

UNIVERSITY
A668: The French Way of War
Advance Sheet

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Abel

Course Meetings:

Location:

Contact:

Course Objective

France has played a primary role in world military affairs from the time of the Roman Empire to the present. France's origins in the fusion of Germanic and Gallo-Roman culture granted it a unique cultural background that enabled the Franks to develop a unique nation and state over the centuries. This produced the French military system that dominated the European continent by 1700, drove Napoleon to his conquests, and granted France an international empire. The World Wars destroyed this hegemony and forced France to reconsider its position in the world and in world military affairs. Today, France continues to chart the "third way" laid out by Charles de Gaulle, which combines with French history to comprise the uniquely "French Way of War." This has important implications for the modern officer in joint and multinational operations, particularly those involving NATO and former French colonies.

Scope of the Course

This course will use a blend of student readings, short lectures, and facilitated discussion to analyze the French way of war and synthesize its role and importance.

Course Philosophy and Methodology

This course will operate under a seminar and/or modified online principle, with student-focused learning with only guidance from the instructor. Students will discuss course readings in person or via Blackboard, with instructor commentary.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class. Each class will consist of presentations, discussions, and topical analysis.

- **Reading Requirements**
 - Readings posted on Blackboard
 - Readings from Horne, *The French Army and Politics*, available on course reserve in CARL
 - All reading links labeled “requires CARL login” will require that your browser be recently logged into your CARL account to work directly
- **Suggested Readings**
 - Roger Price, *A Concise History of France*, Third Edition, ISBN 9781107603431
 - Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire Since 1870*, ISBN 9780199735181
- **Assessments**
 - **3 1-page executive summaries – 70% total; 23.3% each.** Students will write a one-page single-spaced summary of three reading assignments. These assignments are due **before the class in which the source is discussed**. They are to be uploaded to the appropriate assignment on Blackboard. A document detailing formatting and content of executive summaries is on Blackboard.
 - **Daily participation in class discussions – 30% total.**

Conduct of the Course

- **Class 1: Introduction**
 - Reading: Tyler Stovall, "Introduction" in *Transnational France* 4-11 [8] <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carl-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1771949&ppg=4> (requires CARL login)
 - Discussion Questions
 - What stereotypes do Americans have about France and the French?
 - What is France's role in world history and in the present?
- **Class 2: Gallo-Rome and the Franks**
 - Reading: Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany*
 - Reading: Maurice Keen, *Medieval Warfare*, and Timothy Reuter, "Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare"
 - Discussion Questions
 - How did Gaul evolve after the collapse of Roman control?
 - How did France begin to form during the period?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 3: Building France**
 - Reading: John Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*
 - Reading: Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*
 - Reading: Fulbert of Chartres to William of Aquitaine, "Mutual Duties of Vassals and Lords," <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/fulbert1.asp>
 - Discussion Questions
 - How did the Franks evolve into France?
 - What institutions appeared during this period, especially ones relative to the military?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 4: The Old Regime**
 - Reading: James Collins, "State Building in Early-Modern Europe: The Case of France," <https://www.jstor.org/stable/312793> (requires CARL login)
 - Reading: Jonathan Abel, "Control Warfare," Blackboard
 - Review: John Lynn, "Forging the Western Army in Seventeenth-Century France," H102
 - Discussion Questions
 - How did France come to dominate world affairs during the early modern period?
 - What role did the military play in that domination?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 5: The French Revolution**
 - Reading: Jordan Hayworth, "The French Way of War" in *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, [48] <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carl-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4540515&ppg=56> (requires CARL login)
 - Review: Material from H103
 - Discussion Questions
 - What forces did the French Revolution unleash?
 - Why was France best-positioned to leverage those forces during the period?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?

- **Class 6: Napoleon**
 - Reading: Mark Gerges, “1805: Ulm and Austerlitz” in *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, ed. Michael Leggiere [28]
 - Reading: Jack Sigler, “The Battle of Austerlitz and the Principles of War” [7] <https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/articles/the-battle-of-austerlitz-and-the-principles-of-war/>
 - Reading: Robert Epstein, “Patterns of Change and Continuity in Nineteenth-Century Warfare” [14] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1985968> (requires CARL login)
 - Review: Material from H103 and H104
 - Discussion Questions
 - Was Napoleon emblematic of France and the French way of war? Why or why not?
 - What were the elements of Napoleon’s rise and fall?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 7: France After Napoleon**
 - Reading: Horne, *The French Army and Politics*, 1-19 [20]
 - Reading: Douglas Porch, “Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey” in *Makers of Modern Strategy* [32]
 - Reading: General André Bach, “The Behavior of the French Army during the Dreyfus Affair” [11] <https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1383&context=lawreview>
 - Discussion Questions
 - How does a superpower evolve after defeat and humiliation?
 - What legacy did Napoleon leave for France, and for the world?
 - How does imperialism shape France and the French military?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 8: The First World War**
 - Reading: Tyler Stovall, “The Universal Nation in a World at War” <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carle-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1771949&ppg=256> [37] (requires CARL login)
 - Reading: Alistair Horne, *The French Army and Politics* 21-42 [12]
 - Reading: Robert Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* 508-518 [11] <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carle-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3300066&ppg=16> (requires CARL login)
 - Discussion Questions
 - What debates were there in France before the First World War?
 - How did France fight and win the First World War?
 - What lessons may be learned from France’s approach?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 9: Interwar Years**
 - Reading: Alistair Horne, *The French Army and Politics* 43-61 [19]
 - Reading: Elizabeth Kier, “Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars” [29] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539120> (requires CARL login)
 - Discussion Questions
 - What debates were there in France after the First World War?

- What lessons may be learned from France’s approach?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 10: World War II**
 - Reading: Tyler Stovall, “France in World War II” [39]
 - Reading: Alistair Horne, *The French Army in Politics* 61-65 [5]
 - Review: H112RA “Armored Warfare”
 - Discussion Questions
 - Why was France so easily defeated in 1940?
 - What does Vichy reveal about France and French society?
 - Did the French army redeem itself in 1944-1945?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 11: The Era of Charles de Gaulle**
 - Reading: Alistair Horne, *The French Army in Politics* 67-92 [25]
 - Reading: “Indochina, 1946-1954” and “Algerian Independence, 1954-1962” in *Paths to Victory* 23-30 and 75-93 [27] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt5hhsjk.11> (requires CARL login)
 - Discussion Questions
 - What challenges faced France after the Second World War?
 - How are the wars in Indochina and Algeria illustrative of those challenges?
 - Is there a distinctive French way of war during this period?
- **Class 12: Modern France**
 - Reading: Tyler Stovall, “Postcolonial France” in *Transnational France* 441-472 [32]
 - Reading: Olivier Schmitt, “Decline in Denial: France since 1945” in *Coping with Geopolitical Decline* 107-126 [20]
 - Reading: Michael Shurkin, “France’s War in Mali,” Summary and 61-62 [2] https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR770.html
 - Reading: Michael Shurkin, “The Abilities of the British, French, and German Armies to Generate and Sustain Armored Brigades in the Baltics” Key Findings and 5-6 [2] https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1629.html
 - Reading: Michael Shurkin, “Kill the Homothetic Army,” Blackboard
 - Discussion Questions
 - What is France’s role in the modern world, in the EU, and in NATO?
 - Is there a French way of war?