Political Science/IR 278W: War and Political Violence

Thomas M. Dolan, Instructor
Fall Semester 2009
Class: Gavet 312, MWF 11:00-11:50 AM
Office Hours: Friday, 9-11 AM and by appointment; Office is 232 Harkness Hall
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This class addresses several key questions about war: How do states decide how to fight a war? Why do wars end when they do? How should we think about the nature of war? We will delve into these issues by addressing the theoretical and empirical literature on how wars are fought and how they are ended. Readings will include both classics of military theory by the likes of Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Mao, and work on the nature of war and war termination by modern political scientists. Then we will address non-traditional forms of political violence like guerilla warfare and insurgency, civil wars, terrorism, and rioting. The domestic politics of war-fighting, particularly those involving public opinion will also be examined, as will some of the challenges of conflict resolution.

Goals
The presentation of this course, and the evaluation of students’ efforts in it, will be tailored to the following aims:

- Students will acquire an understanding of the politics of war, with particular emphasis on political decisions about strategy, the politics of pursuing war, and war termination.
- Students will develop their powers of political and social analysis, with an emphasis on logical argument and the effective use of evidence in drawing conclusions.
- Students will develop their faculties in writing and speaking about politics and political phenomena.

Please note that none of these goals involve the advancement of anyone’s political or policy opinions (including those of the instructor). While I encourage political activity and the fulfillment of one’s citizenship duties outside of the classroom, a political science course is not a proper forum for the airing of one’s personal politics.

Course Design
This course involves a combination of class seminars, directed readings, papers, a final exam, and opportunities for informal discussion during office hours. Each part serves a purpose, be it information transmission and retention, promoting rigorous analysis, or encouraging the development of new ideas. Failing to engage with all parts will diminish the return on your efforts. For this reason, pre-class preparation is essential for this course. Students are expected to have read and considered the assigned material prior to the course, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Questions are placed beneath each reading to help focus your attention to what the instructor believes are the most important points. Please remember that that the material of the course is delivered in both texts and in-class discussion, which means that the texts contain valuable ideas and information which may not be specifically addressed in class, and discussions and lectures will go beyond the readings. You are responsible for understanding both, so please be sure to raise questions about things you are unsure about.
Assignments and Evaluation

In-Class Participation, 10% Your active participation in class is necessary if this class is to be a successful learning experience. This means you must come in having read the assignments and join in the class-room discussion of them, making evident that you have read and thought about them. You should expect to make at least one comment every week or so. While attendance is not graded as such, excessive truancy can affect this grade, since you are unable to participate when absent. *Excused absences, regardless of duration, will not affect this grade. **Incivility toward fellow students during seminar can negatively affect this grade.

Historical Paper (20%) and Presentation (10%), Due on presentation day, a 7-8 page paper analyzing the key political decisions taken by a belligerent in a war (or other political violence) approved for study by your instructor. During class that day, each war will be discussed in turn, and those writing on that war must present their findings as a group. Focus particularly on decisions to start a war, any changes in aims or strategy, and terminate it.

Response Papers [1 page], #1: no later than 5 October; # 2, after fall break, no later than 2 December, each 5%
Respond to a reading. Include a brief but effective summary and a meaningful critique of the piece. Papers are due on the day the reviewed reading is due.

Term Paper (30%) Due 6 December, a 12-14 page paper investigating a topic relevant to the course. Topics are due on 16 November, and Must be explicitly approved by the instructor.

Final Exam (20%) Sunday 20 December at 12:30

Assignments are to be turned in by class time on the day they are due. They should be in hardcopy unless unforeseen circumstances prevent printing them in or handing them in a timely manner. For every 24 hours that pass thereafter, 5% of credit is lost, to a maximum of 40% lost. Exams are to be sat at the date and time specified, unless prior approval has been given or a doctor’s excuse is submitted at the next attended class meeting. Exams should be sat within 1 week of the general administration of the exam.

Grades
Grades are assigned to both individual pieces of work and cumulatively. The grade scale I use for both is below (note that “g” refers to the numerical grade you receive). I do not usually curve grades, but reserve the right to do so if I deem it necessary. All material is graded on its own terms, rather than through comparison with other students’ work. For the cumulative grades, I do not round: what you get is what you get.

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Cheating and plagiarism are, of course, unacceptable in academic work, and when suspected will be pursued through the appropriate university channels. Proper citations and standards of integrity are not optional. If you have questions about what this means, please ask the instructor.

