

JOHN BECHTOLD curriculum vitae

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in American Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, May 2023.

Dissertation: "Fallujah in Focus," nominated for the American Studies Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize.

M.A. in Liberal Studies, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, May 2017.

Thesis: "Dear Madison," won the Graduate Liberal Studies Distinguished Thesis Award.

B.S. in Business Management, University of Maryland Global Campus, 2001.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

As an American studies scholar, I research and write about the representation of war in American culture. I am keenly interested in how the new digital ecology both structures cultural memory and influences the production of knowledge.

PUBLICATIONS

John Bechtold, *U.S. Militarism and the Terrain of Memory: Negotiating Dead Space*, New York: Routledge, 2024 (forthcoming), peer reviewed monograph.

"Out-gunned" by John Bechtold, Humanities for the Public Good blog, November 2020,
<https://hpg.unc.edu/2020/11/hpg-fellows-feature-outgunned-by-john-bechtold>.

"The Refugees: A Review" by John Bechtold, in *Carolina Quarterly*, Volume 68:1 (Fall 2018),
<https://thecarolinaquarterly.com/2018/02/the-refugees-a-review>.

SELECT MEDIA

"What do you see? A meditation on Vietnam Opa" by John Bechtold, Ackland Close-looks,
<https://ackland.org/close-looks/close-looks-ruth-owens>.

Artist panel and curator talk, "From Fallujah," Click! Photography Festival, October 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysEE-kmgMBU>.

Interview, "A Dual Focus," UNC Endeavors Research Magazine, August 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VCRHzyUfTA&t=2s>.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

"Iterations of the Soldier Body," paper accepted for presentation at the Veterans in Society Conference, Columbia, South Carolina, March 2024.

"Reporting from the Kill Box," paper accepted for presentation at the Memory Studies Association Conference in Newcastle, United Kingdom, July 2023.

"Engaging Military Communities Within and Beyond the Academy," paper presented at the Peace, War and Development Conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, December 2022.

Invited speaker, "The Representation of War in American Culture," Ackland Speaker Series, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, October 2021.

- “Introducing Martial Memory,” paper accepted for presentation at the Memory Studies Association Conference in Charlottesville, Virginia, July 2020 (conference canceled).
- “Recalibrating the Agency of Images,” paper accepted for presentation at Helsinki Photomedia: Images Among Us, Helsinki, Finland, April 2020 (conference canceled).
- Public lecture and film screening of *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) directed by Stanley Kubrick, Chelsea Theater, Carolina Public Humanities, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2019.
- Invited speaker, “War, Media and Memory,” Education Symposium: Teaching War in American Culture, National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, 2019.
- “Toward a Veteran Subjectivity,” paper presented at the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Conference, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2016.

EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

- Archive of Documentary Arts, Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina
- From Fallujah*, John Bechtold, PS118, Durham, North Carolina, 2021 (curator)
- Beirut: Photographs*, Pensacola Museum of Art, Pensacola, Florida, 2020 (solo exhibit)
- Re:Collection*, curated by Gesche Wuerfel, Frank Gallery, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2019
- Beirut*, Horse & Buggy Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2019 (solo exhibit)
- Conceptual Image*, curated by Elin O’Hara Slavick, Allcott Gallery, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2018
- Soundings*, curated by Caitlin Kelly, Power Plant Gallery, Durham, North Carolina, 2017
- The Observer’s Frame*, curated by Caitlin Kelly, Power Plant Gallery, Durham, North Carolina 2015

WORKS IN PROGRESS

- Wiki-memory*. This project investigates the mnemonic structure of the Iraq War as it is articulated in the digital ecology. Through this research, I intend to draw larger conclusions about what is at stake when the memory of war is crowdsourced, algorithmically generated, and subject to the vagaries of cultural reflexivity.
- Recording Absence*. The Department of Defense maintains a publicly available database that lists the names of every service member that was killed in America’s post-9/11 wars. This multi-media project draws on conceptual photography and paper sculpture to visualize the absence of these individuals. And rather than reinstall their presence through photography, the project seeks to instead record their absence.
- From Sentries to Silos*. This photography project reprises the quintessential American road trip as a visual critique of frontierism. But rather than travel east to west – and thereby retrace American mythology – the journey begins at the Laredo, Texas border crossing and continues north to Minot, North Dakota along U.S. Highway 83, where a part of America’s nuclear arsenal is stored.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- National Endowment for the Humanities, Dialogues on the Experiences of War grant (in-progress)
- Humanities for the Public Good grant recipient, University of North Carolina, 2019
- Anna Forbes Liddell Fellowship recipient, University of North Carolina, 2017

