

Critical War Studies

HALF UNIT

Course Coordinator:

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Course Administrator:

Lectures:

Lent Term, Week 1-11
Tuesdays 12.00 p.m. – 13.00 p.m.
Room PAR.2.03

Seminars:

Lent Term, Week 2-11
Wednesdays 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.
FAW.3.01

Film Series:

Lent Term, Week 2-11
Thursdays 4.00 p.m. – 7.30 p.m.
Room PAR.LG.03

(Please check online timetable for any possible room changes)

Basics

This course consists of three elements all taught in Michaelmas: a lecture series, a seminar series, and a film series.

This course is a book-based graduate seminar. The seminar series is the most important element. Each seminar will be based on a book length text which you will read in its entirety. No other reading is required or expected, although recommendations are provided. Students are strongly urged to acquire their own copies of the seminar books.

The lecture series provides concepts, ideas and histories—intellectual scaffolding—against which to read the course texts. It is an essential and helpful aid to your reading.

The film series, attendance at which is voluntary, provides an opportunity for sociability and the exploration of course themes in popular cultures.

Assessment is by 5,000 word essay due **11 May 2020** based upon the seminar books.

The bottom line is that this is a difficult and demanding course. Do not take this course unless you are able to devote the time and energy required. A good way to help decide is to ask yourself if you really want to read the texts listed in the seminar series below.

Introduction

War transforms the social and political orders in which we live, just as it obliterates our precious certainties. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the fate of truths offered about war itself. War regularly undermines expectations, strategies and theories, and along with them the credibility of those in public life and the academy presumed to speak with authority about it. This course begins with the recognition that the unsettling character of war has been a profound opportunity for scholarship. For it is precisely in war's disordering and unsettling of politics and identities that the socially and historically generative powers of war are exposed. In bending, stretching and even breaking institutions and societies, war reveals them to us anew and offers perspectives obscured in times of peace. At the same time, these disruptions shape and inform the course and character of war. This violent but

fecund juncture between war, society and politics is what this course seeks to understand.

Much of the study of war is concerned with how to wage it, or how to use it effectively as a policy. Conversely, scholars in the social sciences and humanities have too rarely addressed so unpleasant a topic directly. When they do, they tend to focus on the consequences of war for society, politics and culture, attending only to one dimension of the powerful dialectic between war and the social. Alternatively, war is reduced to an effect of other processes, such as the international balance of power, the world capitalist system, or faulty decision-making and misperception. Elsewhere, there is a pervasive if implicit assumption that war is merely a momentary interruption in peacetime developments and safely can be ignored in analysis of the motive forces of society and politics.

This course places war and society in the same analytic frame. It looks at past and present scholarly efforts to trace the circuits through which war and society shape one another. It conceives war “in the round,” as involving and impacting on all dimensions of social life.

Aims

In recent decades, the interdisciplinary and critical study of war and armed force has expanded rapidly across the social sciences and humanities. Feminists, critical and postcolonial thinkers, historical sociologists, and a new generation of historians, among others, have built on earlier traditions of war and society scholarship. This course introduces students of International Relations to this new scholarship on one of the discipline’s central concerns, questions of war and peace. It explores the generative powers of war to unsettle and reshape societies and world orders, moving beyond IR’s typical focus on the causes of war and on strategy. It does so through a combination of thematic overview in lectures and in-depth study of theorists and wars in seminars or classes.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should:

1. Comprehend and evaluate the war and society tradition
2. Apply this tradition to the analysis of world politics and assess its significance
3. Evaluate the role of war in historical, social and political change
4. Diagnose the relationship between war and knowledge about war (reflexivity)
5. Develop skills in reading, interpreting, and critiquing monograph length texts

Teaching Methods

This course consists of ten lectures, nine seminars and eight film evenings.

Lecture topics are listed below, along with one recommended reading. Students should concentrate their reading time on the seminar texts. You are not expected or required to read for the lectures.

Each of the nine seminars is based upon a single book. The seminars will develop students' abilities to read, digest, and critique monograph length texts. You will be expected to read the assigned book in its entirety before each seminar. You are not required to do any other reading or preparation for this course beyond reading these nine books. Every student will be expected to come to seminar prepared to participate. There will be no individual seminar presentations. **Every student is expected to speak in every seminar.** You should be prepared to comment on the main argument of each book; to place each text in a wider intellectual context, concerning for example the debates and audiences the book is speaking to; and to offer a critical assessment of the book's contributions.