**Changes to the Syllabus:**
In the event that there is a need for there to be any changes to the syllabus, an e-mail will be sent to all students’ e-mail accounts (as maintained by the registrar), and will be mentioned in class at two class meetings. Changes become effective immediately after their second mention in class, or the sending of the e-mail, whichever comes last.

**Cancellation of Class:** In the event that the instructor needs to cancel class, an e-mail will be sent to all students’ e-mail accounts (as maintained by the registrar) prior to class time.

**Readings**

*Purchase:*
Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*. Any Version.
I will be using

All other readings are available on-line through blackboard at my.rochester.edu

**Schedule of Readings**

2 September: Introduction
(No Readings)

Section 1: What is War?

4 September: NO CLASS (APSA Annual Meetings)

7 September: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

**What is a working definition of war? What is the nature of war?**

9 September
Reading from Wright, Q. (1941) *A Study of War.*

11 September

14 September

**Recommended:**

**Why Do Leaders Start Wars?**
16 September

18 September

Recommended

Section 2: Fighting Wars

*The Nature of Strategy and the Uses of Arms in Politics*

21 September
Sun Tzu. *The Art of War.* (Any Version)

23 September
Reading from Schelling, T. (1966) *Arms and Influence.*

Recommended:

*Conventional Warfare*

*Conventional Ground Strategies*

25 September

Recommended:
*Patton*. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp. 1970.

*Naval Power*

28 September

Recommended:
*Das Boot*. Bavaria Film, 1982. Watch it in German with the subtitles, it’s better than the English dubbing.
Air Power
30 September

Recommended:

Optional Movie Showing:
*Twelve O’clock High*, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 1949.

Guerilla Warfare and Insurgencies
2 October
Reading from Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare*.

5 October: NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

7 October

Recommended:
Lawrence, T. E. (1920) “Evolution of a Revolt”
*Battle of Algiers*. 1966. Igor Film

Tactics
9 October.
Do the handout.

Recommended:
E. D. Swinton, The Defence of Duffer’s Drift, 
E. Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*.

War Presentations (12 and 14 October)

Section 3: Other Kinds of Political Violence

Terrorism
16 October
19 October

**Civil War**

21 October

23 October

**Recommended:**

**Ethnic Violence and Riots**

26 October

28 October

30 October

**Recommended:**

**Genocide**

2 November

**Political Violence Presentations (4-6 November)**

**Section 4: Politics of On-going Wars**

**Evaluating Success and Failures**

9 November

11 November
Public Opinion
13 November
16 November

Recommended:

Civil-Military Relations, Mutinies, Coups, and Desertion
18 November
20 November
23 November
E. Shils and M. Janowitz. (1948) “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” Public Opinion Quarterly. Vol 12, # 2, p. 280-

Encouraged:
Valkyrie, United Artists, 2008

Recommended:
War poetry set (see Blackboard)

Section 5: Termination, Settlement, and the End of Wars

Picking Aims, Talking, and Making the Agreement
25 November
30 November
2 December
Reading from Ikle, F. (1971) Every War Must End.
Recommended:

**Losing**
4 December
Recommended:

**Brokers and Peacemakers**
7 December

**The special case of atomic warfare (24 April)**
9 December
Reading from Herman Kahn, *On Escalation*, 1965.

**The End of War?**
11 December

**Final Exam:** SUNDAY 20 December, 12:30 PM
Other great books and movies about war and political violence that you may not have encountered

Movies:
*All Quiet on the Western Front*
*Mrs. Miniver*—see war propaganda at its Oscar-winning best!
*Zulu*
*Bridge on the River Kwai*
*Letters from Iwo Jima*

Books:
*Thomas Schelling, Strategy of Conflict*
*Geoffrey Parker, The Military Revolution*
*T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, or, Revolt in the Desert*
*Siegfried Sassoon, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*
*Charles De Gaulle, The Edge of the Sword*
*Bernard Brodie, War and Politics*
*Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory*
*Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars*
*Jean Larriquy, The Centurions*
*Andrew Exum, This Man’s Army*
*Nate Fick, One Bullet Away*
*US Army Ranger Handbook*
*John Keegan, The Face of Battle*
*John Keegan, The Mask of Command*
*Martin Crevald, Supplying War*
*Pavel Sudoplatov, Special Tasks*

Other:
*http://www.wsu.edu/~hughesc/why_men_love_war.htm*