Hist 355: American Military Affairs

I. Course Information

Instructor Info:

Dr. T. Cole Jones

Email: [colejones@purdue.edu](mailto:colejones@purdue.edu)

Office: UNIV 222

Class Time and Location:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

8:30-9:20 AM

UNIV 117

Office Hours:

Mondays and Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Course Website:

Blackboard

II. Course Description

This course will explore the history of the United States from its colonial origins to the present by looking at issues of war and defense. We will ask a number of questions about the history of American military affairs. How have Americans confronted threats to their national security? In what ways have Americans used military force to advance foreign policy objectives? How have America’s military institutions changed over time? How has technology affected the conduct of war? How has war influenced American culture? How have American values and assumptions about war evolved? While we will explore questions of peacetime defense, this course will concentrate on armed conflict. We will examine domestic strife and foreign invasions, rebellions and civil wars, imperial and world wars, and finally terrorism and counterinsurgency in order to assess the role of war in American history. In so doing, we will question whether there is, or has ever been, an American way of war.

III. Learning Objectives:

This course asks you:

1. To increase your knowledge of the key events, themes, and problems in American military history.

2. To analyze the social and cultural place of war within American society, and to question the role of warfare as an agent of historical change.

3. To appreciate the role of contingency in warfare.

4. To understand the enduring influence of past conflicts on contemporary American society.

5. To articulate original historical claims in the form of thesis statements.

6. To analyze and contextualize historical evidence.

7. To improve your oral and written communication skills.

IV. Course Requirements

1. Attendance and Active Participation—**20%**

Attendance and active participation are required. Lectures provide the background knowledge necessary to analyze the primary sources during Friday’s discussion. If you have trouble participating in class, please come see me early on so we can strategize solutions.

2. Midterm Exam—**20%**

In class exam on October 6

Midway through the semester we will have an exam designed to evaluate your comprehension of the course material. The exam will take the format of several identifications and one essay. Please bring a “blue book” to class. I cannot provide you with one.

3. Document Analysis—**15%**

Due: Before December 8

At some point before our last day of class, you will locate and identify a primary source from the period under study. Once you have uncovered an acceptable source, you will write a **2-page** critical analysis. You may not use one of the sources we have discussed in class. I will provide you with a list of online databases that you can use to locate sources, but you may also branch out. The key is to consider what the source can tell us about the person or persons who created it and to place it within its proper historical context.

4. Film Project—**25%**

Due: November 13

As a final project, all students will write a **6-8 page** critical review of a film related to the history of war and defense in America. America’s military history has attracted considerable attention from Hollywood, yet the portrayal of America’s wars on film has varied considerably. Movies provide a window onto the values and assumptions of the people who create and consume them. In this project, you will not only evaluate the film for its historical accuracy but also analyze the film in the context of the historical moment in which it was created. This project is as much about the time and place in which the movie was made as it is about the time and place the movie portrays. We will discuss this project in more depth in class.

**All writing assignments should be typed and double-spaced, in 12-point font with 1-inch margins**

6. Final Exam—**20%**

The final exam will occur during the university's exam week. It will cover the second half of the course and consist of several identifications and one essay.

V. Course Readings

Required Text:

John Whiteclay Chambers II and G. Kurt Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History: Documents and Essays*, Third Edition (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013).

We will be reading a combination of classic and current scholarship (ie. secondary sources) as well as period documents (ie. primary sources). All readings can be found in Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*.

VI: Classroom Policies:

**My policies are simple:**

Show up to every class on time having done the reading.

Do the assignments.

Be respectful.

Use common sense.

Do your own work.

Don’t cheat.

If you have a question, ask me in person or via Email.

Late papers will be penalized **one-third grade per day** [example: an A paper that is one day late becomes an A- paper]

For a more detailed explanation of the above, see the University Policies:

*“Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Part 5, Section III-B-2-a,* [*Student Regulations*](http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/)*] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]”*

<https://www.purdue.edu/odos/academic-integrity/>

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students who need special accommodations to participate fully in class should contact me as soon as possible. While I will do everything in my power to accommodate your needs, Purdue University requires you to provide me with appropriate written documentation and to have that documentation on file with Student Services. Students should be aware that Services for Student Disabilities are available at 494-1247 if you need further assistance.

VII. Course Content:

**WEEK 1**

Mon. August 21**:** What is Military History?

Wed. August 23: An American Way of War?

Fri. August 25: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 1-34.

**WEEK 2**

Mon. August 28: European and Native American Ways of War

Wed. August 30: Clash of Empires

Fri. September: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 37-64.

**WEEK 3**

Mon. September 4: Labor Day, NO Class

Wed. September 6: War for Independence or Revolutionary War?

Fri. September 8: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 66-93.

**WEEK 4**

Mon. September 11: Revolutionary Legacies

Wed. September 13: Second War for Independence

Fri. September 15: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 95-117.

**WEEK 5**

Mon. September 18: Antebellum Professionalization

Wed. September 20: Warring for Manifest Destiny

Fri. September 22: In class Presentation by Prof. Chapman from the Library

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 119-150.

**WEEK 6**

Mon. September 25: Brother against Brother

Wed. September 27: Total War?

Fri. September 29: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 152-185.

**WEEK 7**

Mon. October 2: Violence and Reconstruction

Wed. October 4: War on the Plains or War of Extermination?

Fri. October 6: MIDTERM

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 187-219.

**WEEK 8**

Mon. October 9: Fall Break, NO Class

Wed. October 11 Warring for Empire and Remembering the Maine

Fri. October 13: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 221-246.

**WEEK 9**

Mon. October 16: Men against Fire

Wed. October 18: Lafayette, We are Here!

Fri. October 20: No Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 248-276.

**WEEK 10**

Mon. October 23: Isolation

Wed. October 25: Innovation

Fri. October 27: No Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 277-308.

**WEEK 11**

Mon. October 30: Blitzkrieg and Banzai!

Wed. November 1: Germany First

Fri. November 3: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 310-336.

**WEEK 12**

Mon. November 6: Island Hopping

Wed. November 8: Destroyer of Worlds

Fri. November 10: No Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 339-372.

**WEEK 13**

Mon. November 13: Containment and Escalation—FILM PROJECT DUE

Wed. November 15: Tonkin to Tet

Fri. November 17: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 374-407.

**WEEK 14**

Mon. November 20: Vietnamization

Wed. November 22: Thanksgiving Break, No Class

Fri. November 24: Thanksgiving Break, No Class

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 409-443.

**WEEK 15**

Mon. November 27: Safe for Democracy?

Wed. November 29: Sand and Oil

Fri. December 1: Discussion

Reading:

Chambers and Piehler eds., *Major Problems in American Military History*, 445-487.

**WEEK 16**

Mon. December 4: Terror and Counterinsurgency

Wed. December 6: Tomorrow’s War?

Fri. December 8: Exam Prep

EXAM WEEK: December 11-16

Disclaimer:

*In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted on Blackboard or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.*