

# *War, Society, and Culture since 1789*

Fall 2020  
AHIS 366 (9250)  
online, asynchronous

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Since this is an online course and everyone will be working on different schedules, we will have no fixed office hours. However, you may contact us at any time by email. During the work week (Monday-Friday) we will make every effort to get back to you within 24 hours (we will generally be unavailable during weekends). We'll be happy to set up a voice meeting with you, by Zoom or perhaps even by phone if necessary, at a mutually agreeable time to discuss any matters that are difficult or cumbersome to handle in writing.

## **Course Description and Purpose**

This course will survey the history of war and society in the West from the French Revolution of 1789 to the present. Military historian Michael Howard articulates best the approach we will take:

But to abstract war from the environment in which it is fought and study its technique as one would those of a game is to ignore a dimension essential to understanding, not simply of the wars themselves but of the societies which fought them. The historian who studies war, not to develop norms for action but to enlarge his understanding of the past, cannot be simply a 'military historian,' for there is literally no branch of human activity which is not to a greater or lesser extent relevant to his subject. He has to study war not only, as Hans Delbrück put it, in the framework of political history, but in the framework economic, social and cultural history as well. War has been part of a totality of human experience, the parts of which can be understood only in relation to one another. One cannot adequately describe how wars were fought without giving some idea of what they were fought about. (*War in European History*, pp. ix-x)

Accordingly, we will examine war in its widest social and cultural context, treating equally the profound effects of warfare upon the societies that wage it, and the many ways that particular societies and cultures affect the nature of the wars they wage.

The primary focus will be on Western and European civilizations, though we will also examine developments in other parts of the world to gain a comparative perspective and throw into clearer relief the distinctiveness of war and culture in the West. The history of armies, leaders, battles, and tactics and strategy will be among the important topics the course will cover, but we will also take seriously the social and cultural contexts that inform and shape these and other aspects of war. Some of the specific questions and themes we will address include:

- Is the concept of "total war" useful for understanding the changing nature of warfare, and of the effects of war on society and culture, since 1789?
- Why and how do men and women take part in war? What are their motivations for participating in combat or in other war-related activities?
- What different roles do various people play during wartime, what are their experiences of war, how does war affect their lives?
- How have participants in war sought to convey their experiences in writing, and how have narratives of war changed along with changes in war and in societies and cultures?
- How can studying the modern history of war and society help us understand the nature and trajectory of warfare in the present and future?

The study of history is about interrogating the past—asking why and how, as well as who, what, where, and when—and the history of war and society is no different, so this is how we will proceed. We will do our best to answer these questions, though with the full knowledge that hard, concrete answers will more often than not be elusive. Still, when we have finished this course, we will not only know more about the facts and figures of the history of war, society, and culture in this period, but we will also be in a better position to understand how that history has developed in various social and cultural contexts since 1789. We will do what historians (for that’s what you are learning to be in this course) are really supposed to do: explain, as best they can, change over time.

## Readings

- Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale* (978-0140261547)
- Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War* (978-0307279446)

These books are readily available through the campus bookstore and online sellers such as abebooks.com, powells.com, and amazon.com. All other readings will be available online through Blackboard.

## Films

- *1917* (dir. Sam Mendes)
- *Life and Nothing But* (dir. Bertrand Tavernier)
- *Letters from Iwo Jima* (dir. Clint Eastwood)
- *Flags of Our Fathers* (dir. Clint Eastwood)
- *No Man’s Land* (dir. Danis Tanović)
- *Apocalypse Now* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola) [may watch *Redux* version, if interested]
- *Restrepo* (dir. Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger)

Films will be available streaming through Blackboard, and in some cases through services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc.

## Class Requirements and Grading

Grades will be based upon the completion of all of the following assignments:

- Paper 1 (10%)
- Paper 2 (15%)
- Paper 3 (25%)
- Perusall Annotations (25%)
- Quizzes (25%)

Papers will be essays that you will write in response to questions based upon class materials (readings, films, lectures, class discussions).

Perusall annotations will require you to post comments and questions to selected documents among the readings. Links in the course Blackboard page will take you to the Perusall platform, where you’ll read the documents and add your comments and questions. You’ll find out more when you log on to complete the assignments, but know that your grade for these exercises will be based on the quality of your engagement with the reading and with other students whose annotations you’ll be able to see. Readings marked as Perusall assignments will be due no later than 11:59 p.m. on the Sunday ending the week (see the schedule below).

Quizzes will be simple, short reading or viewing comprehension tests focused on readings not assigned for Perusall annotation. The quizzes will consist of a few multiple choice questions. Generally, quizzes will focus on one individual reading selection or film, so that students may complete the quizzes as they finish the reading or viewing assignments. Quizzes for each week will be available no later than Monday of that week, and will be due no later than 11:59 p.m. the following Sunday.

Grades will be determined, according to the weights given above, on an A-E scale: A=92-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=60-62; E=0-59.

