. Directory: <http://www.preservationdirectory.com/preservationorganizationsresources/OrganizationListings.aspx?catid=123>
- Many times a local organization is responsible for the maintenance of the site. These organizations commonly are called something like “Friends of [memorial name]” (e.g., Friends of Jones Cemetery or Friends of Veterans of the Iraq War)
- Foundations who have or are actively funding the memorial site
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officers: <http://www.achp.gov/thpo.html>
- Veterans Service Organizations
- Veterans Organizations
- United Services Organization
- State Humanities Councils <https://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils>
- County/State Community Programming Agencies
  - Area agency on aging
  - 50+ programs
- Corporate partners
  - AARP

### Other Opportunities Include:

- University departments
- Public libraries
- Public/private community centers and religious organizations
- Local media/entertainment outlets

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# Relief Agencies: The Experience of War in the Recovery During and Following War

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## Larry G. Brown, PhD

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Dr. Brown is also a current instructor for the Osher Institute at University of Missouri. He holds a PhD in Policy Studies, and his research and interests focus on cultural geography, North America, Middle America, political geography, geographic education, theocratic right, Christian Identity (Israel) movement, militant hate groups and their effect on public and educational policy, white supremacy movements in the USA, geography of religion, the use of qualitative research methods in geography, political and religious movements in Latin America, the place of complexity theory in the social sciences and in theology. Dr. Brown has written many books and articles including "Terrorism," with Jackie Eller, in *Social Problems: A Case Study Approach*; "Eco-Laughter," *Storytelling Magazine*; *The Middle East: Prospects for Peace?*; *Monsoon Asia: East Timor Seeks to Become the World's Newest State*; *Kashmir: India and Pakistan's Point of Contention*; *A Shift in Taiwan?*; *Africa: Africa's World War*; "Russian and the Near Abroad: A Newly Revised Russia," in *Update 2000, Essentials of World Regional Geography, Third Edition*; and "Landscapes of Fear" in *The North American Geographer*.

## Major Theme

Humanities study the meaning-making processes of people, helping us to understand one another through language, history, and culture. They further allow us to be able to think critically and creatively, enabling us to solve complex problems and improve our thinking about our world and our social behavior.

It is important to study the experience of war and other experiences of violence in order, hopefully, to lessen the need for violent conflict. This document describes a local community discussion series intended for those interested in understanding the way in which humanitarian aid for the victims of war and the rebuilding of communities has been provided by a variety of religions, religious organizations, or quasi-religious/charitable organizations worldwide. Such relief agencies demonstrate how society participates in the transformation of understanding the deadly nature of war into a more matter-of-fact acceptance of violent history. The following study will guide the class or study group participants in understanding the role, the effectiveness, and the long-term consequences of relief agencies engaged in recovery from war.



## Overview: The Agencies

Wars are not only a matter of military battles in which soldiers fight and kill each other and destroy military equipment and facilities, but wars have profound and devastating consequences on civilian populations, the land, and human institutions.

During and following armed conflicts, there is need for food, shelter, infrastructure (water, sewer, transportation, communication, power transmission, fuel, etc.), health care (hospitals, doctors, emergency facilities, etc.), disease management, funerals and disposal for the dead, relocation of the living, finding missing people, and myriad other immediate and enduring concerns. These needs are apparent in the midst of the war, but also in the immediate aftermath, and in many cases years after the fact, e.g., removal of land mines and unexploded ordinances that continue to wound people long after the conflict is over. Agriculture, housing, infrastructure, education facilities, and other aspects of daily life not only are disrupted, but also pose significant problems for long-term recovery within war zones. Governments are one source for recovery resources, but there are also many non-government agencies that are involved from the very beginning to the end, and, in fact, are often the entities that provide the most extensive care and most rebuilding. Non-government agencies (often religious organizations) are equally involved in the decisions about who gets what aid on what timeline.

