This class looks at the literature on war by anthropologists and cultural critics, with a particular focus on the period after the end of the cold war. How does war work as a cultural institution? Has the nature of war changed since the end of the cold war? What drove the bouts of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Darfur and other places? How well is U.S. policy (especially in the context of the war on terror) working? What is distinctive about anthropological knowledge of war? Do American anthropologists have a responsibility to help, or refuse to help, their government fight the war on terror?

Requirements, Grades etc

Reading, writing and class participation are all expected. You are expected to do the readings before class and to come to class on time and stay til the end of class. There will be class lectures (as well as in-class videos), but we will spend much of our class time discussing the readings in seminar format. This only works if students come prepared to discuss the readings. That means students should be ready to say what they agreed and disagreed with, where the logic of the argument in the readings did not work etc. Final grades will take class class participation and attendance into account.

Students are also required to write 2 four-page (double-spaced) reviews of books assigned for the class. (In consultation with the instructor, they can pick a cluster of articles instead). These reviews are due the week the reading is due (i.e. the reviews should be written before the book has been fully discussed in class). There is also a ten-page paper on a topic of the student’s choosing (in consultation with the instructor).

The final grade will be calculated as follows:
Final paper 40%

Reviews 15% each (30% total)

Class participation 30%

Availability of Readings

Articles will be distributed as pdfs by the instructor.

The following books will be available at the bookstore. Most are also available for amazon.com or www.abebooks.com:


Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (Picador, 1999).


Honor Code

The Mason Honor Code reads: “Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” Plagiarism is a particularly serious matter and, once detected, will result in an F and, possibly, disciplinary action. We will discuss plagiarism in class but, if in doubt, please consult the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and need accommodation, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2472. Academic accommodations must be arranged through DRC.
**Wed Aug 30**  Introduction

**Wed Sept 6  Experiences of War and Violence**


**Wed Sept 13  New and Old Wars**


**Wed Sept 20  Civil War and Genocide After the Cold War: Rwanda and Chechnya**


Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (Picador, 1999), first half.
Wed Sept 27  Civil War and Genocide (Cont.): Rwanda and Darfur

Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You... (second half)


Wed Oct 4  Public Discourse About War


Wed Oct 11  U.S. Policy: Intelligence

Rob Johnston, Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study (CIA 2005).
Wed Oct 18  U.S. Policy: Nuclear Weapons


Wed Oct 25  The War on Terror


**Film: A Death in Gaza**

**Wed Nov 1 (4s)**  **U.S. Policy: Military Aid**

Leslie Sharp, *School of the Americas* (Duke University Press, 2004), first half

**Wed Nov 8**  **Military aid (cont.)**

Leslie Sharp, *The School of the Americas* (second half)


**Wed Nov 15 (AAA)  Reflections on the Ethnography of War**


**Wed Nov 22**  **THANKSGIVING**

**Wed Nov 29**  **Reflections (cont.)**

Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*… Read second half.

**Wed Dec 6**  **The Responsibility of Anthropologists**


