



from the Department of
at the University of



[Home](#)

[Events](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Security/Insecurity](#)

[Contact](#)

[Bookmark the permalink.](#)

Dec
4

Faculty Research: Dr. Janet Davis on Jaws and First Blood

by Carrie Andersen

AMS :: ATX is a blog dedicated to representing the many activities and interests of the department of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Together with the department's Twitter feed, this blog exists to serve the AMS and Austin communities by acting as a hub for up-to-date information on events and opportunities at UT and beyond.





We love a good blockbuster action movie as much as the next guy and gal, so we're thrilled to share with you some new research from **Dr. Janet Davis**. Recently, Dr. Davis presented a talk about the relationship between cultural memory, the Vietnam War, *Jaws*, and *First Blood*, and she also provided a write-up of the talk to the the blog *Not Even Past*. We've printed an excerpt below; the full shebang can be found [here](#). Enjoy!

The theme of the abandoned soldier is blasted writ large in the film's first sequel, Rambo (First Blood Part II): Rambo is released from prison to return to Vietnam on a special mission to search for American POWs. Released in 1985, the film was an international box office hit—the first of three sequels, which



[Follow](#)

Follow "AMS :: ATX"

Get every new post delivered to your Inbox.

Join 2,068 other followers

Build a website with WordPress.com



Email Subscription

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Join 2,068 other followers

Morrell likened to “westerns or Tarzan films.” First Blood Part II’s celebration of Rambo’s massively muscled heroics and its erasure of ambivalence about the nation’s involvement in Vietnam, gave popular form to President Reagan’s full-throated declarations of whipping the “Vietnam Syndrome.”

At the time of First Blood’s publication in 1972, a writer named Peter Benchley was drafting an “Untitled Novel” about the social and economic chaos unleashed by a murderous great white shark that eats five people at a beach community on Long Island. A member of the celebrated Benchley literary family, Peter grew up watching marine life at his family’s summer home in Nantucket. His childhood fascination with sharks endured at Harvard, and his subsequent career as a journalist and a speechwriter in the Johnson Administration. Benchley’s privileged background gave him an intimate sense of the WASPY summer people who populate his fictional seaside community of Amity in the novel that he finally named Jaws. References

On Facebook

On Facebook

Contributors



Categories

- 5 Questions
- Alumni Voices
- Announcements
- Departmental Theme
- Faculty Research
- Foodways TX
- Grad Research
- Lists
- public scholarship
- Read This
- Stories from Summer Vacation
- Teaching Stories
- The End of Austin
- Uncategorized
- Undergrad Research
- Watch This

Popular Posts

- Emily Roehl and Jeannette Vaught Giving Talks on Friday 2/12
- Grad and Faculty Research: see

to Vietnam punctuate the novel. In an early draft, Benchley describes the young adult summer people, the lifeblood of this struggling seaside community, as virtually immune to the shocks of war and socioeconomic upheaval because of their wealth and their ready access to college draft deferments, or through desirable draft assignments as naval officers or reservists: "If their IQs could be tested en masse, they would show native ability well within the top ten percent of all mankind.... Intellectually, they know a great deal. Practically, they choose to know almost nothing. For they have been subtly conditioned to believe (or, if not to believe, to sense) that the world is really quite irrelevant to them. And they are right.... They are invulnerable to the emotions of war."

Share:



Loading...

UT AMS at ASA in Toronto

- Undergrad Research: Molly Mandell named UEPS scholar for 2015-2016 school year!
- Alumni Voices: Dr. John Gronbeck-Tedesco, Asst. Prof. of American Studies, Ramapo College
- Announcement: Workshop with media artist Samuel Cepeda this Friday

Tweets

- RT @HouserHeather: TODAY, 11am: TILTS Discussion of LIVING OIL w @LeMenagerUO, @ut_english Professor Ann Cvetkovich, & @AmStudies PhD candi... 6 hours ago
- RT @HouserHeather: TODAY, 6pm: TILTS, @ut_english, @AmStudies present Stephanie LeMenager on Oil Culture & Environmental Humanities <https://...> 1 day ago
- Emily Roehl and Jeanette Vaught Giving Talks on Friday 2/12 amstudies.wordpress.com/2016/02/11/emi... <https://t.co/nh2aFWZWn7> 1 day ago
- RT @NotEvenPast: Smallpox as a Cold War weapon @LiberalArtsUT @OBUColdWarrior @coldwarhist @AmStudies @ut_CREEES notevenpast.org/smallpox-eradi... 1 day ago
- Is there a place for fakery in art galleries and museums? aeon.co/essays/is-ther... 2 days ago

This entry was posted in [Faculty Research](#) and tagged [cultural memory](#), [first blood](#), [jaws](#), [rambo](#), [vietnam](#), [war](#).

[Follow @amstudies](#)

RSS Feeds

- [RSS - Posts](#)
- [RSS - Comments](#)

[← Faculty and Gra...](#)

[Teaching Stories: ...](#)

Leave a Reply

Email (required) (Address never made public)

Name (required)

Website

Notify me of new comments via email.

Notify me of new posts via email.