

Research Workshop “Depiction and Definition: Representing War across the Disciplines”
Winnipeg March 8-9, 2008

Final Questions developed in the Final Discussion of the Research Workshop (+ the two roundtable questions):

Representing War – General

1. What is the difference between perpetration and aggression?
2. What are the effects of time/space compression on representations of war?
3. Is the representation of war *necessarily* political or ideological?

Language of Representing War

4. Is there a “grammar” of representations of war that would lead to us speaking about “generative” concepts?
5. Is there a specifiable “aesthetics” of warfare?
6. How does our dependence on language play into our understanding of visual versus literary representations of war?
7. What dominant narratives do we carry in our heads when it comes to war?
8. How do we approach unrepresentability when dealing with war and atrocity?

Truth & Representing War

9. Is it possible to arrive at a representation of wartime experiences that is true, or are we doomed to an endless series of revisions? What is the public memory of war and how has it changed? Are more representations of war the best we can do when making sense of human conflict?
10. Is it possible to misrepresent war?
11. What is the relation between truth claims and representation in war?
12. It seems as though we are discussing attempts in the present to get at the past. Assuming we have an event in the past that we have failed to commemorate for whatever reason, and we come up with a good way of understanding what happened, are we also responsible to inform people about the fact that it has been ignored for so long? When we go back to overwrite or correct misrepresentations, do we replace them or do we need to construct a palimpsest that shows an event or a conflict’s history?

The Influence of Cultural Contexts and Perspective

13. How does class perspective affect the representation of war or responses to war?

14. Are we talking about a “Western” perspective on war? Is there a universal perspective? Are we conflating the two?
15. How might the notion of “heroism” be culturally inflected?
16. How do we discern privileged perspectives on war and determine the authority of different interpretations?
17. What are the similarities between the different ways that we each represent war?

Ethics and Trauma

18. As scholars addressing this topic, what sort of moral or political responsibilities do we have to those who have suffered, and those whose voices have not and are not being heard?
19. To what extent have different representations of war been produced as commodities? What is the relationship between culture industry and the narratives and images of war that surround us?
20. How do representations function to enable healing or to address trauma? Who are non-combatants? Are they civilians? Medical personnel?

Post Bellum

21. When does war come to an end?
22. Does war ever end?
23. How would one define victory in war, what are the consequences of victory, and what are the victor’s responsibilities?