Media Study Guide:

WHY WE FIGHT
A FILM BY EUGENE JARECKI

President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Farewell Address 1960,
warning the American people of the emerging threat to peaceful democracy
through the rise of the military industrial complex.

CUST 432
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August 10, 2006
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Introduction:

Eugene Jarecki's "Why We Fight" is a window into the soul of American and to some extent, Canadian foreign policy today. Many social studies teachers believe that students should focus only on home grown Canadian content. The main problem with this argument is that Canadian and American foreign policy is closely related. I will not make an argument regarding whether or not Canadian foreign policy should be closely related, to the American policy I will simply use that as a starting point.

The war in Iraq and by extension Afghanistan is seen on every daily newscast. The media is "imbedded" with American troops and their missions are beamed into every living room, making the war a part of dinnertime. This has created a familiarity with the general public. A difficulty with the familiarity is people become complaisant with the images and accept it as normal. The problem with the war in Iraq is that it should not be considered normal. Students and most people for that matter have not examined the war critically.

It is vital that the students move past the idea of 'critical thinking' to the notion of "critical consciousness"\(^1\), where "through the process of critical analysis...liberate them from the values and ideologies the media are assumed to impose upon them"\(^2\). With critical consciousness comes the idea of "critical autonomy"\(^3\). Once a student is able to examine a document, film or other piece of media, deconstruct it, analyze it then create

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\(^2\) Buckingham, 107.

\(^3\) Buckingham, 107.
their own idea valid understanding, have they truly become critical thinkers. The issue of
the war in Iraq, however important it is now, is not the main concept behind this unit. The
ture concept is to create in the students the tools they will need to critically examine
issues and situations they will encounter in the future. We know that students have truly
learned when they can transfer what has been taught into personal understanding and
critical autonomy is an excellent example of students truly learning.

The War in Iraq and Afghanistan is complex. There is no one reason the war
started or why it continues. There are certainly some major reasons why the war was
fought. This unit will allow students to critically examine the war in Iraq, the media’s
role and Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan. The entire conflict is a quagmire of
truths, half-truths and outright lies. Instead of just accepting what is being given to us by
the media and military censors, this unit will open up the conflict and deconstruct it.

It is important to mention at the beginning that this unit will not answer all the
questions regarding the war in Iraq. The one question the unit will attempt to answer is:
Is the Military Industrial Complex to blame for the War in Iraq and Afghanistan? I do
not believe that there is one right answer to this question. What I want to achieve in the
unit is to get the students to form their own opinion and defend it. I will try in the lessons
to remain as neutral as possible knowing that I have my own personal bias.

Synopsis:

Inspired by Dwight Eisenhower’s legendary farewell speech (in which he coined
the phrase “military industrial complex”), filmmaker Jarecki surveys the scorched
landscape of a half-century’s military adventures, asking how – and telling why – a
nation of, by, and for the people has become the savings-and-loan of a system whose
survival depends on a state of constant war. The film moves beyond the headlines of various American military operations to the deeper questions of why – why does America fight? What are the forces – political, economic, ideological – that drives them to fight against an ever-changing enemy?⁴

Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

Social Studies 11: It is expected that students will

1. Apply critical thinking- including questioning, comparing, summarizing, drawing conclusions and defending a position- to make reasoned judgments about a range of issues, situations and topics

2. Demonstrate effective research skills including: presenting information

3. Demonstrate skills and attitudes of active citizenship, including ethical behaviour, open-mindedness, respect for diversity and collaboration

4. Assess Canada’s participation in world affairs with reference to modern conflict

LESSON #1

The first lesson will be a review of the main theme of the film, that oil is not the only reason but that the Military Industrial Complex is partially to blame for the War in Iraq. Students will examine the causes of the conflict and determine if they are valid. Students will also understand that even though the film is a documentary it has a perspective and bias. Even though the War in Iraq is continuing today, many students may not have taken the time to examine the conflict in much detail. This lesson will begin the ‘critical consciousness’ the students will require to have an understanding of the issue. I want the students to have a good understanding of what is meant by the Military Industrial Complex and that Eisenhower warned America about its power in 1961. The key to this is at the root of American existence that “security and liberty may prosper together”. The difficulty is how to balance these two necessities? When does the security interfere with the liberty? The film argues that the security has taken over and instead of corporations responding to government policy, they are now creating public policy. The idea of ‘build it and they will come’ is evident. Have a large and capable military and you are going to use it. The building and maintaining of the American military is worth billions of dollars annually. With this amount of money being spent each year it is almost impossible for anyone to control. It would appear that those few who control the eight major manufactures of arms are living the American dream.
WHY IRAQ?

