

America's Wars: From Reconstruction to the Present

Thursdays, 9:25-11:15am

Yale University

Spring 2021

Dr. Michael Brenes

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:30-1:30pm or by appointment

INTRODUCTION

This course explores the history of American warfare since the late 19th century, focusing on the development of U.S. military strategy and policy since the end of the Civil War. We discuss how the United States waged war—why the United States got into wars, and how the U.S. extricated itself (or tried to extricate itself) from war. The course also pays close attention to the relationship between war and state-building in the United States and abroad, as we cover topics such as the history of American occupations, the political economy of the American military, and the technology of modern warfare. By taking an expansive view of American military power, we therefore seek to understand how wartime, as well as “peacetime,” shaped the history of the United States throughout the twentieth century.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will have a broad knowledge of American military history after 1865. Students will be actively engaged with primary sources, including archival collections at Yale Library's Manuscripts and Archives, to experience the complexities and difficulties associated with the historian's craft.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is a seminar that will meet weekly over Zoom. All classes will be conducted synchronously. The class will be discussion-based, with some modifications to accommodate the Zoom format. I do not intend to give lectures on the material, only offer context to the week's material, when necessary. The class format will also feature a variety of guest speakers and one session with archivists from Yale Library's Manuscripts and Archives.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (30%)

Our discussion of the required readings will occupy much of the class time. I therefore strongly encourage you to participate actively and thoughtfully at each class. A significant portion of your final grade will be based on your participation (asking questions, commenting on readings, etc.). Please come to class having done the reading and prepared to discuss its content.

Each week you are required to submit a reading response to Canvas by 12:00pm Wednesday before class. Response papers should not be more than 2 paragraphs. Each reading response should offer an analysis of the readings, and/or synthesize the readings around a central theme or argument. Successful response papers will reflect a close analysis of the readings. Reading responses will not be graded, but their quality will be factored into your participation grade.

In-class presentation on readings (10%)

Each student will select one class session during the semester to make a 5-7-minute presentation summarizing the historiographical and thematic connections within the week's readings, highlighting the arguments made by the authors (and their merits) relative to your interpretations and conclusions. This presentation will not be a reiteration of your weekly response, but a chance to elaborate upon points made in the readings, presenting them to the class in terms of their significance to the class discussion. At the end of the presentation, you are asked to pose 2-3 questions to begin the class discussion.

Short Paper (20%)

Your first major writing assignment will be a 6 to 8-page paper that responds to the assigned readings covering American military history from Reconstruction to World War I. In writing your paper, you should consider the evolution of American military power from the 19th century, particularly how America's growing involvement abroad shaped how America waged war. This paper requires you to take a theme from the readings—occupation, insurgency, invasion, or annihilation—and place it in historical context. This paper will be due on March 18th.

Final Paper: Proposal (10%) and Research Paper or Policy Briefing (30%)

Your final assignment will be a 10 to 15-page research paper based on archival collections at Yale. The subject will be of your choosing, but it must be relevant to the themes discussed in class and rely on at least 2 archival collections. A 1 to 2-page proposal is due by April 1st and your topic must be approved prior to writing the paper. If you choose not to write a research paper, you may also write a policy briefing. The policy briefing will be written as if prepared for the Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, or Secretary of Defense. If you choose this assignment, it must also rely on primary sources, including Yale's archival collections. This paper will be due on May 19th.

Grading:

Short Paper: 20%

Research proposal: 10%

In-class presentation of readings: 10%

Participation: 30%

Final paper: 30%

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

Yale College students are expected to adhere to scholarly standards for citing all source material. Your sources must be properly documented, with attribution given to author's ideas, concepts, and words—if not your own. Violations of academic honesty are serious and inexcusable. Failure to adhere to guidelines of academic integrity will be punished, and the incident(s) may be reported to your residential college dean. For questions and concerns about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, please consult the Yale Center for Teaching and Learning, <https://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>.

OTHER POLICIES**Laptops**

Laptops and other electronic devices are only permitted for participation in Zoom sessions during class. Please avoid other distractions, electronic or otherwise.

Cellphones

Please put away and turn off (or mute) all cellphones. Cellphone use is prohibited in the classroom.

Attendance/Lateness

Your attendance and participation in class is expected and required. If you must be absent for a class, please let me know by email. Multiple unexcused absences will result in a reduction in your overall grade.

