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Enduring Questions Project Title: When Should War End?

Introduction: Endurance, Intellectual Rationale, Teaching Value, and Institutional Context

Sometime around the 12th century BCE, Hector continued his battle with the Achaeans, even after the dying Patroclus prophesied that Hector “too shall live but for a little season; death and the day of your doom are close upon you, and they will lay you low by the hand of Achilles.”¹ Move from the 12th century BCE to the 12th century CE and the ascendant Taira clan is mobilizing against the Miyamoto clan, even though *The Tale of the Heike*—the Japanese epic that recounts their war—begins by portending the end of the Taira: “the proud ones do not last long, but vanish like a spring night’s dream. And the mighty ones, too, will perish like dust before the wind.”² Some 800 years later, bombardier John Yossarian finds himself caught in the catch-22 of a never-ending World War II: a bombardier “would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn’t, but if he was sane, he had to fly them. If he flew them, he was crazy and didn’t have to; but if he didn’t want to, he was sane and had to.”³

“There are many histories of how wars have begun,” as Afflerbach and Strachan remind us in *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender*, “but very few which discuss how they have ended.”⁴ This course addresses that dearth of discussion by inviting students to consider a question that has been asked since antiquity: when should war end? Just War theory provides students with a vocabulary to debate when war should begin (*jus ad bellum*) and how it should be conducted once it has begun (*jus in bello*). Given, however, that the United States—as one of my students recently reminded me—has been at war for the entirety of the living memory of contemporary college students, it is just as important that students have an intellectual apparatus,

¹ Homer, *The Illiad*, as translated by Samuel Butler, classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.16.xvi.html

² *The Tale of the Heike*, as translated by Donald Keene, from *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), p.78

³ Joseph Heller, *Catch-22: A Novel* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), p.52

⁴ Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan, *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), from book abstract as cited on www.oxfordscholarship.com

vocabulary, and conversations on when and how war should end—*jus post bellum*. If, as Carl von Clausewitz wrote in *On War*, “there is in every combat a point in time when it may be regarded as decided” and “to have a clear notion [of] this point [in] time is very important,” then the value of this course is that it provides students with: 1) intellectual frameworks that make that point visible and 2) practice in articulating their vision of that point.⁵

This course meets these two objectives by way of readings and classroom activities on literary works—*i.e.* drama, epic poetry, autobiographies, diaries, and graphic novels—that present war narratives. The course is organized according to units that propose potential answers to the question “when should war end” (*i.e.* “before it begins,” “when it becomes absurd,” *et cetera*). Each class unit is composed of analysis, discussion, and debate of the way that literary techniques and narratives make the consequences of these various answers visible. The course focuses on narratives because, as Frank Kermode reminds us, with literary narratives “we cannot, of course, be denied an end; it is one of the great charms of books that they have to end.”⁶ Literary war narratives, which, unlike actual wars, have to end, lend themselves to analysis of both the significance and consequences of ending at a particular moment in a narrative’s plot.

This is the prime moment to offer a course on when war should end at the University of California, Irvine (hereafter UC Irvine). The three-year (2013-2016) theme of the UC Irvine Humanities Core (a yearlong, freshman program designed to cultivate critical reading and writing skill through engagement with texts and techniques of the humanities) was war. The Humanities Core introduced students to the “ways in which people have represented, rationalized, propagandized, memorialized, evaluated, or understood” war across history and cultures.⁷ In

⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), edited by Anatol Rapoport, p.320

⁶ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.23

⁷ <http://hcc.humanities.uci.edu/humcore/Student/index.html>

addition to the Humanities Core, the UC Irvine Humanities Commons sponsored a research residency program on war during the 2014-2015 academic year. The residency program built connections between faculty research, general education, and graduate training in the School of Humanities around the theme of war. Moreover, the UC Irvine School of Humanities was awarded a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to produce a yearlong Sawyer Seminar on the topic of “Documenting War” during the 2016-2017 academic year. Through the Sawyer Seminar, UC Irvine will invite scholars, journalists, and military personnel to campus for shared discussion of the processes of documenting war. The course proposed here will engage in and benefit from the scholarly conversation about war and the humanities at UC Irvine.

Envisioned Course Design: Length, Expectations, Design, Fostering Intellectual Inquiry, Ancillary Activity, Assessment, and Discussion of Tentative Course Readings