**Essential Question:**

What are the main reasons the film gives for the War in Iraq and do you believe they are valid?

**Objective:**

- Have students create a list of reasons for the War in Iraq
- Understand their own perspective and bias
- Define Military Industrial Complex
- Show original WWII “Why We Fight” propaganda film and discuss similarities and differences

**Body of Lesson:**

Start with Think, Pair, Share exercise.

*Ask: What are the reasons for the War in Iraq?*

Have students brainstorm as many ideas as possible on their own. Then share with a partner, then in groups of four. Have one volunteer from each group share with the class their list. Teacher will keep track of all the answers and create a list. When groups are finished teacher will summarize main points students have provided.

*Ask: Are these ideas your own or from the film? If your own, where did you get them? Have you ever done any research to check validity? Or are they simply personal reasons?*
Have students answer these questions as a class. Important to point out perspective and bias in answers.

*Watch clip Eisenhower’s farewell speech*

*Ask: What did Eisenhower mean when he mentioned the Military Industrial Complex?*

As a class get ideas and write on board. Create mind map. Make sure students understand the M.I.C. (Military Industrial Complex) refers to the making and selling of arms and how integrated it is in American society. Remind students that it was filmed in 1961.

Give example of Air Show just like circus mention Abbotsford Air Show (*Is Abbotsford Air Show part of the MIC?*). Part of everyday life. Parts of each piece of military apparatus manufactured in as many states as possible to create jobs, which keep congressmen elected.

*Ask: Why did Jarecki include Eisenhower’s speech?*

Make sure students include: gives film credibility, gives historical significance to film, foreshadowing, not necessarily conspiracy at work more factual based.

*Show Frank Capra’s original “Why We Fight”*

*Ask: What kind of film was this?*

Need propaganda as answer

*Ask: What is the difference between the two films?*

Discuss ideas students bring forward i.e. if both are propaganda, difference between WWII and Iraq etc.

**Culmination:**

Have students bring in one article from newspaper, magazine or Internet, which describes any topic about the war in Iraq. Have students highlight or underline the major
parts of the article. Encourage students to gather information from more than just tradition news sources. i.e. The Christian Science Monitor or Amnesty International etc. Use as entrance slip.

**Conclusion:**

The main theme I want students to take from this lesson is that the War in Iraq is a complex problem that needs to be investigated and understood. There are many factors that have lead the world’s number one superpower to commit so much time, money and manpower to the success of the operation. I understand that this is a huge topic that cannot really be covered in one lesson. If the students begin to critically examine the War and topics surrounding it then the lesson has been a success.

**Lesson #2**

Another major theme in the movie is the role the media played/plays in the war. Paul Rutherford in his book Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq as reviewed by Stuart Poyntz, suggests that the war became “a co-production of the Pentagon and of newsrooms, processed and cleansed so that it could appeal to the well-established tastes of people who were veteran consumers of popular culture”\(^5\) The Pentagon learned a valuable lesson during the Vietnam War and that was they needed to better control the media. By ‘imbedding’ the media in the troops of their choosing, sent on missions of their choosing, the Pentagon could control what was being broadcast back to America. Once the raw footage was ‘cleansed’ as Rutherford suggests it was ready for

the American audience to consume along with their nightly dinner. The film makes the point that if the media did not play by the rules set out for them they could not have access to the footage and the people. The media has to make money and people want to hear from the leaders in charge and from the front lines. If the one media outlet cannot provide this, people will simply go to where they can obtain the information they want. I believe this lends itself to what Dan Rather eluded to in the film about making films about the great leader, saying how great he is. I would call this the 'cult of the president'. Wilton Sekzer the retired New York City police officer discusses this at great length, suggesting that if the President says it, then it must be true. The film follows his journey to disillusionment when he realizes another President has lied to him. It is almost a taboo to question the President and apparently few people do. One of Jarecki’s arguments is that the media did not ask the tough questions but simply published whatever the government said. Students need to examine the media with a critical lens and be able to decide for themselves what is fact and what is fiction.