### Procedures and policies

- Each week on **Monday at 12:00 p.m. (noon)** I will hold a **live class session** of an hour or so via Zoom, during which I will provide background, answer questions, and engage in conversation about the previous week's material for anyone who would like to participate. Understanding that these sessions will not fit everyone's schedule, and that this course is an asynchronous online class, attendance is certainly not required. I will record each session and post it to Blackboard, though, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to access the conversation. And of course students may contact and schedule a meeting with the instructor or the teaching assistant for a one-on-one conversation at a different time.
- You must complete all of the **assigned reading/viewing** for each week no later than the end of that week: Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Papers are due on the dates and times indicated in the schedule below. Unless you have made prior arrangements, for legitimate reasons, with the course instructor, you must submit your work by these deadlines. Without prior permission, you may not make up missed quizzes or Perusall assignments. **Late papers** will be penalized 5 points per day.
- The policy of the Department of History on **plagiarism** is as follows: "Plagiarism is taking (which includes purchasing) the words and ideas of another and passing them off as one's own work. If in a formal paper a student quotes someone, that student must use quotation marks and give a citation. Paraphrased or borrowed ideas are to be identified by proper citations. Plagiarism will result, at the minimum, in a failing grade for the assignment." I would add that plagiarism violates the educational mission of the University, the ethical foundations of the scholarly endeavor, and the essential trust between instructors and students. Do not do it. If you do, and I catch you, I will enforce the appropriate penalty, including referral to University authorities for formal adjudication and sanction.
- As you may imagine, the University at Albany as a whole also takes plagiarism and other issues of academic integrity very seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the **Standards of Academic Integrity** published in the Undergraduate Bulletin ([http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)).
- I will make reasonable **accommodations** in this course for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130; 518-442-5501; [drc@albany.edu](mailto:drc@albany.edu)). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.
- I will also make reasonable **accommodations** to make up missed assignments for student-athletes who must miss classwork for away-from-home competitions, according to the

university policy in this area:

[https://www.albany.edu/ncaa/files/Intercollegiate\\_Athletic\\_Missed\\_Class\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.albany.edu/ncaa/files/Intercollegiate_Athletic_Missed_Class_Policy.pdf).

Student-athletes are responsible for submitting to me official letters from the Athletics Department detailing these absences at the beginning of the semester.

## Schedule

Week 1 (ending August 30)

Topics: Introduction; What is War?; War before 1789

Reading: David A. Bell, "Officers, Gentlemen, and Poets" **[Quiz]**

Week 2 (ending September 6)

Topic: Revolution in France, Revolution in War, 1789-1815

Readings: French National Assembly, "Levée en masse;" Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War" **[Quiz]**; Michael J. Hughes, "Napoleon's Manhood" **[Perusall]**

Week 3 (ending September 13)

Topic: Toward Total War?: The American Civil War

Readings: Mark Neely, "Was the Civil War a Total War?;" James McPherson, "From Limited to Total War" **[Perusall]**

Week 4 (ending September 20)

**Paper 1 due Thursday, September 17, 11:59 p.m.**

Topics: Great War, Total War; Telling War

Reading: Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, Prologue and Chapter 1 **[Quiz]**

Film: *1917* **[Quiz]**

Week 5 (ending September 27)

Topics: Great War, Global War; Telling the Great War

Readings: Joe Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks" **[Perusall]**; Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, Chapters 2-3 **[Quiz]**

Week 6 (ending October 4)

Topics: Women and Modern War; Women and the Great War

Readings: Pearl James, "Images of Femininity in American World War I Posters;"

Deborah Thom, "Gender and Work" **[Perusall]**

Week 7 (ending October 11)

Topics: "Shell Shock" (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder); Aftermaths

Readings: Jay Winter, "Shell Shock;" John Talbott, "Soldiers, Scientists, and Combat Trauma" **[Perusall]**

Film: *La vie et rien d'autre (Life and Nothing But)* **[Quiz]**

Week 8 (ending October 18)

Topics: Second World War, Race War, Atrocious War

Readings: John Dower, "War Hates, War Crimes;" Mark Mazower, "War of Annihilation: Into the Soviet Union" **[Perusall]**

Film: *Letters from Iwo Jima* **[Quiz]**

Week 9 (ending October 25)

Topics: Second World War, Total War, Women's War

Reading: Roger Chickering, "Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept" [Quiz]; Susan Gubar, "'This Is My Rifle, This Is My Gun': World War II and the Blitz on Women;" Gudrun Schwarz, "During Total War, We Girls Want to Be Where We Can Really Accomplish Something" [Perusall]

Week 10 (ending November 1)

Topics: Second World War, Criminal War, Good War?

Readings: Aryeh Neier, "War and War Crimes: A Brief History;" John Dower, "An Aptitude for Being Unloved': War and Memory in Japan" [Perusall]; Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, Chapter 4 [Quiz]

Film: *Flags of Our Fathers* [Quiz]

Week 11 (ending November 8)

**Paper 2 due Thursday, November 5, by 11:59 p.m.**

Topics: Revolutionary Wars, Dirty Wars

Readings: Mao Zedong, "People's War" and "Guerrilla War;" Che Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare" [Quiz]; Raphaëlle Branche, "Sexual Violence in the Algerian War;" Teresa Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions': Investigating Mass Rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina through a Case Study of Foca" [Perusall]

Film: *No Man's Land* [Quiz]

Week 12 (ending November 15)

Topics: Telling Twentieth-Century War

Readings: Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, Chapters 5 and 6, and Epilogue [Quiz]

Film: *Apocalypse Now* [Quiz]

Week 13 (ending November 22)

Topic: Telling Twenty-First Century War

Readings: Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War*, all [Quiz]

Film: *Restrepo* [Quiz]

Week 14 (ending November 24)

Topic: Imperial Violence—War without End?

Reading: Richard Fogarty, "War" [Quiz]

**Paper 3 due Friday, December 4, by 11:59 p.m.**