Several modern organizations (religions, religious organizations, or quasi-religious/charitable organizations) were created explicitly for recovery from war and have gone on to be longstanding relief agencies for war relief, disaster relief, refugee resettlement, and other immediate and long-term recovery needs. Such agencies include the Red Cross, Red Crescent, CROP/Church World Service, Heifer International, and others.

Visual and documentary presentation of case study agencies, including field trips or personal experiences, are recommended to stimulate discussion around this topic. This study guide will look at a number of examples by examining their origin, functions, financial support, leadership, and some critical examination of effectiveness. Discussion can also consider the role these agencies play in global politics (e.g., NGOs and the United Nations), peace negotiations, interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and refugee resettlement.

## Agencies (Themes and Discussion)

With this study series, groups should select any or all of the following three case study agencies (themes) for consideration, and consider adding their own. The agencies may be considered individually or used for comparison and contrasting purposes. Agencies have websites with an abundance of historic and contemporary information about their mission, priorities, functions, administration, budgets, and goals. Most of these agencies have regional and local offices or are represented by partner organizations. The local offices serve as information centers and typically will have staff available who can be interviewed or assist with access to resources, often including printed documents or audiovisual materials. Such organization may even have paid or volunteer staff who would be willing to come and speak to class sessions and/or provide tours of service preparation and delivery sites. In addition to the listed example organizations, there may be other similar organizations that class members are aware of or personally involved in, and participants can be a great resource for finding supplemental or substitute case study organizations. Class members may be local volunteers, fund raisers, or may have been involved in international work, and should bring their own experience to bear on the discussions.

Once an agency or theme has been chosen, the class is encouraged to gather information on the selected agencies through a variety of formats to include: research and field visits, their own knowledge and experience, and any additional interviews they might conduct on their own.

There are also many books, articles, documentaries, films, and other published accounts of the agencies that can be reviewed and used during discussion. Beyond resources suggested in this guide, class members will be encouraged to create their own bibliographies on their selected agencies. This information will then form the curriculum foundation from which the following discussion questions may be considered.

## Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, is the history presented accurate? What is included or excluded from the information that has been shared or provided?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the stated purposes and priorities of the agency? What are the stated or unstated purposes and priorities? How do the budget or funding sources of the agency express these purposes and priorities? Are these purposes and priorities aligned with those who fund or manage the agency? Here the class might interview staff members or volunteers, or share any class member experiences with this agency. The class may discuss what information and/or appeals they have witnessed in the media—both negative and positive expressions should be examined.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. To what degree does this agency directly engage with those who are experiencing the immediate or long-term consequences of war? What comments are available from those who have received benefit from agency resources? What comments are available from those who have volunteered locally or in war zones? How does this agency engage with those who do not have a direct connection, e.g., potential contributors or volunteers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How are war and the aftermath portrayed by this agency? What are its specific political, economic, or cultural perceptions of the cause, experience, and consequence of war? How have these perceptions changed over time, personal involvement, or any other direct or indirect connections to the war(s)? To what degree is this agency involved in the prevention or resolution of war?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the communication of the agency? Consider your own experience and your assessment of the experience of studying and/or visiting with the agency (casual or intentional).  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How were you informed, surprised, disappointed, etc., about the work of this agency? What might be the ultimate takeaway, meaning, lesson, or assessment of the experience of war from involvement with this agency? What is the story of war that is told through this agency's work?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How does this agency address or appropriate the violence of war into normal society?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Compare and contrast your experience with this agency to other agencies or other types of agencies.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Relief agencies are increasingly involved in international policy decisions made by individual countries and global political organizations. How is this agency connected to such entities, e.g., the United Nations. (See Peterson, "International Religious NGOs at The United Nations: A Study of a Group of Religious Organizations," in *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/>). Also consider the role of refugee resettlement; review the activities of the listed agencies on the following pages.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What other reflections, evaluations, or conclusions do you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Examples of Relief Agencies (Themes)

