

## **HISTORY 595: War and American Society**

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Sections V84  
Office Hours by Appt.  
ONLINE COURSE

**Course Overview:** This is a graduate-level reading seminar on the history of the relationship between war and American society from (roughly) the Civil War to the present. We will focus on the intersections of war and the social, political, cultural, and economic engines of American life. This is a course that will focus on historiography (the study of how and why historical methods, concepts, and interpretations change over time) and how the public commemorates/memorializes war. This will not be a traditional military history course that focuses on battles, campaigns, or changes to military technology, strategy, or tactics.

**Course Objectives:** Through our interrogation of the historiography on war and American society, you will achieve the following:

1. Become knowledgeable on how war contributes to Americans' sense of themselves as a nation and a people, and how Americans view the world and their place in it.
2. Understand how war has shaped American politics and government since the end of the Civil War.
3. Identify how war has historically shaped opportunities for men and women, even in times of relative peace.
4. Hone your critical thinking and analytical skills. The study of history is not the rote memorization of names, dates, places, and other facts. It is a debate about their meaning within historical contexts, about causal relations between events in the past, and about crafting lucid and engaging narratives that describe change over time.
5. Communicate complex ideas, arguments, and analysis through writing and classroom discussions.
6. Build strong research skills through demonstrating your ability to find and interpret evidence, synthesize complex information, and draw conclusions from your investigations.

You will be evaluated on the above through three primary methods: written assignment throughout the quarter; our weekly class discussions, which will take place online, facilitated by an online platform called **VoiceThread** (more on that in a moment); and finally, each of you will go to a public exhibit related to war and tell us about your experience.

**\*\*\*SPECIAL NOTE FOR ONLINE COURSE\*\*\***

This is a course that meets exclusively online. It is your responsibility to make sure you have RELIABLE access to the Internet every day of the week. We live in a digital age, and this course is designed for that environment. If you think that access to a computer, laptop, or tablet on **A DAILY BASIS** will be a problem for you, I recommend that you do not take this course!

**Warning About the Content/Themes of This Course:** In this class we will be discussing topics that deal directly with war, violence, and death. *If you are a combat veteran or if you are a person who has experienced a violent traumatic event in your life, certain elements of this course might be an unwelcome reminder of those events.* Because this is a course on American history, we will also unflinchingly confront issues of race and racism, and the myriad other forms of bigotry that are a part of our national story.

Moreover, some of the texts we will be reading contain profanity, depictions of violence, and/or sexually explicit situations. The arguments and ideas about war and American society that I present to you may conflict with (or contradict) your core beliefs, principles, or convictions. I do not expect you to agree with me all of the time, but you will be required to learn the material and arguments I present to you. You will not always agree with your fellow classmates. I expect you to argue your point of view—using evidence from the course materials where appropriate—passionately, but with respect toward other people’s feelings and beliefs. *Ad hominem*, or personal attacks, on your fellow classmates **WILL NOT** be tolerated.

**I have identified these texts and materials as essential to understanding the current stakes in the ongoing scholarly conversation on war, the military, and American society. I will not make any accommodations, exceptions, or excuses for students who find the material objectionable. Please take time to reflect on the course themes and review the assigned material, outlined in this syllabus, very carefully before you commit to taking this course.**

**Course Requirements:**

**Required Texts** (in Alphabetical Order. For a detailed schedule of reading, refer to the Course Schedule below):

Matthew L. Basso, *Meet Joe Copper: Masculinity and Race on Montana’s World War II Homefront*, University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, Harvard University Press, 2018.

Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Vintage, 2009 (any edition will do).

Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire, A Short History of the Greater United States*, Vintage Books, 2019.

John M. Kinder, *Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, Harvard University Press, 2015.

Michael S. Neiberg, *The Path to War: How the First World War Created Modern America*, Oxford University Press, 2016

Amy Rutenberg, *Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft Resistance*, Cornell University Press, 2019.

**In addition to these required books, you will need to select one war memoir (below), and occasionally I will also assign an article or section from a larger work. These additional readings will be located on MOODLE.**

**Grading and Assignments:** The following is a breakdown of each assignment and how they fit into your overall grade for the course.

**Grade Breakdown—**

<b>Comparative Book Review</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Memoir Response Paper</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Film Review</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Final Historiographical Essay</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Weekly Participation in Online Discussions</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Museum/Public Exhibit/Monument Visit</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Discussion Leader (Pick One Week)</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Writing Assignments:** This course is both reading-and-writing intensive. The major written products you will be evaluated on are one comparative book review (1200-1500 words), one memoir response paper (750 words), one film review (750 words), and one final historiographical essay (3000-3500 words).