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Adjunct Professor, Department of American Studies, University of North Carolina	2024 – present
Instructor of Record, Department of American Studies, University of North Carolina	2020 – 2023
Research Assistant, Department of American Studies, University of North Carolina	2019 – 2020
Teaching Fellow, Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina	2018 – 2023

COURSES TAUGHT

Watching War in American Culture (Spring 2022, 2023, 2024) – three-credit hour visual culture seminar which examines the representation of war in visual modes of communication; selected the filmography, graded assignments, and developed a pedagogy that relied on group collaboration, frequent journaling, and the analysis of war films and other visual media.

Myth and History in American Memory (Summer 2020) – three-credit hour seminar which explored the formation of cultural memory by identifying how the 1950s is structured in the new media ecology; created two portfolio assignments and selected a range of primary source material to analyze, including a board game, collection of photographs and children's book.

Art is Everywhere (Fall 2022) – three credit-hour, interdisciplinary lecture that asked students to consider what art can be from both a historical and ethnographic perspective; co-taught three lectures and managed the coursework for 85 students, which included providing feedback on three written assignments and grading both a mid-term and comprehensive final exam.

Native America (Fall 2021) – three-credit hour lecture course which surveyed the history of indigenous peoples in North America; taught three weekly recitations (45 students); implemented a recitation structure that fostered collaboration, prepared students for course exams, and helped to improve their writing skills through routine critical response assignments.

Intersectionality (Fall 2020) – three-credit hour lecture designed to help students talk about race, gender, and sexuality; virtually taught two weekly recitation sections (30 students); introduced art and photography into the curriculum to explicate course themes, examples included work from Hank Willis Thomas, Rose Piper, and Kara Walker.

Reckoning with Race (Fall 2019) – organized and taught a three-week symposium that explored the mediation of race in university archives; developed a visual analysis assignment which required students to choose and analyze a photograph from the special collections archive; students presented their findings to a university audience.

Ackland Art Museum (Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2022, Spring 2023) – planned and delivered more than 200 hours of instruction to multiple audiences from various academic disciplines as a teaching fellow at the Ackland Art Museum; curated educational exhibits organized around topics such as war and photography.

AFFILIATIONS

Veteran Studies Association, American Studies Association, Memory Studies Association

SPECIAL SKILLS

Novice Arabic speaker, Adobe Creative Suite, Darkroom and inkjet printing, Hindenburg Journalist Pro, Blackboard, Canvas, and Sakai learning platforms.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Small Group Instructor, United States Army, Fort Sill, Oklahoma 2013 – 2011

- Taught the 24-week Advanced Leadership Course to Army officers as a Major in the United States Army; curriculum included topics such as military strategy, tactical planning, and the implementation of various doctrinal processes.
- Developed a project-based pedagogy that relied exclusively on group work complemented by periodic lectures to enhance experiential learning; designed a hybrid curriculum for reserve officers which combined virtual learning with resident study in small groups.

Commander, United States Army, Fort Sill, Oklahoma 2011 – 2009

- Led a 70-person organization that provided training support to military units on Fort Sill, Oklahoma; responsible for the training, welfare, and professional development of all employees; managed an annual budget of 1 million USD.
- Implemented a series of initiatives to improve employee morale and foster relationships with the community, including leadership incentive programs, community partnerships, and family outreach.

Combat Advisor, United States Army, Fort Riley, Kansas (Iraq) 2009 – 2007

- Served as the executive officer of a combat advisory team working with an Iraqi infantry battalion in northern Iraq; participated in tactical operations, provided logistical support, and improved civil-military cooperation between the Iraqi military and local leaders.
- Planned and executed a clinic to help Iraqi soldiers maintain American military equipment; oversaw the translation of technical manuals, and disbursed more than 100,000 USD as a pay agent for the Commander's Emergency Relief Program.