Films are an important way in which war shapes modern culture. Even small wars have often been big hits on the silver screen, where empire and its rebellious "natives" provide exotic backdrops for Western heroes. The Film Evenings will provide an enjoyable—but voluntary—capstone to your empire-filled Thursdays. Some food and drink will be organized. The course coordinator will briefly introduce each film and a short discussion will follow the screening.

Moodle Site

The IR478 Moodle Site is an important resource for this course. The site contains information about seminars, course notices, and course assessment and coursework submission procedures. The Moodle Site also gives access to a range of electronically available readings beyond the core course texts.

Assessment

Summative Assessment

This course is formally assessed through one long (5,000 word) essay, which is due to be submitted on **11 May 2020**. This essay will put three of the course texts into conversation with one another around a theme of your choice. Details of the submission process will be circulated in Week 8 of MT. You should plan to meet with the course coordinator during Weeks 9 and 10 to discuss your essay. See Taught Course Student Handbook and Moodle Site for Regulations on Assessed Essays.

Formative Assessment

To prepare for your summative essay, you have the opportunity of writing two 2,000 word formative essays. Each of these will be a critical analysis of one of the books we read for seminar. These may critique the main argument of the book or an important theme within the book. Tarak will provide questions to prompt your thinking but you can also devise your own. A critical assessment involves 1) summarising the argument you are critiquing; 2) identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the argument; and 3) situating the argument in some wider perspective—what is the author trying to do with this argument? What is its significance or consequences? You should write with close reference to the text you are critiquing. You are strongly encouraged to use these formative essays to develop your ideas for the summative and get feedback from Tarak. You may write on any books you choose and you can turn the essays in at any point up to about two weeks before the summative is due. You should discuss your ideas for the formative essays in advance with Tarak in a meeting or on email. **NOTE:** You may use revised material from your formative essays in your summative, in fact you are strongly encouraged to. There is no “self-plagiarism” in this course.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism consists of any form of passing off, or attempting to pass off, the knowledge or work of others as your own. It is a form of cheating. Examples of plagiarism include: unattributed quotations from a book, magazine or article; copying from the notes or essays of others; the submission of work actually written or dictated by others; and unattributed use of other peoples’ ideas. Remember, plagiarism includes information from books, newspapers, journals and the Internet. All plagiarised work will at the very least receive a mark of zero, and all summatively assessed work will be checked against specialist plagiarism software.

You should be aware that school rules on plagiarism are strict and can result in expulsion. Please see link to regulations below.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/academicRegulations/RegulationsOnAssessmentOffences-Plagiarism.htm>

Lectures

Week 1: Introductory Session – War around us

Introductions; discussion of course procedures; outline of main themes; how war played a role in creating nearly everything around us, including the internet.

Recommended Reading:

Roy Rosenzweig, "Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors and Hackers," *American Historical Review* 103,5 (Dec. 1998), pp. 1530-1552 (available online: <http://www.pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/ahrcwreview.pdf>).

Week 2: Clausewitz's Philosophy of War

An overview of how the leading philosopher of war conceptualizes and theorizes his object of analysis.

Recommended Reading:

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), Book 1, Chapter 1, "What is War?", pp. 75-89.

Week 3: War and the State

War and the formation of the modern state; military organization and regime type; the state and the command of war

Recommended Reading:

Charles Tilly, "How War Made States, and Vice Versa," in his *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990-1992* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 67-95.

Week 4: The Problem with Military History

What is military history? How is it different from history proper? Where are armed forces and war studied? Should war and the military be separate subjects or integrated with other disciplines?

Recommended Reading:

Robert M. Citno, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction," *American Historical Review* Vol. 112, No. 4 (October 2007), pp. 1070-1090.

Week 5: Strategy and the Problem of Modern War

The dilemmas of means and ends in war; how these dilemmas are intensified by modernity and its characteristic rationalization.

Recommended Reading:

Tarak Barkawi, "Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, #2 (1998), pp. 159-184 (available online at <https://lse.academia.edu/TarakBarkawi>).

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: War and Society

The co-constitutive relations between war and society; the tradition of war and society scholarship; historical and contemporary developments in war and society.

Recommended Reading:

Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze, "Introduction to Volume III" in Geyer and Tooze, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Second World War, Vol. III: Total War: Economy, Society and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1-17.

OR

Michael S. Sherry, "Prologue: War in American History" in his *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 1-11.

Week 8: The Army and its Discipline

The curious discipline of the army, ancient in origin but also emblematic of modern bureaucracy; debates, critiques, and alternative perspectives on why military discipline works.

Recommended Reading:

Philip Smith, "Meaning and Military Power: Moving on from Foucault," *Journal of Power* Vol. 1, No. 3 (December 2008), pp. 275-293.

