

Interdisciplinary and International Inquiry in Veterans Studies

Annotated Bibliography for 2016 NEH Summer Institute on Veterans in Society

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I chose these resources to reflect the potential for an interdisciplinary and international inquiry to shape the pursuit of veterans studies.

Ebel, Jonathan H. *G.I. Messiahs: Soldiering, War, and American Civil Religion*. Yale University Press, 2015.

Before we can adequately define and analyze veteran studies as a field, it is necessary to first understand the power of American civil religion to frame the dynamics of service men and women as the incarnations of the ideals of protectors and preservers of the nation and its ideals. Ebel traces the evolution of the images of Christianity that lead to American belief of the soldier as savior and the suffering, sacrifice, and heroism that have come to be popularized over the past century. He shows us the tension between individualism and the communalism of war service from WWI through the present. He warns against the continuation of the troubling ways service men and women have (sometimes) unwittingly been part of modes of thought, feeling, and action as part of a religious tradition and urges us to make less room for myth and symbols. Ebel gives us a potential model for studying the what post service men and women symbolize.

Wood, David. 'I'm A Good Person and Yet I've Done Bad Things,' *A Warrior's Moral Dilemma*. Huffington Post. <http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury> A three-part series published March 18, 2014 Part 1 The Grunts, Damned If They Kill, Damned If They Don't; March 19 2014 Part 2 The Recruits, When Right And Wrong Are Hard To Tell Apart; and March 19, 2014 Part 3 Healing, Can We Treat Moral Wounds?

David Wood, the Pulitzer Prize winning senior military correspondent for the Huffington Post, has been embedded in military operations as a journalist for several decades, has enormous respect for military service, and wanted to know why current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were making it difficult for service men and women to come all the way back from war. The Huffington Post editor gave him free reign to write about moral injury, the therapists helping to define and treat it, and the human dimensions of prolonged conflict beyond PTSD. In November 2016, Little, Brown and Company will publish Wood's *What Have We Done, The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars*.

Branch, Boyd & Erika Hughes (2014) *Embodied Historiography*. *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 19:6, 108-115, DOI: [10.1080/13528165.2014.985118](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2014.985118) or <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13528165.2014.985118>

As arts-based initiatives proliferate, how can we assess what they create, who they are communicating with, what the effect is on the participants, and how to evaluate their ability to bridge new arts forms with community engagement? Branch and Hughes created the term "embodied historiography" to capture what they stage with military veterans as a practice of regarding performers as historical documents, using the act of performance to expose the subjective processing of memory and historical events through the live layering of multiple perspectives. They weigh individual versus collective narratives and the role of audience and

media to break up a monolithic performance by actors. Through unscripted but rehearsed performances they are questioning art as object and replacing it with art as praxis. They offer a new model to complicate simple contemporary narratives of service men and women as either heroes or victims. Their fragmenting and rupturing those tropes is vital and they provide new models for veterans to explore their stories and significance and for audiences to see and hear them in new ways.

Gallagher, John M. *Procedural Justice, Veteran Identity and Legal Legitimacy in Veteran Courts*. Dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, Arizona State University, August 2016.

Drug and mental health treatment courts provided a model to start veterans treatment courts, which are now active in 35+ states. Unlike previous problem solving courts, veterans courts are undergirded with an active component of respect and gratitude for military service. While there are several studies of the origins and spread of veterans courts, Gallagher studies the power of fair and courteous treatment, social connections, and a valued identity in understanding the notion of legal legitimacy. The dissertation is a technical study of the possible correlation between fair treatment and reduced recidivism and is a model for dissertation topics that will further our collective understanding of veteran identity and values.

Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society, 2015/2: **Double Special Issue: Back from Afghanistan: The Experiences of Soviet Afghan War Veterans and Martyrdom and Memory in Post-Socialist Space**, Edited by Julie Fedor, Andriy Portnov, and Andreas Umland. Guest edited by Felix Ackermann, Michael Galbas, and Uilleam Blacker.

https://books.google.pl/books?id=PAKGCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

This double special issue widens the US-centric veteran studies inquiry to include the experiences of Soviet Afghan War Veterans in a transnational perspective. It documents veteran self-perceptions, post-war experiences, and changes in post-Soviet settings. It ends with a series of questions for the future study of the impact of war in a transcultural perspective. This kind of special journal volume is instructive for the future of veteran studies and a nudge toward globalizing the lines of inquiry.

Carver, Raymond. *Cathedral*. Knopf, 1983.

Although not specifically war or veteran literature, Raymond Carver's short story is a classic resource for asking about how to communicate across large gaps of experience and perspective. Built around the narrator whose wife invited an old friend who is blind to visit for a few days, the story moves from the extreme prejudice and ignorance of the narrator and his limitations for seeing (although sighted) to learning to see from the blind man. Although there is only a cursory reference to a previous military marriage that did not last for the narrator's wife, the story is ideally suited to seed conversation about the military / civilian gap and how to mend it.

Opération Retour / Crash Landing. A documentary film by Luc Côté, 2005.

Côté's film documents the torment of dealing with PTSD by Canadians who served and now suffer. At the time of researching and conducting interviews for the film, PTSD was generally ignored by the Canadian Forces and Côté's interviewees shared the power of peer judgment and inability to regain a foothold in civilian life. The film raised awareness in Canada and helped to spur more investment in study and treatment. In screening the film with American audiences, we found that it was easier to watch (as opposed to seeing American service men and women talk about their situations and the VA's lack of response) because film watchers did not feel a strong sense of complicit responsibility and that subsequently they were able to listen and learn more about the complexities of PTSD.