All assignments that are handed in late will be penalized a letter grade for each day. For example, if the first paper is handed in Thursday, February 18th—when it was due on February 17th—the highest grade the paper can receive is an A-. If handed in on Friday, February 19th, the highest grade will be a B+, and so forth

Office Hours

As noted above, I have office hours on Thursdays from 11:30am-1:30pm. Feel free to arrange an appointment with me to discuss all matters related to the course over Zoom. I enjoy meeting with students and I welcome the opportunity to speak to you. Just one request: If you do plan on visiting my office hours, send me a quick note to confirm a time. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, please send me an email at michael.brenes@yale.edu to make an appointment. I will try my best to accommodate you.

DISCLAIMER ON SYLLABUS

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus as the semester changes and the course progresses. Changes to the syllabus will be announced to the class via email and/or in class.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977)

Tami Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002)

Christopher Capozzola, *Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America's First Pacific Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2020)

Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2015)

The books above may be purchased at the Yale bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Yale Library. All other reading assignments will be distributed to the class or available on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

February 4th: Introduction/Syllabus Review

February 11th: Peace in a Time of War: Reconstruction

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapter 8

Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War*, chapters 7 and 8

William Alan Blair, "The Use of Military Force to Protect the Gains of Reconstruction," *Civil War History*, Volume 51, Number 4, December 2005, pp. 388-402

website: Mapping Occupation: <https://www.mappingoccupation.org/>

February 18th: Invasion, Insurgency, Occupation: the U.S.-Philippine War

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapter 9

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, introduction, chapters 1-2

Paul Kramer, "Race Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as Race War," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 2006)

February 25th: Waging a Total War: World War I

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapters 10 and 11

Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, chapter 1

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapter 3

John Maynard Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace* from *The Essential Keynes*, pgs. 28-34; 99-101

Guest: Josh Cochran, Senior Archivist for American Diplomacy, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

March 4th: Preparing for Primacy: The American Origins of World War II

Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy*, chapter 2

Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, chapter 3

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapter 4

Guest: Stephen Wertheim, Quincy Institute

March 11th: Fighting and Winning World War II

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapters 13 and 14

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapter 5

Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, chapters 4 and 5

Mark Wilson, "Farewell to Progressivism: The Second World War and the Privatization of the 'Military-Industrial Complex'"

Guests: Josh Cochran, Senior Archivist for American Diplomacy, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

James Kessenides, Kaplanoff Librarian for American History, Yale University Library

March 18th: Occupying and Rebuilding: The Postwar Moment

Susan Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace*, chapters 4 and 5

Jennifer Miller, *Cold War Democracy: The United States and Japan*, chapter 3

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, pgs 217-230

Guest: Jennifer Miller, Dartmouth College

SHORT ESSAY DUE

March 25th: Planning for Nuclear War

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapters 15 and 17

Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, chapters 8 and 9

Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*, chapter 5

Ernest May, "The U.S. Government, a Legacy of the Cold War,"
Diplomatic History, Volume 16, Issue 2, April 1992, pages 269-277.

April 1st: How the Korean War Became a Forever War

Weigley, *American Way of War*, chapter 16

Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: An Untold History*,
Chapters 1, 5, 7, conclusion

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, pgs. 230-252

Guest: Monica Kim, University of Wisconsin, Madison

PROPOSAL DUE

April: 8th: BREAK DAY; NO CLASS

April 15th: Death from Above, and Below: Vietnam

Marc Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower: The American Bombing of North Vietnam*, chapters 5 and 6

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapter 8

Hannah Gurman, "Vietnam—Uprooting the Revolution: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam"

Mittelstadt, *Rise of the Military Welfare State*, chapter 1

April 22nd: Drafting Volunteers: The All-Volunteer Force and a New Era of Warfare

Amy Rutenberg, "Drafting for Domesticity: American Deferment Policy during the Cold War, 1948-1965," *Cold War History* 13, no. 1 (May 2013): 1-21

Mittelstadt, *Rise of the Military Welfare State*, chapters 2-3

Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force*, chapter 7

Guest: Jennifer Mittelstadt, Rutgers University

April 29th: Small Wars, Great Powers: The American Military in an "Age of Inequality"

Michael Knights, *Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of the Modern Military*, chapters 3-5

Mittelstadt, *Rise of Military Welfare State*, chapters 4-6

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapter 9

May 6th: Endless War

Capozzola, *Bound by War*, chapters 10 and 11

Priya Satia, "Drones: A History from the British Middle East," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2014, pp. 1-31

Anand Gopal, "America's War on Syrian Civilians," *The New Yorker*, December 14, 2020

Mittelstadt, *Rise of Military Welfare State*, chapters 7-8

May 19th: FINAL PAPER DUE