Dr Alex Houen <ah217@cam.ac.uk>

This course will examine how a range of writers and film directors have figured political conflict since World War II in terms of sacrifice. In looking at depictions of various confrontations—particularly the Vietnam War, Cold War, and War on Terror—we will consider how such conflicts have been viewed as battles over the nature and justification of sacrifice. This will raise a number of related issues: oppositions between secular and religious struggle; different types of sacrificial exchange; sacrifice as production of intimacy with god, community, or death. Numerous thinkers have written about substitution and exchange as being crucial in sacrificial work—whether in terms of a victim standing for a community, or the profane becoming sacred. Special attention will be given to those matters in terms of how they bear on literary and filmic figuration, particularly synecdoche, symbolism, metaphor, myth, and realism.

Students who wish to write in their course essay on relevant texts other than those prescribed or suggested in the module may do so, but should discuss this with the course convenor first. Please note that course essays should bear a clear and evident relation to the main focal themes of the course.

**SHORT WEEKLY RESPONSES**

Each week students are required to write a short response (around 250 words) to the set reading and/or viewing. The response doesn’t need to be beautifully crafted, and can be a list of points and questions. When referring to a text, please include page numbers. You are required to email each week’s response to me <ah217@cam.ac.uk> by 12 noon on the day before the seminar. I will then gather the responses and email them to everyone as a single document. The responses will be used to foster discussion in and out of the seminars, and will serve as a collective diary of notes and queries.

**BACKGROUND READING ON SACRIFICE**

Johannes de Silentio [Søren Kierkegaard], *Fear and Trembling* (1843)

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (1898)

Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939)

René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972)


SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READING AND VIEWING

1. World War II

Set Reading
Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (1961)

Set Viewing
Mike Nichols, Catch-22 (1970)

Set Theory
Moshe Halbertal, On Sacrifice (2012), Part II

Related Reading
T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets (1943)
Ezra Pound, The Pisan Cantos (1948)
Norman Mailer, The Naked and the Dead (1948)
Curzio Malaparte, The Skin [La Pelle] (1949)
Elizabeth Bowen, Heat of the Day (1949)
Colin McDougall, Execution (1958)
William Styron, Sophie’s Choice (1979)

Related Viewing
Pier Paolo Pasolini, Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma [Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom] (1975)
Alan J. Pakula, Sophie’s Choice (1982)
Michael Bay, Pearl Harbor (2001)

Related Criticism and Theory
Thomas Doherty, Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II (1999)
Mark Rawlinson, British Writing of the Second World War (2000)
Christopher Lloyd, Collaboration and Resistance in Occupied France: Representing Treason and Sacrifice (2003)
Michael Paris, Repicturing the Second World War: Representations in Film and Television (2007)
Derek Hughes, Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera (2007), ch. 15.
Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (1998)
2. The Vietnam War

Set Reading

Set Viewing

Set Theory
Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (1992), chap. 4

Related Reading
Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1955)
Robert Duncan, *Bending the Bow* (1968)
Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977)

Related Viewing
Joseph L. Mankiewicz *The Quiet American* (1958)
Oliver Stone, *Platoon* (1986)

Related Criticism and Theory
3. The Cold War

Set Reading
Graham Greene, *Our Man in Havana* (1958)

Set Viewing
Sidney Lumet, *Fail-Safe* (1964)

Set Theory

Related Reading
Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler, *Fail-Safe* (1963)
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)
Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* (1957)
John le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* (1963)
———. *The Human Factor* (1979)

Related Viewing
Stanley Kramer, *On the Beach* (1959)
Carol Reed, *Our Man in Havana* (1959)
Stanley Kubrick, *Dr Strangelove* (1964)
Martin Ritt, *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* (1965)
Jack Sholder, *By Dawn’s Early Light* (1990) [adaptation of Prochnau’s *Trinity’s Child*]

Related Criticism and Theory
M. Keith Booker, *From Box Office to Ballot Box: The American Political Film* (2007)

4. The ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland
Set Reading
Seamus Heaney, *North* (1975)

Set Viewing
Steve McQueen, *Hunger* (2008)

Set Theory
René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (1986), chaps 2 and 10

Related Reading

Related Viewing
Jim Sheridan, *In the Name of the Father* (1993)

Related Criticism and Theory
*Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) <http:cain.ulst.ac.uk>* [Online archive on the Troubles]
5. **Israel/Palestine Conflict**

**Set Reading**


**Set Viewing**


**Set Theory**

Jeremy Fernando, *The Suicide Bomber and her Gift of Death* (2010), chap. 4

**Related Reading**


———. *Elsewhere, Perhaps* (1966)


**Related Viewing**


**Related Criticism and Theory**


Anne-Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyr’s Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber* (2005)


6. 9/11 and the ‘War on Terror’

Set Reading

Set Viewing

Set Theory
Talal Asad, On Suicide Bombing (2007), chap. 2

Related Reading
Don DeLillo, Falling Man (2007)
Ian McEwan, Saturday (2005)

Related Viewing
Paul Greengrass, United 93 (2006)
Oliver Stone, World Trade Center (2006)
Paul Haggis, In the Valley of Elah (2007)
Gavin Hood, Rendition (2007)
Brian de Palma Redacted (2007)
Francis Lawrence, I am Legend (2007)

Related Criticism and Theory
Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen, eds., Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam (Houston: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986)
Susan Willis, Portents of the Real: A Primer for Post-9/11 America (2005)