**Operation Media Control?**

**Essential Question:**

Did the media do an adequate job of reporting the events of the War or were they controlled by the military and therefore acting as just another government agency?

**Objective:**

- To critically examine the media’s role in the War
- To determine if the media was or can be objective
• Does the media contribute to the 'culture of fear' in American and Canadian society

**Body of Lesson:**

Begin by collecting the entrance slips. Group students together who have same or similar articles. If students have articles from different sources regarding the same incident put them in the same group. Have students discuss the articles in small groups answering the following questions:

*Do you believe all the information in the article is true? Why or why not?*

*Does the article have a bias? If so, explain?*

*What, if anything, do you think is missing from the article?*

*If event or issue is the same but reported by different new agencies: Is there a difference in the article and why?*

Have the students record their answers on an overhead sheet and then present to class.

Discuss the common threads in their answers. Now have each student:

*Rewrite the article from the perspective of Saddam Hussein*

Once this is complete ask for volunteers to share their rewritten articles. Talk about perspective and how bias can be in the media.

**NOTE** Before beginning next section review rules for debate. Attack idea not person, no yelling, no profanity, no interrupting, follow directions of mediator (teacher) etc.

*Show 'The Public Doesn't need to Know' including Dan Rather interview*

Place chairs in horseshoe shape around room.

*Ask: Was and is the media reporting the War fairly and objectively?*
Have students who strongly agree with the statement move to one open end of horseshoe and those who strongly disagree move to the other. Those who are not sure move to the heel of the horseshoe. Everyone else in between.

Once the students are in place review some items from the film i.e. Operation Iraqi Freedom, Axis of Evil, imbedded journalist, access to leaders, significance of the montage, truth and media, media contributing to culture of fear, how?, Bush saying "opinion mixed in with news" isn’t news just opinion or has it evolved into something else? include that the CBC and BBC produced the film is this significant? Every few minutes allow students to get up and move if they have changed their mind. i.e. a student who was in middle now disagrees they can move to that side. Once the debate is finished observe where the students are sitting and review main points and comment on the location of students.

**Culmination:**

Have students write two or three sentences on how or if the media can truly be objective. Have students research the Internet or old magazines and newspapers to determine the reasons why Canadian Troops are in Afghanistan. Bring to class as an entrance slip. This may be difficult to find.

**Conclusion:**

The main theme I want students to have learned from this lesson is that the media is full of bias and the information it provides needs to be deconstructed. Just because the images the media beams into their living rooms each and every night looks like it was just taken, it is important to remember, everything is edited. Journalist have better access to leaders and other decision makers than the average citizen. It is therefore their
responsibility to ask the questions we all want answered. This lesson should encourage students to ask the tough questions of the people around them.

**Lesson #3**

This lesson is meant to allow the students to ask one of the tough questions: *Why are Canadian forces fighting in Afghanistan?* Some have suggested that I provide some background information before the students begin to tackle this task. I would argue that the students need to examine this question through their own lens and the lens of the people they interview. This lesson will become a kind of digital story. The students will tell the story of why they believe Canada is fighting in Afghanistan. It is vital that the students be able to link the film to the reality of today. Even though the events are current and global in nature it will benefit the students to give it a Canadian perspective. The students will have to concentrate on the content. The teacher must ensure that the students do not get distracted by the special effects. This lesson will take more than one class. One whole day will be devoted to camera work, another class will be used for editing and part of third class will be used for presenting and discussing the iMovies. It is hoped that the iMovies themselves will be a portal to more critical thinking about Canada’s role in Afghanistan. It is only by asking the difficult questions that we can bring about change. This lesson and assignment is designed to encourage that form of behaviour in the students. The iMovie is a simple yet effective way to convey a message. Through the use of some basic filming techniques the students should be able to create an informative and thought provoking piece.
Canadian Peacekeepers?