**Film Review:** You will choose one of the following films to critically review. Your essay should be roughly 750-words. It will be due on the Monday of Week 6.

***The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Directed by Nunnally Johnson (1956)**

***The Deer Hunter*, Directed by Michael Cimino (1978)**

***A Few Good Men*, Directed by Rob Reiner (1992)**

***Three Kings*, Directed by John Ridley (1999)**

**Memoir Response Essay:** You will choose one of the following memoirs to read for Week 9. Your Memoir Response needs to be roughly 750-words and it will be due on the Monday of that week.

**J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle***  
**Johnny Rico, *Blood Makes the Grass Grow Green***  
**Phillip Caputo, *A Rumor of War***  
**Mary Jennings Hegar, *Shoot Like a Girl***  
**Laura Westley, *War Virgin***

**War Exhibit/Gallery/Monument:** Each of you will need to find a war museum, gallery, monument, or some other public display on the subject of war. Your task will be to visit the exhibit and present a short critical evaluation to the class. You may do this at any point during the quarter, with one caveat: you must present your critical evaluation during a week when the theme best matches the exhibit on which you are presenting. For example, if you visit a World War II exhibit, you would present during Week Seven. NOTE: This assignment WILL NOT require a formal paper. You only need to give a short presentation to the class about your trip.

**Weekly Discussions:** Each of you will be required to participate substantially and meaningfully in our online class discussion every week. Because this is a graduate seminar, I will not be lecturing to you; instead, you will be required to take an active role in the class. Unlike undergraduate courses, learning in graduate school requires you to invest several hours a week in intensive independent study, with direction from the professor, and with engagement in discussion/debate with your peers.

Each week, one of you will take charge of the class discussion. You will offer a 20-minute overview of that week's book and author, generate 4-5 discussion questions based on the reading, and facilitate the discussion by pointing out similarities and disagreements in your peers' responses, as well as encouraging respectful dialog. The mechanics of the weekly discussions will be described in further detail below. [NOTE: Depending on enrollment numbers, we may have to pair up each week. I will make that determination during the first week of the quarter.]

**Course Policies and Procedures: PLEASE PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THIS SECTION. It is your instruction manual for the rest of the quarter!!**

We will be interacting with each other every week via [VoiceThread](#), an application that allows users to collaborate without having to be logged in at the same time. There will be no set time for class meetings, but you will be required to participate in this virtual classroom multiple times each week!

**This means that all of you will be required to set up a VoiceThread account (free of charge) and be enrolled in our class VoiceThread page. IF YOU ARE**

**HAVING TROUBLE USING VOICETHREAD, OR SEEING OUR CLASS PAGE DURING THE FIRST WEEK? CONTACT ME IMMEDIATELY VIA EMAIL SO I CAN FIX THE PROBLEM!**

**Here is what I expect in our online discussions each week:** on **Sunday** night, I will create a new VoiceThread discussion forum for the week. Between **Monday** and **Tuesday** (before midnight), the **discussion leader** will post their 20-minute lesson and 4-5 discussion questions. You'll soon notice that VoiceThread allows for posts in video, audio, and written format. **In this graduate seminar, ALL discussions MUST occur in video format** (I will allow audio posts if a student cannot post a video due to a legitimate issue). Discussion leader, you will also post the discussion questions **in writing** on VoiceThread.

**This means that in order to take this class, you must have a working video camera on your laptop or tablet. There is also a VoiceThread app for Apple and Android smartphones, which makes it possible to record with your phone. If you don't have access to these technologies, you cannot succeed in this class.**

Each of you will have from the time that the discussion leader posts their lesson and questions until the end of the week (Friday night at midnight) to do the following: **respond**—via video post—to at least **three (3)** of the discussion questions; **respond** to at least **two (2)** of your fellow classmates' posts. Responses must be substantial and meaningful, demonstrating that you have read and mastered the arguments and themes in the book, and that you can make connections to other books we've read, your understanding of the scholarly debate, and what your fellow classmates are saying.

**I reserve the right to jump into the conversation at any point and ask additional questions or request that you expand on, or better explain, a response you have given. If I call on you to answer a question or expound upon your answer, you must respond by the end of the week.**

In order for an online seminar like this to work, you must contribute to a lively debate each week about the reading! I know that all of you are busy people and have different schedules, but this format will allow our discussions to happen while also respecting each of your daily commitments outside of graduate school. You can post at any time—morning, afternoon, or the middle of the night—so saying that you had a “scheduling conflict” will not be an acceptable excuse. Plan accordingly!