### 1. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was founded to protect human life and health, to ensure respect for all human beings and to prevent and alleviate human suffering. It has approximately 97 million volunteers, members, and staff worldwide consisting of several distinct organizations that are legally independent from each other, but are united within the movement through common basic principles, objectives, symbols, statutes, and governance. It includes: The International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In 1859, the Swiss businessman Jean-Henri Dunant traveled to Italy to meet French emperor Napoleon III with the intention of discussing difficulties in conducting business in French-occupied Algeria. He toured the field of the Battle of Solferino, an engagement in the Austro-Sardinian War where, in a single day, about 40,000 soldiers on both sides died or were left wounded on the field. Jean-Henri Dunant was shocked by the terrible aftermath of the battle, the suffering of the wounded soldiers, and the near-total lack of medical attendance and basic care he witnessed. For several days he devoted himself to helping with the treatment and care for the wounded, and succeeded in organizing an overwhelming level of relief assistance by motivating the local villagers to aid without discrimination. He authored a book and explicitly advocated for the formation of national voluntary relief organizations to help nurse wounded soldiers in the case of war. In addition, he called for the development of international treaties to guarantee the protection of neutral medics and field hospitals for soldiers wounded on the battlefield. Thus the Red Cross was born, and continued to develop through both World War I and II.

For a more complete history see Forsythe, *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross*, Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*, and Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal*.

### 2. CROP/Church World Service

From its website: <http://cwsglobal.org/about/history-2/>

“Church World Service was born in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Seventeen Christian denominations came together to form an agency ‘To do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone.’ The mission: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless. More than 70 years later the mission remains, though where and how we accomplish it has changed dramatically.”

“In 1946-47, United States churches opened their hearts and provided more than 11 million pounds of food, clothing, and medical supplies to war-torn Europe and Asia. Protestants and Catholics pooled talent and resources to meet a staggering refugee crisis. Today the Immigration and Refugee Program of CWS is a vital, internationally recognized operation, having resettled nearly a half million refugees since its inception.

“Also in 1947, CWS, Lutheran World Relief, and the National Catholic Welfare Program created a joint community hunger appeal, the Christian Rural Overseas Program, also known as CROP. The acronym is gone but the name and life-saving work remain as CROP Hunger Walks in some 1,500 communities across the United States.

That early CROP initiative captured the imagination of America’s heartland. Soon “Friendship Trains” roared across the country, picking up commodities such as corn, wheat, rice, and beans to be shared around the world. The experience of the trains led to “Friendship Food Ships.” And a multi-denominational program called “One Great Hour of Sharing” was formed to raise in-church gifts to help fill these ships.”

### 3. Heifer International

<https://www.heifer.org/about-heifer/index.htm>

“Heifer International’s mission is to work with communities to end world hunger and poverty and to care for the Earth. Dan West was a farmer from the American Midwest and member of the Church of the Brethren who went to the front lines of the Spanish Civil War as an aid worker. His mission was to provide relief, but he soon discovered the meager single cup of milk rationed to the weary refugees once a day was not enough. And then he had a thought: What if they had not a cup, but a cow? That ‘teach a man to fish’ philosophy is what drove West to found Heifer International. And now, nearly 70 years later, that philosophy still inspires our work to end world hunger and poverty throughout the world once and for all.

“How it Works. We empower families to turn hunger and poverty into hope and prosperity—but our approach is more than just giving them a handout. Heifer links communities and helps bring sustainable agriculture and commerce to areas with a long history of poverty. Our animals provide partners with both food and reliable income, as agricultural products such as milk, eggs and honey can be traded or sold at market. When many families gain this new sustainable income, it brings new opportunities for building schools, creating agricultural cooperatives, forming community savings and funding small businesses.

“Passing on the Gift. The core of our model is Passing on the Gift. This means families share the training they receive, and pass on the first female offspring of their livestock to another family. This extends the impact of the original gift, allowing a once impoverished family to become donors and full participants in improving their communities. The goal of every Heifer project is to help families achieve self-reliance. We do this by providing them the tools they need to sustain themselves, and it’s thanks to the generosity of donors like you.”