This lower division course, which will be offered by the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures and cross-listed with International Studies and Comparative Literature, is designed for 20-30 students and will meet for ten weeks. As its departmental homes suggest, this course employs a comparative approach that puts Western takes on war in dialogue with Eastern ones. Students will meet three times per week—on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Students must fulfill a minimum of four basic responsibilities. First, each week includes an average of 150 pages of reading. Second, Fridays are reserved for student-led exploration and discussion of the key themes and questions of the week. Every Friday, three students will: create and deliver an eight to ten minute micro-lecture, formulate three to five discussion questions, and moderate our discussion. Third, in order to facilitate the duties of the discussion leaders, students will make weekly posts to an online discussion board that will serve as a forum for discussion of the themes of the week. Finally, every student will be required to submit: a two-page essay, two five-page essays, and one video essay in lieu of a final exam. Each essay will

have the same prompt: when should war end? The two-page essay will be assigned during the first week of class. The first essay will be a position paper based primarily on students' personal thoughts and experiences with war; given that UC Irvine is a public university with a substantial population of international students, this essay will ask students to draw on their rich family and life histories as "evidence" for their positions. Although the second, third and fourth essays will ask students the same question as the first essay—when should war end?—for these essays, students will integrate class readings and discussions of the current class topic into the argument for their position. Peer edits of these essays will make the pluralism of our intellectual endeavor apparent. The essays will also serve as my primary assessment tool. Because all four essays share the same topic, they will allow me to gauge the impact of a given unit, reading, or discussion on students' intellectual development.

The course is divided into six units. The first unit—"What Is War?"—establishes a foundation for the course by providing students with both classic (*i.e.* Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*) and modern (*i.e.* Elaine Scarry's "The Structure of War: The Juxtaposition of Injured Bodies and Unanchored Issues") conceptualizations of warfare. Building on the framework provided by the first unit, the remaining units provide debatable answers to the question of when war should end. The second unit—"When War Is Won: War and the Honor Code in Ancient Greece"—considers the characterization and conditions of victory in ancient Greek warfare as they are presented in the *Iliad* and *Lysistrata*. The third unit is "When War Is Lost: Medieval Representations of the Losses of War." In light of the fact that the term "medieval" has become synonymous with gratuitous punishment, this unit re-evaluates *The History of the Kings of Britain* and *The Tale of the Heike* for their depictions of what is lost—both literally and figuratively—in war. The fourth unit, "When It Becomes Absurd: The Rationalization and Absurdity of War," considers *Catch-22*

and *The Gods Must Be Crazy* as textual evidence of the synergy between the modern rationalization of war and the rise of artistic absurdity. The fifth unit is “Never: Imperial Japan and War without Surrender.” The “never” here signifies two responses to the question of when war should end: this unit takes up 1) theoretical assertions (*i.e.* realist, evolutionary, *et cetera*) that war is an inevitable human phenomenon and 2) works by Imperial Japanese soldiers such as *No Surrender: My Thirty Year War*, which crystallize the preference of death to surrender promoted by the Japanese empire. The final unit, “Before It Begins: The Poetics of Pacifism,” reads two works that memorialize wartime atrocities—*I am Malala* and *Maus*—for their articulation of the ethics of non-violence in a violent world.

This course includes one ancillary activity: an open forum discussion lead by a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 9934. This post, which is located in Dana Point, California (which is 17 miles from UC Irvine), sponsors a “Veterans in the Classroom” program through its citizenship education initiative. Because only an isolated subset of Americans serve in the armed forces, there is an arguably unprecedented schism between those who experience war and those who remain on the (usually invisible) home front. The objective of this forum, which will be held at UC Irvine and feature a lecture by a combat veteran, is to supplement the textual knowledge provided by this course with the experiential knowledge of a veteran of war.

Course Preparation, Expansion of Intellectual Range, Timeline, and Dissemination

Teaching this course would require me to expand my intellectual range significantly. I am a specialist of postwar Japanese literature and cultural studies; my research is based primarily on close readings of the literary works and historical documents of postwar Japan. Although this research has provided me with a foundation in reading war narratives, teaching this course would, as the enclosed bibliography suggests, allow me to expand my scholarly interests in two new

directions: theories of war and peace and representations of war in world literature.

Support from the National Endowment for the Humanities would allow me to teach war narratives in all of their complexity. My preparation will proceed according to the following work plan. I will complete all readings/viewings of the preparation texts between May and June of 2016. During July and August, I will complete: the class syllabus, in-class teaching materials, reference materials, assignment instructions, and a WordPress site that will serve as the digital home for the class. I will also make arrangements with VFW Post 9934 at this time.

I will disseminate the results of this grant in three ways. First, the aforementioned WordPress page will be open to the public; any scholar, student, or person interested in the class will be able to access class-related materials on the page. Second, the video essays that will serve as the final assignment for this class will be posted to a video sharing site and linked to my webpage, a method of dissemination that remains sustainable long after the close of the grant period. Based on my experience with video essay assignments, I have found that video essays facilitate both the dissemination of classroom ideas and discussions as well as dialogue between previous and current students. Third, I will submit a seminar proposal for the 2017 annual conference of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA). The theme of the seminar will be “War and/in the Humanities.” ACLA annual conference presentations are organized according to seminars, in which a group of scholars meet, present, and discuss several times over the course of the conference. This format lends itself to the discussion I would like to have: a day of presentations by recipients of the Enduring Questions grant who have designed courses on war, to be followed by presentations on what the humanities teach us about war.

With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, I look forward to discussions of when war should end—a question that is just as enduring as it is pressing.