

## **Pulitzer-winning journalist to keynote Nov. 10 Iraq War symposium**

**by Alex Hummel - Friday, October 05, 2012**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/21924/pulitzer-winning-journalist-to-keynote-nov-10-iraq-war-symposium/>

A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for The New York Times who has spent more than a decade on the ground covering wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be keynote speaker at a first-of-its-kind November symposium at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Dexter Filkins, a reporter for The New Yorker and The New York Times who has reported on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001, will speak on Nov. 10 at the “Iraq War in Retrospect” symposium planned in UW Oshkosh’s Reeve Memorial Union.

The free, public symposium, co-sponsored by Military Veterans Museum, Inc., is the culmination of a week-long lineup of UW Oshkosh programming and events titled “War Through Their Eyes: Eyewitnesses, Combatants & America’s Newest Veterans.” Speakers, film screenings, art exhibits and forums will take place on campus throughout Veterans Week 2012, November 6 through November 10. Veterans Day is Sunday, Nov. 11.

The Saturday symposium welcomes a broad audience of participants to publicly examine and help preserve the diverse experiences of the Iraq War, said UW Oshkosh Department of History Prof. Stephen Kercher.

“Dexter Filkins is recognized, and has been rightly honored, as one of our era’s most skilled, exhaustive and thorough war correspondents and storytellers,” Kercher said. “He and his work embody what the Iraq War in Retrospect is all about.”

“Our special objective with this symposium is to really give a broad range of analysis, in a scholarly yet accessible way,” he said. “We are inviting a diverse audience to join us and consider the experience of journalists in Iraq and Afghanistan, the way filmmakers interpret the experience of these wars, the experience of the medical professionals who served, the experience of people who objected to the wars. And, finally, we need to provide a context for the geopolitical forces that accounted for these wars taking place in the first place. You can never talk about the experience of veterans without examining why they were sent to war in the first place.”

The Oshkosh-based, nonprofit Military Veterans Museum, dedicated to educating the public about the experience of war veterans, worked with UW Oshkosh to secure the grant making Filkins’ keynote visit and the Nov. 10 symposium possible. The partners’ collaboration is funded by a \$10,000 major grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council.

Military Veterans Museum is also working to raise funds and complete its new “Fields of Honor” museum honoring and preserving the experiences of U.S. war veterans south of Oshkosh, near U.S. Highway 41 and State Highway 26.

“Dexter Filkins has dedicated himself and his work to sharing the experience of war through the stories, service and sacrifice of its veterans,” said Larry Smerling, vice president of Military Veterans Museum’s board of directors. “Both his presentation and the rest of the Iraq War symposium’s programs are strongly aligned with the mission of our organization and, most importantly, they will deeply involve the public, educators, historians and veterans themselves.”

- [CLICK HERE for registration for the free symposium lunch.](#)

Before his tenure with The New York Times, Filkins worked for the Los Angeles Times, where he was chief of the paper’s New Delhi bureau, and for The Miami Herald. In 2009, he was part of a team of Times reporters who won a Pulitzer Prize for covering Afghanistan and Pakistan. He has received a George Polk Award and two Overseas Press Club awards. Most recently, he was a fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University. He lives in New York City.

Filkins’ presentation is just one component of the day-long Nov. 10 symposium. Students, staff, war veterans and archivists from the UW Oshkosh Department of History, UW Oshkosh Veterans Services Center, Military Science Department, American Democracy Project and Forrest R. Polk Library are also involved in the event’s sponsorship, coordination and content.

“A veteran’s war-time experience is a seminal moment in his or her life,” said Shawn Monroe, Veterans Resource Coordinator at UW Oshkosh. “An opportunity to better understand that moment is an opportunity to frame veterans’ personal stories within the larger canvas of the human experience. The Iraq War Symposium provides a rare opportunity to examine the factors, the players, the effects and experiences of our society in near-real time.”

The symposium will include six, 90-minute sessions moderated by UW Oshkosh professors, featuring special panelists, including Iraq War veterans who attend UW Oshkosh and who are members of area communities. The sessions’ subjects range from the role of women in the war, the work of war journalists and correspondents, how media and film have portrayed the war and the preservation of veterans’ memories and records in a digital era.

Kercher said the symposium will also feature a “memory corps” project, encouraging veterans of a digital, and often delete-able era, to preserve their artifacts and experiences for the sake of their historical value. UW Oshkosh Archivist Joshua Ranger is helping coordinate the effort.

“It will ultimately be an interdisciplinary program, looking at the Iraq War through different lenses but prioritizing the lens of the veteran,” Kercher said. “We want to make sure we have eyewitnesses — the reporters are those people with the eyes and ears we’ve relied upon to develop our sense for what these wars were like for everyone involved. The symposium also addresses the experience of veterans, both on the battlefield and in their difficult transition on the home front.”

Registration for the free symposium will be available soon.

The UW Oshkosh Veterans Week lineup leading into the Saturday, Nov. 10 symposium and Veterans Day will be equally engaging. The list of speakers and events follows:

- **Tuesday, November 6, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.** (Reeve Union Theater); Vietnam War Veterans panel discussion led by Greg Olson, Department of Communications.
- **Wednesday, November 7 (time TBD)** (Sage Hall, 1210) Co-sponsored by the Women's Advocacy Council; Screening of the film "Lioness," with a talk-back panel led by female Iraq War veterans.
- **Thursday, November 8, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.** (Sage 1210) Co-sponsored by the International Film Series; Screening of the film "In the Valley of Elah," with talk-back led by Kelly Wilz, UW Marshfield film professor who has written about Iraq War films), Troy and Frances Perkins and war veterans.
- **Friday, November 9, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.**, (Reeve Union Theater and Steinhilber Gallery); "War Through Their Eyes: Warriors & Nurses at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh" event coordinated by UW Oshkosh's Grace Lim and Shawn McAfee, who, in collaboration with UW Oshkosh students, developed the original "[War Through Their Eyes](#)" multimedia project in 2009.

Learn more:

- [Military Veterans Museum Inc.](#)
- [UW Oshkosh Department of History](#)
- ["War Through Their Eyes: From UW Oshkosh to the Middle East and Back"](#)
- [Wisconsin Humanities Council](#)