Week 9: Battle

Fighting as war's distinctive characteristic; the idea of a decisive battle; understanding war through battles; battle imaginaries.

Recommended Reading:

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story" in his *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), pp. 1-30.

OR

Carol Reardon, "History, Memory, and Pickett's Charge" in her *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 1-10.

Week 10: War and Knowledge

The problem of knowing war; the relations between war and knowledge about war; the concept of war/truth

Recommended Reading:

Tarak Barkawi, "Powers of War: Fighting, Knowledge and Critique," with Shane Brighton, *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 5, #2 (June 2011), pp. 126-143 (available online at <https://lse.academia.edu/TarakBarkawi>).

Week 11: The End of War or Future War?

Efforts to predict the future of war; predictions of the end or obsolescence of war; claims of revolutions in warfare; persistence and change in warfare

Recommended Reading:

Antoine Bousquet, "Technoscientific Regimes in Warfare" in his *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (London: Hurst, 2009), pp. 9-35.

OR

Lawrence Freedman, "Introduction" to his *The Future of War: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. ix-xxi.

Seminars: Readings in Critical War Studies

A crucial skill postgraduate students in the social sciences and humanities are expected to acquire is the ability to critically digest a book-length text. This involves being able to explain the main argument of the book, to place the book in wider

intellectual context, and to identify contradictions, flaws, *aporias*, and other difficulties with the text. Accordingly, each seminar for this course is based on a single book. **Students are expected and required to read each book *entire* prior to the seminar.** If you cannot make this commitment or feel that it is asking too much of you, please take another course.

A short course of this nature cannot hope to completely or even adequately investigate all the questions it poses and themes it invokes. The lectures introduce and lay out a broad framework for analysis. The seminar books develop moments in this framework in more depth. Students should not expect a ‘tight fit’ between the lectures and the seminars. Rather, the two develop in different ways a common set of themes explored in the course as a whole. Students are strongly encouraged to introduce their own concerns and questions into seminar discussions as well. In this way seminars typically develop a “life of their own” and return time and again over the weeks to conversations originally initiated by students.

There will be no individual presentations in seminars. All students should arrive having completed the reading and ready to contribute to a general discussion loosely organised around the three critical tasks identified above: the main argument, wider intellectual contexts, and critical assessments. Students should make a habit of identifying specific passages in the text that they find perplexing, interesting or difficult to understand, and raise these for group discussion and analysis. Please **make sure** to bring your copy of the text to the seminar.

Seminars

Week 1: No Meeting.

Week 2: Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023)

Introductory Social Event

Week 3: Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Week 4: Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Week 5: Anders Engberg-Pedersen, *Empire of Chance: The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015)

Week 6: Reading Week.

Week 7: Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1017-1923* (London: Penguin, 2017)

Week 8: E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990 [1981])

Week 9: Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

Week 10: Kenneth T. Macleish, *Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013)

Week 11: Jarius Victor Grove, *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019)

Film Series: War Films around the World

An important way in which war shapes society is through its representation in film. Originally a “Hollywood” genre, war films have gone global. In this film series, we look at war films, mostly about World War II, from the US, Japan, the UK, Germany, Russia, and China. We begin with the classic John Wayne outing *Sands of Iwo Jima*, a film that defines the genre through its focus on the trials, friendships and enmities among a small group of soldiers. Movies play a crucial role in forming images and ideas about war in popular culture. These films show how war and its combatants have been portrayed over time in different countries. What are the main elements of the “war movie”? What are some variations? Does this genre develop and change or

does it remain the same? How has this distinctively American genre been adapted by other countries?

Eight films will be shown, one per week, beginning in Week 2 of Lent Term and running through the end of term. Films will be shown from 4 o'clock in the afternoon and we will have a short discussion after each one. We will organise food and drink to accompany our viewings.

- 1) *Sands of Iwo Jima* (dir. Allan Dwan 1949)
- 2) *The Fighter Pilot* [in Japan, *The Eternal Zero*] (dir. Takashi Yamazaki 2013)
- 3) *Das Boot* (dir. Wolfgang Petersen 1981)
- 4) *The Cruel Sea* (dir. Charles Frennd 1953)
- 5) *Stalingrad* (dir. Fedor Bondarchuk 2013)
- 6) *Saving Private Ryan* (dir. Steven Spielberg 1998)
- 7) *The Battle of Shangganling Mountain* (dirs. Shan Lin and Meng Sha 1956)
- 8) *Stop-Loss* (dir. Kimberley Peirce 2008)