

FACING THE WAR

Post-War events concern PSH faculty

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Capital Times Staff

As the bombs continue to fall from allied war planes over Baghdad and the world anticipates the next move by Saddam Hussein's Iraqi war machine, many Penn State Harrisburg professors seem to think that the real battle lies in what happens after the fighting stops.

"The Palestinian issue must be solved or the whole war will have been in vain," said Troy M. Thomas, assistant professor of humanities and art. A graduate of University of California at Berkeley, Thomas said he has not been a strong supporter of military force. But, he added, "Saddam is clearly a tyrant who must be stopped."

Jefferson S. Hartzler, associate professor of mathematics, echoed Thomas' concern. "The key thing after the war is improved relations with the Arab world," he said.

Hartzler said he was disappointed that diplomacy and sanctions had failed. But, he acknowledged, "It was a difficult position for the president to be in when aggression was at hand."

Clemmie E. Gilpin, assistant professor of community systems and African studies, said that in the days leading up to the war U.S. leaders tended to portray Hussein as a militarily incompetent third world leader. Gilpin called this attitude "a wee bit of western arrogance."

He said that before the war started,

few Southwest Asian experts were quoted publicly on Arab culture.

"We tended to get the same parade of people who have been the major advisors for the past 25 to 30 years," Gilpin said. More prominence should have been given to people from the region, he said.

Gilpin said United Nations sanctions should have been given more time to work since they appeared to be effective.

"There was the argument that the Iraqi war machine was gearing up, but one would suspect that the current war machine has been in place for the past

occupying your neighbor's territory is not new," he said. "Move Iraq or Kuwait to a different part of the world and I think the response would have been different."

On the question of Hussein's contention that this is a holy war, Robert R. Bresler, a public policy professor said, "Saddam is not a holy man. He is merely using religion as a propaganda tool."

Whatever the war is about, it is "not a football game," said Jean Harris, assistant professor of accounting, noting

much television on the war, it is normal to be fascinated by war.

"Nothing is healthy in great doses," he said, "but there is a difference between keeping abreast of what's going on and becoming addicted to it."

Students' interest in the war arises "naturally out of the concern for others they know and for themselves as they face potential combat," said Jacob L. Susskind, an assistant professor of social science and education. Susskind said he discusses the war with students in many of his classes.

"We have talked about how the war can divert money from schools to make bombs," he said. "Also the influence of the war on children's psyches and on their families and what that does for education."

Susskind said that students in his cultural anthropology classes are concerned about the antiquities and ancient ruins in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys that must withstand repeated bombing.

"This is another example of how the war affects everyone in both personal and societal ways," he said.

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--Professor Troy Thomas

10 years or was built over the last 10 for that matter."

What is the war about? The professors had a variety of views.

Hartzler said oil is part of the cause.

"If bananas were at stake, we probably wouldn't be there," he said. But he said he would prefer to think that the U.S. was responding to the invasion of a small country by a neighbor.

Gilpin wondered if it was actually Iraq's invasion of Kuwait that sparked U.S. reaction. Why, he asked, hadn't the U.S. responded to a number of other invasions over the last 10 or 20 years.

"Invading your neighbor and

that too much media coverage is making the war seem like a sport.

Gilpin said the media has devoted so much time to the Gulf crisis that other world events have received too little attention. He mentioned the war in Liberia as an example.

"There are little wars going on all over the world," Gilpin said. "You can't de-emphasize the war in the Persian Gulf, but at the same time good journalism has to acknowledge the other events occurring in the world."

Michael A. Becker, an associate professor of psychology, said despite suggestions Americans are watching too

Classroom War discussion varies

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The Gulf War is on everyone's mind, but how often is it a subject in Penn State Harrisburg classrooms?

Some professors are integrating the war into their subject material. Others say they are concerned about the war but time won't permit much class discussion. Still other professors free class time for discussions of students' feelings and concerns.

Secondary education major Kathleen White said that in her class on young adult literature, students discussed how they, as future teachers, would help students cope with feelings about the war.

But White said there has been no free discussion of student opinions about the war in any of her classes.

"The professors are a little gun-shy of starting a debate on the war," White said.

Finance, management and statistics students also said teachers have been connecting the war to their studies. Finance major Robin Passley said some of her classes have included discussion of the financial effects of the war.

Jacob De Rooy, associate professor in the School of Business, said, "We're concerned with factors that influence the condition of the American economy." He

said he described ways the war is affecting financial markets, inflation rates and unemployment.

Business major Linda Conrad said the war has come up in her statistics and management classes. Thomas Michau, an education major, said the war came up in all his classes.

Similarly, Dana Sadarananda's class on World War II lately begins with a discussion of war news. Like the World War II class, some classes easily lend themselves to discussion of the Gulf War.

Social science student Holly Ragan said it is a relevant topic in Robert Simko's class on developing nations. Students from a variety of nations are enrolled, Ragan said.

"It's really interesting to get their perspective," she said.

Though professors believe it's important to bring the subject of the war into the classroom, many say time won't permit it.

Peter Parisi, who teaches journalism, said he has assigned his Advanced Reporting students to write war-related articles.

Yet, he said, "I feel a little guilty that we're not really discussing the war." He said he thought students should be able to discuss their views, but they also have a right to get the course material

they paid for.

Some math and engineering professors said they are concerned about the war but don't see that it fits their course subjects.

William A. Welsh, associate professor of engineering, said the war doesn't relate to his coursework and he doesn't start discussion of it in class. But he said he is concerned about the situation and hears students talking about it among themselves before class.

Vicki Volpe, a business management major, and Brian Campbell, an accounting major, said the war has not come up in their classes because it doesn't relate to the coursework.

Ban Adler, a secondary education major, said that in his classes with Jacob Susskind, students get a chance to express their concerns about the war.

Psychology professor Patricia Kenney said she begins each class by giving students a chance to express feelings about the war. The students don't always need the opportunity because they have discussed the war in other classes.

Kenney said she also integrates the war in her coursework. For instance, she compares the complexity of the war with the complexity of thought processes.

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