**Expectations for written work:** All written work must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. Typos, misspelled/misused words, grammatical mistakes, and other errors demonstrate that you don't care about your work. Please use spelling/grammar check functions on your computer and **PROOFREAD** your papers. As graduate students, I expect you to turn in your work on time. **Late assignments will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day past due. After 5 days, you will receive a zero for the assignment.**

On all written work, you will be required to use proper footnote citations. For this course, we will be using the Chicago Manual of Style format. Please use the “note” format, NOT the “author-date” method. For your reference, please consult this website [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)

I understand that many of you have learned different citation styles. However, in this class, you will all use the Chicago format.

**Office Hours:** Because this is an online course, my office hours will be by appointment only. I am willing to meet over video chat online, if preferred. Or, you are also welcome to come to my regular office hours in person on main campus in Ruston.

**It is your responsibility to check your email daily.** I stay in constant contact with my online students via email, MOODLE, and VoiceThread. Please ensure that your preferred email address is current with Louisiana Tech administrators.

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

I fully expect each of you to turn in ORIGINAL work. Copying the work of other authors, cutting and pasting from the Internet, paraphrasing without proper citation, or any other form of plagiarism WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. **Any graduate student caught plagiarizing will automatically receive a failing (F) grade for the course.** Graduate students found guilty of academic dishonesty will also be referred to the Honor Committee for further action. For your reference, the Louisiana Tech Honor Code defines plagiarism as:

“3.1.2. Representing another person's work or any part thereof, be it published or unpublished, as one's own, which is referred to as "plagiarism."  
3.1.3. Copying another's entire paper and claiming it as one's own. 3.1.4. Copying a part of a paper or another source and claiming it as one's own.  
3.1.5. Copying information from a source word for word without using citations. 3.1.6. Copying information from a source but changing the words around without 3.1.7. Obtaining, distributing, or referring to a copy of an examination which the instructor and/or department have not authorized to be made available for such purpose. 3.1.8. Submitting work that has been previously or is being concurrently used in a different class by oneself or by another student. Special permission must be obtained from the instructor or professor if a student wishes to utilize or develop further any work prepared for another class” (REF: <https://www.latech.edu/documents/honor-code.pdf>).

### **Classroom Accessibility:**

This course is intended for all Louisiana Tech students who meet the academic requirements, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illness, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that tends to negatively affect one's equal access to education. If, at any point in the term, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to contact me by email, phone, or during office hours to discuss your specific needs. I also encourage you to contact Disability Services at (318) 257-4221, or visit their office in 318 Wylly Tower. Disability Services can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan, while also protecting your right to confidentiality.

## Course Schedule

**(Below is a rough outline of the topics and themes we will be covering each week, as well as which Required Text we'll be reading)**

Week One (3/9-3/14)— **Introductions**

Reading: Familiarize yourself with the syllabus, sign up for VoiceThread and post a brief introductory video.

Week Two (3/16-3/21)— **Death and War**

Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*

Week Three (3/23-3/28)— **Wounds of War**

John M. Kinder, *Paying with their Bodies*

Week Four: (3/30-4/4)— **American Empire**

Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire*

**Your Comparative Review essay will be due Wednesday April 1, 2020 before noon.**

Week Five (4/6-4/11)— **World War I**

Michael Neiberg, *The Path to War*

Week Six (4/13-4/18)— **WAR AND AMERICAN CINEMA**

Scott Laderman, "War and Film" (MOODLE)

**You'll each discuss the films that you watched**

**Your Film Review essay will be due Monday 4/13 before noon.**

Week Seven (4/20-4/25)— **World War II on the Homefront**

Matthew Basso, *Meet Joe Copper*

Week Eight (4/27-5/2)— **Cold War Manpower Policy and Vietnam**



Amy Rutenberg, *Rough Draft*

Week Nine (5/4-5/9)— **REMEMBERING WAR: MEMOIR DISCUSSION**

**You'll each discuss the memoir you read**

**Your Memoir Response essay will be due Monday  
May 4, 2020 before noon.**

Week Ten— (5/11-5/16) **The All-Volunteer Force and American Society**

Jennifer Mittelstadt, *Rise of the Military Welfare State*

Week Eleven (5/18-5/23)— **Paramilitary Culture and White Power**

Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home*