

**KALAMAZOO READING TOGETHER**  
***THE THINGS THEY CARRIED***  
**SPRING 2006 FILM SERIES SCHEDULE**

**All Screenings are Thursday Nights, 7pm (\*unless noted), with Discussion to Follow**

**February 9 – Lessons of a “Limited” War**

*The Fog of War* (2004)

Kalamazoo Public Library

Robert S. McNamara discusses his experiences and lessons learned during his tenure as Secretary of Defense under John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. He talks about his work as a bombing statistician during World War II, his brief tenure as president of Ford Motor Company, and the Kennedy administration's triumph during the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, the film focuses primarily on his failures in Vietnam. The themes of the film are "eleven lessons" he learned during this time. Some of these include improving military efficiency, understanding your enemy, and the frustrations of trying to deal with (and unsuccessfully trying to change) human nature. (107 Minutes)

**Thursday, February 16 – The Wars at Home**

*The Weather Underground* (2002)

Kalamazoo Public Library

In the 1960s and 1970s, the polarization of the political situation of the USA was becoming acute with the Vietnam War abroad and civil rights at home being but the most obvious issues. For the youth political movement, the seemingly ineffectual methods of peaceful protest and resistance led to the rise of an idealistic faction that wanted a more extreme approach that the Establishment could not ignore. This faction, called the Weather Underground, attempted to team up with the Black Panthers to violently confront the US government that started with street riots and escalating to bombing government targets. Thorough archival footage and interviews of the veterans of both sides of this conflict, this film covers the resistance movement's campaign of selective violence through this period until changing times and disillusionment brought it to an end. (92 Minutes)

**February 23 – American Myth, American War, I**

*The Deer Hunter* (1978)

The Little Theater, Western Michigan University

Michael (Robert De Niro), Nick (Christopher Walken), and Steven (John Savage) are three buddies from a Pennsylvania steeltown. They are like schoolmates, hanging out in a local bar and enjoying weekends of deer-hunting. Michael and Nick are also both in love with Linda (Meryl Streep). Their lives are all changed forever after the men volunteer for service in the Vietnam War. *The Deer Hunter* is one of the first and only American films to deal with the effects of the war on working class communities, but is also troubling for its depictions of Vietnamese soldiers. Controversial and compelling, this film won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1979. (182 Minutes)

**March 2 – American Myth, American War, II**

*Apocalypse Now Redux* (1979)

Kalamazoo Public Library \*6:00pm start time

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, and inspired in part from a script by Joseph Conrad's classic novella *Heart of Darkness*, this film explores the damage done to the American psyche by the war in Vietnam. A taciturn American soldier is sent to "terminate with extreme prejudice" the command of a rogue United States Army Special Forces colonel. The narrative of his journey and its culmination are studded with a series of bizarre encounters. The soldier's journey becomes increasingly nonlinear and hallucinatory. Coppola's agenda clearly involves larger themes; the film's subtext concerns a journey into the darkness of the human psyche. This "redux" version from 2001 contains many scenes cut from the original 1979 release. (202 minutes)

### **March 9 – The Things They Carried**

*Gao Rang* (2002)

*Rising Above: The Women of Vietnam* (1996)

The Little Theater, Western Michigan University

#### *Gao Rang*

The war in Vietnam was the most filmed conflict in world history. But, unlike the thousands of Western journalists, a small band of North Vietnamese and NLF cameramen has largely been forgotten, though they founded Vietnamese cinema. GAO RANG (meaning grilled or burnt rice) tells the story of these cameramen/soldiers. In their own words, they describe their experiences filming in combat, first against the French and later the Americans. (52 Minutes)

*Rising Above:* In the long years of war against France and the U.S., Vietnamese women fought alongside men as equals. Women such as Madam Binh, who negotiated with Henry Kissinger at the Paris Peace Accords, and later became Vice President of Vietnam, and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Dinh, general and deputy commander of the Vietcong forces, reached the highest positions of power. But 20 years after the signing of the peace agreement, the revival of Confucianism and the spread of market forces are conspiring to relegate women once again to the role of second-class citizens. This film looks at what happened to Mrs. Binh and Mrs. Dinh and three other women since the war. (50 Minutes)

### **March 16 – “Realities” of War**

*Platoon* (1986)

(Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Texas Township Campus)

In the first major film by Oliver Stone, a young recruit in Vietnam, based on Stone's own experience as a combat soldier, faces a moral crisis when confronted with the horrors of war and the duality of man. A gritty and emotional look at the lives of a platoon of American soldiers as they patrol, fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam as seen through the perspective of a young recruit. Two veteran sergeants clash when one of them precipitates a massacre of villagers. Hailed by many critics and veterans alike as the first “realistic” American film about the war in Vietnam. (120 Minutes)

### **March 23 – Legacies and Loss**

*Regret to Inform* (1998)

*How to Behave* (1987)

Kalamazoo Public Library

*Regret to Inform:* On her twenty-fourth birthday, Barbara Sonneborn received a knock on her door from a United States Army soldier, and heard the words "We regret to inform you...." Her husband Jeff had been killed by a mortar in Vietnam. She received a box containing Jeff's dog tags still encrusted with his blood. Twenty years later, Sonneborn embarks on a journey through the country where he fought and died. Woven into her personal odyssey are interviews with American and Vietnamese widows from both sides of the conflict who speak openly about the men they loved and how war changed their lives forever. (72 Minutes)

*How to Behave:* Dying of cancer, the cameraman Dong Xuan Thuyet asks his friends to make a film on the subject of "tu-te" - human relations, fraternity or, simply, kindness. Thus charged, the filmmakers explore the realities behind the nationalistic slogans to reveal troubling scenes of Vietnamese life in a society which, although not without hope, seems no longer able to define humanitarianism - or greed for that matter. Originally banned in Vietnam, this documentary was released only after the intervention of Communist Party leader Nguyen van Linh. *How To Behave* then became a smash hit, seen by millions of Vietnamese, turning into a cornerstone of that country's new glasnost. (43 Minutes)