

# Critical War Studies

**HALF UNIT**

**Course Coordinator and Lecturer:**

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**Administrator:**

**Lectures:**

Lent Term, Week 1-11  
Tuesdays 12.00 p.m. – 1.00 p.m.  
Room PAR.2.03

**Classes:**

Lent Term, Week 2-11  
Thursdays 9.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.  
Room PAN.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, classes, and a film series.

This course is an advanced undergraduate option. It is a *text*-based course and not a survey course. That means we will concentrate on a few required readings—read carefully and in-depth. Rather than being given a list of readings for you to select from, you will be given specific, required readings that everyone must read.

For each class, you will be doing **required** reading of approximately half a book, sometimes less. For each lecture, you are given one **recommended** background reading. In planning your time, you should read **first** for the class and **second** for the lectures.

It is essential that you do the required reading for each class before class.

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 4,000 word essay due **11 May 2020**.

## **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.

### **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 the war and society tradition
2. Apply this tradition to the analysis of world politics
3. Explain the role of war in historical, social and political change
4. Critique the political and normative character of scholarship on war
5. Develop skills in reading, interpreting and evaluating monograph length texts

### **Teaching Methods**

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

Lecture topics are listed below, along with one required reading. Students should concentrate their reading time on the class texts.

You are not expected or required to read beyond the assigned, required readings. If you want to read further, a list of suggested reading can be found at the end of the syllabus or meet with the course coordinator for specific suggestions that match your interests.

Each of the class sessions will involve in-depth discussions of the assigned reading. You will prepare a 75 word summary of the reading which you will bring to class. Every student will be expected to come to class prepared to participate. There will be no individual presentations. **Every student is expected to speak in every class.**

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 organised. The course coordinator will briefly introduce each film and a short discussion will follow the screening.

### **Moodle Site**

The IR378 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 100% assessed through one 4,000 word essay, which is due for submission on **7 May 2020**. Students may choose from a list of questions provided in Week 10 or come up with their own title in consultation with the course coordinator before the end of LT. See Taught Course Student Handbook and Moodle Site for Regulations on Assessed Essays.

#### **Formative Assessment**

In order to prepare for your summative long essay, you will write one 2,000 word formative essay. You must turn this essay in by Week 10 in order to get feedback before the end of LT. This essay will be based on a class topic chosen from Weeks 2-9. At the end of the class session on which you want to write (or in email immediately

afterwards), agree a title with the course coordinator. The essay will then be due at the beginning of the next week's class.

## **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?

A summary of course themes through the lens of the contemporary conflicts grouped under the label of the 'Global War on Terror'.

*Recommended Reading:*

Faisal Devji, *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics* (London: Hurst, 2008), chap. 5, "GWOT", pp. 137-164.



## Classes

Before each class you are **expected and required** to do two things:

- 1) The assigned reading;
- 2) Write a **75 word** summary of the main argument or point of the reading.

Please print out and bring a copy of your summary to class. Every student must do a summary for every class reading.

### What is a good 75 word summary?

You should describe the main point of the reading. What is the most important idea the author is trying to get across? Be sure you do not concentrate on details or on just one section of the reading. Words like shows/argues/discusses/analyses are good action verbs to start your argument summary. A good summary shows that you have read and understood the point of the whole reading, rather than parroting back specific details.

### How much can I possibly say in 75 words?

Expressing yourself with few words is a skill. If you have too many words, go back and see if you can cut some out. Can you convey the same ideas as clearly with fewer words? Rank the importance of your statements, and only include the most important. Remember, editing is one of the most important skills in good writing! (59 words)

For instance, if I had to seriously cut down the above paragraph, I might say:  
Concise writing is a skill. Cut less important words and less important phrases.  
Editing will help you write well! (Only 19 words)

**Note:** It is **strongly recommended** that you purchase copies of the assigned books for classes. Bring them to class during the relevant sessions.

## Assigned readings

**Week 2:** Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 1-150.

**Week 3:** Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War*, pp. 151-282.

**Week 4:** Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), entire.

**Week 5:** Ian F.W. Beckett, *Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), entire.

## **Week 6: Reading Week is for Reading Roberts and Sledge**

**Week 7:** Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), entire.

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

**Week 9:** Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), entire.

**Week 10:** Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 1-168.

**Week 11:** Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War*, pp. 169-361.

## **Film Series: War Films from 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)