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