

## IU Themester topic, Making War, Making Peace, seeks to engage, challenge

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Special to the H-T

August 28, 2011, last update: 8/27 @ 1:10 pm



"The Resurrection," Master of the Holy Kinship, (German, flourished Cologne, 1475-1510) an oil on panel, is part of "The Spoils of War" program at the newly renovated IU Art Museum. The program aims to educate people about the looting and destruction of art during World War II, primarily by the Nazis, and about current efforts to restore looted works of art to their rightful owners. Courtesy photo



2010's "Restrepo," directed by Sebastian Junger and the late Tim Hetherington, killed while reporting on the Libyan civil war, makes viewers feel as if they've just gone through a 90-minute deployment. The film screens Sept. 22 as part of IU Themester. Also on tap for Themester: The eight-hour documentary "Shoah," shown in two parts on Sept. 18, Errol Morris' "Fog of War," and more. Courtesy photo

**BLOOMINGTON – When and why should we go to war? Is peace the norm, or conflict?**

**A coordinated series of local events and Indiana University curriculum will address these questions and more through lectures, films, exhibits, live music and theatrical plays on topics both pop – IU theater does the musical "Hair" in mid-October – and academic – the Institute for Advanced Study presents a lecture Oct. 11 titled "From Blood Feuds to Peace: Traditional Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Ethiopia."**

**All relate to the topic, Making War, Making Peace.**

**It's the third consecutive fall semester the university has organized a Themester, a series of classes and events that delve into a theme. Themester 2011 starts Thursday and**

runs through December.

Themester topics have been heavy in the past – the university first tackled evolution and, last year, sustainability. But this fall's focus on war and peace will surely be the headiest yet.

Themester gets its start in the College of Arts and Sciences with undergraduate education and a selection of courses in a wide array of disciplines related to the topic, said Steve Watt, the associate dean of undergraduate studies at IU.

It ends with an undergraduate conference where students demonstrate what they've learned and how their research has evolved, Watt said.

In between are more than 100 community and campus events, most free and open to all. Well-known visitors slated to speak on campus this year include the first female U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, cartoonist Garry Trudeau and writer Tim O'Brien.

"This year's Themester promises a wealth of intellectual and cultural events," Watt said, "all of which address one of the most significant issues of this or any other time.

"One of our goals is to create responsible, informed and civil dialogue on what are, in some cases, controversial or highly political topics," he added.

Professor John Louis Lucaites, chairman of the Themester advisory committee, says the program is about "big ideas – ideas that are so big, so capacious that they cannot be adequately engaged by a single discipline, whether animated by the arts, the humanities, or the social or natural sciences. 'War' and 'peace' are concepts that exist in

opposition to one another and there is a tendency to think of war as the disruption of peace, where peace is the norm.”

But, historically, Lucaites said, war is the norm and peace is the rare condition. This fall’s Themester is designed to “interrogate this disturbing fact of human history.”

Also addressed will be the important decision of when to go to war or to support going to war, Lucaites said.

Lucaites says the Themester committee believes that “war and peace continues to be one of the central deliberative concerns of our time, and liberally educated citizens need to be prepared to engage it in all of its complexities.”

Themester originated in the College of Arts and Sciences in the fall of 2009 as a multidisciplinary approach to important issues of our time.

The arts in particular play a crucial role in this year’s Themester, and the list of participants includes the IU Department of Theatre and Drama, the IU Cinema, Cardinal Stage Company, the Bloomington Playwrights Project, Theater of the People, the Bloomington Early Music Festival, and more.

On stage

Randy White, the artistic director of the Cardinal Stage Company, has been involved with Themester for several years, launching Cardinal’s past two seasons with a classic American drama that fit the theme of that year’s Themester. Two years ago, it was “Inherit the Wind” for evolution, and last year it was “The Grapes of Wrath” for sustainability.

“For Making War, Making Peace, we looked

at scores of plays, including several Greek tragedies, the terrific British play 'Journey's End' and its harrowing account of life in a World War I trench, and even a capable adaptation of 'All Quiet on the Western Front,'" White said. "But we finally felt that we should continue the tradition of opening Cardinal seasons with a great American story."

Cardinal folks read several scripts, including an adaptation of "The Red Badge of Courage" and a number of contemporary pieces about the Iraq war, White said.

"But we kept returning to Arthur Miller's career-launching 'All My Sons' and its consideration of the economics of war and the harrowing toll one family pays as a result of choices made during the war."

White noted "All My Sons" is likely the most important drama about what Tom Brokaw called America's "greatest generation."

White enjoys the full-scope approach of Themester and the opportunities it allows his company to work with the community.

"With the support of the College of Arts and Sciences, we have prepared comprehensive educational materials to enhance the theater-going experience for general audiences. Because Miller is on the curriculum of most high schools, we are also bringing in hundreds of students to the show for free."

Chad Rabinovitz, artistic director of the Bloomington Playwrights Project, is also excited about his group's involvement and their production of Bomb|Shell — a presentation of eight short plays about war and peace.

"The biggest thing worth noticing is the level

of playwrights we've brought in for this event," Rabinovitz said. "These are top artists in their field, and we're not just producing any old play they've written — they're writing plays specifically for the BPP and the Bloomington community."

Among the plays are ones penned by Tami Sagher, writer for "How I Met Your Mother," about a post-apocalyptic Indiana where aliens have invaded but abduct only the pretty people; a play by Greg Kotis, Tony-winner for "Urinetown," about an army of men in a barracks who can't quite understand how to use their equipment; and a moving piece about post-traumatic stress by Paris Barclay, two-time Emmy winner. Jesse Eisenberg, a 2010 Academy Award nominee for best actor for "The Social Network," has also written a piece.

Rabinovitz says the commission of Bomb | Shell is a timely production.

"Themester is partnering with us to produce this show as it fits into their mission in a large way. Not only is it an artistic event that fits within the theme, it's all been written in the past few months, so it speaks directly to today.

"With Bomb | Shell, we don't have any answers, we just want to leave our audience thinking and asking questions about the world. And ultimately, we want them to be entertained while doing it."

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### Plan your outings

Many events, from films to plays to music performances and lectures, planned in conjunction with Indiana University's Themester are free and open to the community. Find a calendar of events online at [www.themester.indiana.edu](http://www.themester.indiana.edu).