#### 4. Refugee Resettlement

The United States Office of Refugee Resettlement lists the voluntary agencies that are instrumental in relocating the refugees from conflicts around the world.

*These agencies are as follows:*

- Church World Service (CWS)
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
- Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
- World Relief (WR)

In addition to the organization profiles provided above, these are more suggestions for potential community partnerships and resources on the role of war recovery organizations.

#### *Federal Administrative Agencies*

- Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
- Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)
- Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGS)

For a full listing of refugee resettlement agencies throughout the U.S., organized by state, visit:  
<http://www.wrapsnet.org/Contacts/RPAgencyContacts/tabid/100/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

***Training and Technical Assistance Provider***

- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS)
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)
- Welcoming America
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Higher (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service)
- National Capacity Building Project for Specialized Torture Treatment Centers

***County/State Community Programming Agencies***

- State Humanities Councils—<https://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils>
- Area agency on aging
- 50+ programs

***Corporate Partners***

- AARP

***Other***

- University departments
- Public libraries
- Public/private community centers and religious organizations
- Local media/entertainment outlets

## Suggested Resources

- **The American Red Cross** maintains a list of documentary films and recommended feature films about the consequences of war and the recovery efforts after wars: <http://www.redcross.org/humanityinwar/resource-guide-films>.
- **Forsythe, David P. *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross*. 2005.**  
This book examines the ICRC from its origins in the middle of the nineteenth century up to the present day, and provides a comprehensive overview of this organization that is recognized in international law as if it were an intergovernmental organization. Forsythe focuses on the policy making and field work of the ICRC, while not ignoring international humanitarian law. He explores how it exercises its independence, impartiality, and neutrality to try to protect prisoners in Iraq, displaced and starving civilians in Somalia, and families separated by conflict in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.
- **Frontline (PBS Learning Center)** provides a list of films and curriculum guides on contemporary conflicts, including their causes and conflicts: [https://ninenet.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/fl/?topic\\_id=1033](https://ninenet.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/fl/?topic_id=1033)
- **The International Rescue Committee** maintains a comprehensive list of books and films about refugees and U.S. Refugee Resettlement in its Project Soar (Strengthening Organizations Assisting Refugees): [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/refugee\\_films\\_and\\_books.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/refugee_films_and_books.pdf)
- **Moorehead, Caroline. *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*. 1998.**  
The Swiss-directed International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] was established to deal with governments at the highest levels and coordinate work of national societies such as the American Red Cross. National societies existed at the mercy of their governments and ruling classes. They had a special relationship with the armed services and like the ICRC avoided the image of pacifism. To them, wars, like natural catastrophes, must always be expected; the Red Cross considered it a duty to ameliorate human suffering caused by war. Moorehead shows expansion of Red Cross work beyond nursing to other forms of emergency relief, negotiations of international conventions, triumphs and failures of aid in nonmilitary disasters, protection of POWs, and efforts to establish humane regulations of the conduct of war.
- **Moser Jones, Marian. *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal*. 2013.**  
Moser Jones tells the story of the charitable organization from its start in 1881, through its humanitarian aid during wars, natural disasters, and the Depression, to its relief efforts of the 1930s. She illustrates the tension between the organization's founding principles of humanity and neutrality and the political, economic, and moral pressures that sometimes caused it to favor one group at the expense of another.
- **Peterson, Marie, Jul. "International Religious NGOs at The United Nations: A Study of a Group of Religious Organizations,"** in *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. 2010. <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/>  
This article provides a survey of particular kinds of religious organizations, namely international NGOs engaged in development and humanitarian aid. Based on systematic investigations of a large number of international religious NGOs, the analysis explores different dimensions of this group of organizations, asking questions such as: Who are these organizations? What are their goals? How do they organize? What do they do? Who do they cooperate with? And, most importantly, what role does their religious identity play in this particular work?
- **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Administration of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement.** <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies>



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