**Essential question:**

Why are Canadian forces fighting in Afghanistan?

**Objective:**

- To create a mini-documentary about why Canadian forces are fighting in Afghanistan using iMovie
- To critically examine why Canadian forces are in Afghanistan
- To demonstrate understanding of digital storytelling as a form of media

**Body of Lesson:**

Have all the Digital Cameras in room with tripods, microphones, batteries etc. Place students into groups of three. Make sure camera is attached to computer and LED projector, so students can see what is being demonstrated.

Each group will have camera. Check to see if there are any students who are part of a film studies or similar course that can help out other groups.

Before teacher hands out cameras review technical goals of making a digital story:

**SHOTS:** determines relation to human form. In this case determine if you want subject, standing or sitting? Do you want headshot, upper torso, or whole body? Camera should remain on tripod. If camera is moving, even slightly, it will take away from what the individual is saying. Do you want the interviewer in the picture or just the person answering the questions? Be aware of the background. Is the subject wearing the same colour shirt as the background. Hallway lockers, library, walls outside, people running
behind subject etc. Make sure background does not distract from what the individual has to say.

**SOUND:** test the sound before the first interview to determine what works best. Do you use the microphone or the onboard mic on the camera. It is important that you are aware of background noise. Outside, cars, busy hallway, cafeteria etc. Do you want the mic in the picture? Where is the mic positioned? Is the subject speaking loud enough. Is the subject speaking to fast? (pacing) Do you ask the question for each subject or do they just answer the question. Think about adding sound to the introduction and conclusion.

**LIGHTING:** make sure that there is enough light. If outside be aware of the sun, make sure sun is not behind subject. Sun in the eyes of subject is uncomfortable and distracting. If inside make sure there are enough lights on in room. Look for shadows on subject, can you see their face etc.

**EDITING:** when using iMovie make sure that the breaks in the film are not distracting from the content. It is the content that is most important in this film do not overuse the transitions. Be sure to include an introduction and credits. Music throughout is a good idea but make sure that it does not distract from the content.

Hand out cameras and have students sit in groups. Teacher will now go over operation of camera step by step.

Step 1: demonstrate operation of camera, battery, tape, focus, zoom, power indicator, tape length indicator, AC adaptor, microphone, tripod operation. Answer questions.

Step 2: make sure all students are comfortable with operation of camera before they begin assignment.
Allow the students to use camera during the day. All camera must be returned by end of
day arrange specific time. Failure to return camera by end of day will result in a ZERO.
Have students meet in computer lab next class. Download film from camera to iMovie.
Teacher will show students basics of iMovie transitions, music, editing, etc. Students will
have entire class to work on iMovie.
All iMovies will be saved to teacher’s external hard drive at the end of the class.

Culmination:

All students will complete the group self-assessment form and teacher will
view/mark iMovies before next class. During next class all the iMovies will be shown
and discussed.

Conclusion:

This lesson covers more than one day and is very technical. It is the process of
asking the questions and listening to the answers that is the most important part of this
lesson. The iMovie, I hope, will be a fun and enjoyable experience for all the students.
Using different assessment techniques will reach students that possess a different skill
set. Not all students will be as competent with the digital cameras and iMovie but I am
sure the movies will create some interesting discussion after they are all shown. The self-
assessment will be interesting and from my past experience one that is taken seriously by
the students.
WHY WE FIGHT ASSIGNMENT

In groups of three prepare a documentary style digital story using iMovie. The question each group will ask is:

"WHY ARE CANADIAN FORCES FIGHTING IN AFGHANISTAN?"

- Each iMovie should not be longer than **4 mins long**.
- Each iMovie should have an introduction page and credits page.
- Groups can make the iMovie as simple or fancy as they want but remember it is the content that is important.
- Each group will do a self-assessment on the other individuals in the group which will make up part of each members mark. (attached)
- Make sure you tell the individuals interviewed what it is for and always be polite
- Be sure to remember all technical goals, shot, lighting, sound, editing
- Groups are not allowed to disrupt classes or work on this assignment during other teachers class time
- A rubric is attached
- This assignment is worth 50 marks

HAVE FUN AND GOOD LUCK!!!!
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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WHY WE FIGHT IMOVIE

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