

# Unfit for Command: Veterans, Violence, and the 2000-2008 Presidential Campaigns

Annotated Bibliography for 2016 NEH Summer Institute on Veterans in Society

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Doherty, Thomas. "He's a Candidate, But Not Manchurian." *Los Angeles Times*. 11 February 2000. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2000/feb/11/local/me-63303>>.

Brief op-ed examines some of the negative aspects of John McCain's image, setting them within the history of anxieties that have surrounded POWs since the American Revolution.

Gooding, Richard. "The Trashing of John McCain." *Vanity Fair*. November 2004. <<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2004/11/mccain200411>>.

Broad survey of the dirty tricks and rumors that dogged John McCain's campaign in South Carolina during the 2000 presidential campaign, including the insinuation that his years in North Vietnamese captivity had damaged him psychologically and left him mentally and emotionally unstable.

GPD. "John McCain: The Real Manchurian Candidate." *Veterans Today: Journal for the Clandestine Community*. 26 October 2008. <<http://www.veteranstoday.com/2008/10/26/john-mccain-the-real-manchurian-candidate/>>.

This article raises questions about the psychological and physiological effects of John McCain's years as a North Vietnamese POW. Drawing loosely on medical literature about POWs the article speculates that McCain must be suffering from an array of disorders that threaten to cloud his judgment; the article also reviews McCain's political record and concludes that he has been "soft" on the Vietnamese (and communism in general) and unreasonably hostile toward efforts to uncover the truth about American POWs in Southeast Asia. *Veterans Today* is a journal that traffics heavily in conspiracy theory.

Hagopian, Patrick. *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.

This book looks at the cultural and political fractures surrounding the historical memory of the Vietnam War, including the 2004 campaign. Hagopian argues that for many Americans, John Kerry's anti-war activism in the 1970s disqualified him from seeking the presidency. By shining a light on atrocities committed during the war, Kerry exposed himself the charge that he had effectively worked on behalf of the enemy.

Kellner, Douglas. *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy: Terrorism, War, and Election Battles*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Chapter 5.

This chapter considers the media coverage of the 2004 campaign, particularly the controversies over John Kerry's service and Vietnam and George W. Bush's tenure with the Texas Air National Guard.

O'Neil, John, and Corsi, Jerome. *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry*. Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004.

This book played a central role in the 2004 election, which featured ferocious debates about the Vietnam-era service of the two major candidates, George W. Bush and John Kerry. Based on interviews with a selection men who served in Kerry's vicinity during the war, the book portrays the Democratic candidate as having received medals he did not deserve; as an officer who exercised poor judgment in combat; and as a veteran who betrayed his comrades and his nation by speaking out against the war after his return

from Vietnam. The book's arguments were challenged and rebutted by other veterans who served with Kerry, and the "swift boat" issue galvanized supporters around both Kerry and Bush.

Reyes, G. Mitchell. "The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, the Politics of Realism, and the Manipulation of Vietnam Remembrance in the 2004 Presidential Election." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9:6 (2006): 571-600.

This article evaluates the first television advertisement produced by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth group in August 2004. Reyes argues that the group employed realistic narrative techniques in order to cut through the ambiguities of the Vietnam War in American memory, and in doing so undermine John Kerry's effort to pose himself as a war hero.