

AH 101/1st Year Seminar: Looking at War
Spring 2012
Instructor: Prof. Hannah Feldman
Time: M/W 11-12:20
Office: Crowe 3-107
Phone: 17788
Email: h-feldman@northwestern.edu

Brief Description:

This course examines the contemporary proliferation of images depicting or representing catastrophe and war in order to understand what these images tell us about the ways in which war is experienced in the contemporary moment and in the very recent past. In looking at photographs, films, videos, and artistic projects, we will ask what such images can teach us about how representation works in relationship to questions of information dissemination, affect, and the possibilities of opposition engendered by both.

In today's world, we spend so much time looking at war that we are hardly aware that we are doing so. Images of catastrophe float across our tv screens, interrupt the text of our newspapers, pop-up on the internet, dazzle and bewilder on movie screens, and sometimes even unfold right outside our windows. In this class, we will try to "slow down" this flood of information in order to ask how these images work or don't work and how they frame our understanding of the world and our own agency within it. We will also spend time looking at how visual practices, including art and time-based media, have engaged the modern and contemporary phenomena of war and catastrophe. Looking at this hybrid constellation of practices will allow us to consider whether contemporary catastrophes may even be generated by representation.

Teaching Method:

Discussion and in-class viewing

Method of Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on their written work (60%), class participation (30%), 2 collaborative, in-class-presentations (10%), and in correspondence with their overall improvement over the course. Written work will focus on short papers and the revision thereof.

Number of Writing Assignments:

Students are asked to write weekly or bi-weekly response papers (1-2 pages) that critically engage the assigned readings and viewings. Several of these will be revised and resubmitted

and 1 will form the basis of the final (4-5 page) paper, which will be written in stages throughout the duration of the course.

Readings:

Readings will be drawn from art historical texts as well as those in cultural studies. We will also read artist's statements, newspaper reports, and reviews. In addition, we will screen several films and artist's videos, while also learning to analyze digital and analogue media.

Brief Biography:

Hannah Feldman studies modern and contemporary art, with a special focus on the ways urban space and visual practices engage or reflect the geo-political consequences of war, nationalism, and displacement in the post- and neocolonial world. She is particularly interested in how this has come to bear on art made in the United States, France, North Africa, and the Middle East, as well as how art and activism continue to intersect in these same regions.