SENSOR GUIDELINES, MEVIT3427/JOUR4427
Media, War and Journalism: Smokescreens and Blurred Lines

The questions are rather broad, designed on purpose to encourage students to develop their own approach to the topic. They are also developed on the expectation that students have read the whole syllabus. Of course creative approaches to answering the questions, as long as they are based on relevant reading, are welcome.

Question 1
I hope students will problematize the question: what is "better access"? What does "greater understanding" mean? I also hope they will understand that newer technologies do not necessarily mean better access, and that seeing more images and receiving more information do not necessarily mean greater understanding. The analysis will possibly include: discussion of bias in the coverage (structural, organizational, individual), propaganda attempts (including media management by authorities) by different sides, reflections on whether coverage can ever be objective or neutral, considerations that audiences still have the freedom to choose which media to consume and interpret content their own way.

For MA students: discussion could include reflections on the robotization of warfare and how this leads to both citizens becoming politically disengaged from war and war appearing like an "easier" policy option. These arguments, based on the reading, suggest possible negative consequences for democracy. Different conclusions, as long as they are reasonably supported by evidence (and not deriving from simple ignorance of what was in the reading), are most welcome.

Question 2
I hope students will refer to at least one (or more) possible theories (manufacturing consent paradigm, media contest model, "CNN effect" arguments, 3 spheres model by Hallin about the Vietnam War…) and talk about the various possible influences (structural, organizational, individual; media management by politician and military) that are at work on the practice of journalists at times of conflict. New technologies promise the possibility of speaking out for alternative actors (individual citizens, NGOs, non-state actors, etc), but to what extent are these "listened to" by the broader public and to what degree do they really manage to shape the mainstream discourse (let alone change policy and shape the outcome of a conflict)?

For MA students: discussion should include critical reflections on the extent to which objectivity is ever achieved in reporting conflict and whether a truth exists at all.

Overall
I encourage independence of thought and appreciate students arguing something different than the arguments they find on the book. This, however, needs to be based on knowledge of those arguments and reasonably justified.

Deduction of points: for uncritical clichés, errors about which communication technologies existed when, and statements that completely go against what is in the assigned reading and was discussed in class: for instance, arguing that the media caused the US to lose the Vietnam war (extremely strong evidence against this); wars from the past (before the 1990s) were reported live; social media creates democracy and gives everyone a voice (a more critical view perhaps?); journalism is objective (on the textbooks, but in practice?) and reveals the truth (whose truth?) about a conflict; government's propaganda is everywhere (OK along the lines of the "manufacturing consent" model, but no getting into conspiracy theory-like arguments).