

**Sex, Gender, and War**  
PLSC/GNSE 21505  
Winter 2018  
Wednesdays, 9:30-12:20

Amanda H. Blair  
[amandahelenb@uchicago.edu](mailto:amandahelenb@uchicago.edu)

Office Hours: By Appointment  
Pick 526

This course explores the sexed, gendered, and oftentimes racialized dimensions of war. With the rise of civil wars and the decrease of interstate or world wars, the nature of warfare has changed: wars are no longer being fought in battlefields, but neighborhoods; and combatants and civilians are no longer distinguishable. Additionally, over the last century, women's formal participation in armed groups and militaries has increased, challenging the traditional segregation of men and women into different roles during war. As such, this undergraduate seminar explores various dimensions of contemporary war, in order to understand how war is not only made possible, but is perpetuated and reinforced by sexed, gendered, and racialized inequalities. It draws from literature in armed conflict studies and gender studies, as well as from contemporary representations of gender and war in films and novels.

The goals of the course are two-fold: to engage with the five themes of the course in order to understand, analyze, and interrogate the sexed, gendered, and racialized dimensions of war, and to develop critical writing skills for the social sciences.

#### Course Requirements:

**Participation** (20%): In-class participation is essential for the success of this seminar. Students are expected to complete all readings and engage actively with discussion. The course includes one out-of-class film screening. If you are not able to attend, you are expected to view the film on your own. Absences must be approved by the instructor at least 48 hours in advance or be cleared with a doctor's note.

**Presentations** (20%): One time over the course of the quarter students (in groups of 2-3) will prepare reading and discussion questions for the rest of the class. The subject pair will be responsible for carrying out the readings in advance so that questions can be distributed during the class session before the discussion of the readings will take place. The questions, 4-8 in total, (it depends to some extent on how many different readings we have for a given day) should be designed to help all of us to focus on the most troublesome, useful, striking, or significant portions of the text, and to lead into a productive conversation about the readings that will help to ensure clear understanding of the texts, the problems they raise, and their relationship to ideas/texts previously discussed. Questions might focus on a specific passage, on the main claim/s being made, on the (unacknowledged) assumptions upon which claims might be founded, on the rhetorical strategies employed to make an argument, or other. They might ask for comparison to other texts from the same day, or may refer back to previous reading/s.

**Short Reflection Papers** (15% each): You will write four papers of 2-3 pages each. Each paper will be oriented towards one of the main thematic clusters of the course (excluding the introductory texts). In each paper you will be asked to put the academic and popular texts into conversation with each other. Prompts will not be provided, but students may request prompts if needed.

**NOTE: Laptop, tablet, and cellphone use are not allowed in this class.**

Readings:

The majority of the texts for this course will be provided in a course packet available for purchase in the mailroom of the Social Sciences building (SS 103). Additional texts may be posted on Canvas. You are asked to acquire five texts (available at the Sem Coop), as follows:

- Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992-1995* (Fantagraphics Books, 2000).
- Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent Into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death* (Crown, 2010).
- Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 10 (University of California Pr, 2004), 83-238.

If purchasing the coursepack and/or books presents a financial hardship, please contact me.

Course Outline:

**Gendering war and security**

January

- Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–58.
- Carol Cohn, *Women and Wars: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 1–30.

January

- Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

**Military masculinity and mobilization**

January

- Paul Higate, *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Praeger Publishers, 2003). Selections.

January

- Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992-1995* (Fantagraphics Books, 2000).
- Photos of Chinese Military from the Atlantic

**\*\*First Reflection Paper\*\***

## **Women's involvement**

February

Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

February

FILM SCREENING: First they killed my father (in class, with discussion)

**\*\*Second Reflection Paper\*\***

## **Sexual Violence and Race**

February

Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (Zed Books, 2013), 12–41.

Jelke Boesten, *Sexual Violence during War and Peace: Gender, Power, and Post-Conflict Justice in Peru* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 43–68.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review*, no. 30 (1988): 61–88.

February

Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Descent Into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death* (Crown, 2010).

FILM SCREENING: Restrepo (out of class)

**\*\*Third Reflection Paper\*\***

## **Continuums of Violence**

February

Angela Raven-Roberts, “Women and the Political Economy of War,” *Women and Wars: Contested Histories Uncertain Futures*, 2013, 36–53.

Aili Mari Tripp, “Toward a Gender Perspective on Human Security,” *Gender, Violence, and Human Security: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, 2013, 1–22.

Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 10 (University of California Pr, 2004), 83–238.

March

FILM SCREENING: The Price of Sex (in class, with discussion)

Poem: “Home” by Warsan Shire

**\*\*Fourth Reflection Paper\*\***