

American War Culture

1) Special place in American culture for war & violence

military uniforms at commencement

military service of politicians (not an issue in Europe)

second amendment (incomprehensible to Europeans)

flag burning as issue

Richard **Slotkin** talks of “regeneration through violence” in US culture

TV westerns

Movies like Star Wars

Military service

Core precepts in this cultural frame:

Fighting is ennobling

Victor wins because he is right

Violence makes mature men

Violence regenerates the moral order

Hollywood vital in propagating this frame

2) **James William Gibson** sees mutation in TV/Hollywood war culture since Vietnam because of:

Loss in Vietnam raised questions about American manifest destiny & American manhood

Civil rights movement

Women's movement

In pre-Vietnam movies:

US = virtuous

US wins

Soldiers integrated in hierarchical group

No civilian casualties

War is a rite of passage to manhood

Death and injury are painless

In "New War" movies:

US authorities are corrupt and useless

US has lost

Soldiers are anomic and isolated

High civilian casualties

War is still rite of passage, but now to all-male groups, not to gender-balanced adult role

Aesthetic of gore and focus on fetishized weaponry

Examples of “new war” movies:

Rambo

Dirty Harry

Lethal Weapon