

English 461-01: Senior Seminar
Don't Mean Nothin': The Literature and Culture of the Vietnam War
Spring 2010
Tuesdays, 4-6:45 p.m.
Dr. Daniel Donaghy



Tim Page

In this seminar, we will consider matters such as gender, race, and class as they relate to the literature, films, and music of the Vietnam War. We will also examine questions of identity, truth, and responsibility, which often took the form of a struggle between private thought and public speech. Throughout the course, we will consider the effects of the “experience gap” between veterans and civilians, both during and after the war. As we do so, we will examine the role that art has played in the healing process of both countries over the past thirty years.

Texts will include novels, memoirs, poems, short stories, personal essays, historical documents, psychological studies, literary criticism, films, photographs, and songs. Books may include Bruce Weigl's *Song of Napalm*, Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam*, Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*, Lynda Van Devanter's *Home Before Morning: The Story of an Army Nurse in Vietnam*, Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War*, Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trials and the Trials of Homecoming*, *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, edited by Bernard Edelman, *Poems from Captured Documents*, edited by Bruce Weigl, and *The Vietnam Reader*, edited by Walter Capps. Films may include *The Green Berets*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *We Were Soldiers*. Songs by artists such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Barry MacGuire, Barry Sadler, Country Joe and the Fish, Creedence Clearwater Revival, John Lennon, The Doors, The Animals, CSNY, Edwin Starr, Marvin Gaye, John Prine, Billy Joel, Johnny Cash, Nancy Griffith, Steve Earle, and Bruce Springsteen will provide the soundtrack for our course.

Each student who enrolls in this seminar will lead a class discussion and write several short papers, revisions, informal writing exercises, peer reviews, and self-assessments. In addition, each student will craft a 5-7 page written proposal, an outline, and a bibliography for the 20 to 25 page research-based argumentative essay that will be at the core of ENG 462 01 in Fall 2010.