“Tim O’Brien and the American Literature of War”

Description:
In this course, we are going to use three major works by Tim O’Brien as the foundation to understand the theme of war in American literature. Not only will we get an in-depth look at the career of a major American author, Tim O’Brien, but we will examine other selections from American literature that provide context for and respond to O’Brien’s work, or, in general, help us understand the role of American writers in witnessing and responding to war. Genres include novels, poetry, and short memoirs. The literature we are examining covers from the World Wars up to the current war in Iraq. The Vietnam conflict is the topic of O’Brien’s works and figures predominantly in this course.

Note: None of the literature we will be reading is “protest” literature per se, and the class will not be a forum for debating the pros and cons of current American involvement in Middle East. Our focus is on how war is understood in American culture and history through the devices and techniques used by American authors.

Readings:

Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948)

Tim O'Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973)


Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)


Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet* (2005) (OPTIONAL TO PURCHASE)

Andrew Carroll, ed. *Operation Homecoming* (2006) (OPTIONAL TO PURCHASE)