

IR402 – THEORIES OF WAR

An introduction to analytical and normative problems arising from violent conflicts within and between states

**Department of International Relations
University of Southern California
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I. Course Description

This course provides an introduction to analytical as well as normative problems arising from violent conflicts within and between states with particular attention to the U.S. military and major wars involving the United States in the twentieth century. Drawing on readings from a wide range of disciplines—including international relations, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, literature, and philosophy—we will attempt to better understand the causes, dynamics, and ethical dimensions of armed struggles. We will examine theoretical and empirical arguments concerning the trends and magnitudes of wars as well as their origins, ranging from rational choice to ideological to structural or systemic explanations. We will explore linkages between state-making and war-making, between gender and war, the “military-industrial complex,” and “just war” theory. Throughout these studies we will pay particularly close attention to the experiences of civilians, who throughout the twentieth century have represented an increasingly high percentage of the casualties of war. Our course will lead to an in-depth case-study of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in an attempt to better understand the nature of war, human nature, and some of the perennial challenges violent conflicts pose for students and practitioners of international relations.

II. Learning Outcomes

This is a discussion-based seminar in which you will develop skills in reflective dialogue and debate. By the end of the course you should have a clear understanding of some of the difficulties involved in sharply distinguishing “war” from “peace” as well as in quantifying fatalities in wars. You should be able to intelligently discuss rival social scientific theories of the causes of conflicts. You will have gained knowledge of the history and psychology of war. You will also have encountered challenging new perspectives on violence and the nation-state that will hopefully help you to grow not only intellectually but also as a critically engaged moral agent in an interconnected world.

III. Required Texts

This is a reading intensive course. I have compiled and posted on Blackboard required

chapters and articles in PDF format. We will also be watching a number of films. It is your responsibility to print Blackboard readings and bring them with you to class for discussion. In addition, we will read the following books (which you must purchase):

Bilton, Michael, and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

Cramer, Christopher, *Violence in Developing Countries: War, Memory, Progress* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007).

Note: it is vitally important that you come to class each week prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion with your peers about the assigned readings. This includes supporting your ideas and arguments with evidence and illustrations from the assigned texts. I am therefore requiring that you either bring: 1) printed versions of all readings with you to class, preferably copiously marked; or 2) typed or written notes based on your reading. You might be asked to produce one of these at any time as part of your participation grade.

IV. Grading Scale and Distribution

The grading scale for this course is as follows: A (90-100); B (80-89); C (70-79); D (60-69); F (< 60). You will be assessed based on the following distribution of points:

- 10% Class Participation: You are expected to attend all classes and to actively contribute to discussions through thoughtful dialogue and respectful (but hopefully also vigorous!) debate with others based upon your careful reading of all assigned texts. There are no excused absences and three absences will result in an automatic failing grade for the course. As part of your participation grade, you are required to bring with you to each class a list of 3-5 typed questions for discussion based upon your reading. This will be collected at the start of each class period.

- 10% Class Leadership: You will be responsible to help guide a seminar by providing an overview of an assigned reading or readings and by raising some incisive questions to launch our discussion. (For more on what seminar leadership entails, see below.)

- 10% Quizzes: There will be periodic unannounced quizzes at the start of class based on the assigned readings. They should not be difficult *if you have done the reading*.

- 30% Midterm Examination: There will be a late midterm exam (March 12) that will be comprehensive of the ideas and literature covered up to that point in the course. I will say more about what you can expect on the midterm later in the semester. Note: this exam is not optional and cannot be taken on another date; you should not make early spring break plans.

40% Final Paper: You will submit a 10-page research paper, due on the last day of class (April 30), addressing one of the major questions or themes of this course. I will give you more details about the paper later in the semester.

V. Seminar Leadership

As seminar leader you will introduce an assigned reading (or readings) and help facilitate a discussion with the class. You should NOT use Powerpoint or any other electronic or onscreen aids. However, you are required to prepare a single-page handout to distribute to the class (front and back is acceptable if you need the space). Your task as seminar leader is to do the following as clearly and concisely as possible:

1) Summarize: You should *briefly* identify the key ideas, facts, theories, and/or evidence in the article(s), calling attention to especially insightful passages or quotations. Make your summary succinct on the assumption that others have done the reading and do not need to have the entire reading repeated back to them.

2) Engage: You should critically discuss the significance of the article and analyze its possible strengths and weaknesses. In doing so, strive to be a sympathetic and open reader even when confronted by an author you may strongly disagree with.

3) Reflect: Raise several questions for reflection and further discussion with the entire class. Good questions might do one of several things. They might: a) seek to clarify a difficult concept or theory; b) invite vigorous debate over a controversial or contentious idea; or c) encourage “big picture” thinking by bringing one author/reading/theory into conversation (or collision!) with others.

VI. USC Statement on Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early as possible. DSP is in STU 301. The DSP phone number is 213-740-0776.

VII. Academic Integrity

Your work on all written assignments, both exams and papers, should be your own. You should not use the words or ideas of others without giving full credit to them using proper citation methods. You should also not self-plagiarize, i.e., recycle in whole or in part your own work from another course. If you have any questions about how and when to cite other peoples’ work you should come and speak with me after reviewing the USC student handbook (on the web at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-policies/#plagiarism>). Students found to be copying or plagiarizing the work of others on any assignment will receive an automatic failing grade for the course and be reported to the judicial affairs

committee. There will be no exceptions to this policy. You are required to submit your final paper as a paper hard copy and also to Turnitin on Blackboard.

Academic integrity means more, however, than simply not cheating or plagiarizing. It also means fulfilling assignments with the care and rigor of a serious scholar, showing basic respect and courtesy to others both in and out of the classroom (including being in class on time), and being honest and forthright in dialogue. While not all of these virtues are directly subject to grading, they will serve you well in this class and in your academic and professional lives in general.

VIII. No Electronic Devices Policy

This course depends upon your active participation as an attentive listener and generous conversation partner with others. Texting devices, internet, and social media are grave impediments to academic conversation and are not permitted in class at any time. Students observed using phones or texting devices during class, checking their emails or Facebook, or surfing the web, will be marked absent. Computer screens should only be open if you need to directly refer to a passage in the PDF version of a reading.

IX. Course Outline and Weekly Reading Assignments

Note: This reading list is subject to change as the course progresses. I will let you know in class or by email if any readings are added or dropped. Superscript numerals indicate the course days (first or second) of each week on which we will discuss the required texts.

Wk.1 (January 13 and 15): Introduction and Continuums of War and Peace, Part I (92 pages)

¹*Hedges, Chris, "Introduction," and "Ch.1: The Myth of War," in *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), pp.1-43.

²*Cramer, Christopher, "Introduction" and "Ch.1: Violence, Memory and Progress," in *Violence in Developing Countries: War, Memory, Progress* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp.1-49.

Wk.2 (January 22): Continuums of War and Peace, Part II (58 pages)

¹*Film: "Dirty Wars" (2013), directed by Rick Rowley (86 minutes).

¹*Dudziak, Mary, "Law, War, and the History of Time," *California Law Review*, Vol.98 (2010), pp.1669-1710.

¹*Farmer, Paul, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," in *Current Anthropology*, Vol.45, No.3 (June 2004), pp.305-323.

Wk.3 (January 27 and 29): Trends and Magnitudes (85 pages)

¹*Video: “TED Talks: Steven Pinker:,” March 2007, (approximately 19 minutes) on the web at: http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_the_myth_of_violence.html

¹*Pinker, Steven, excerpt from “Ch.5: The Long Peace” in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin, 2011), pp.189-228.

¹*Gray, John, “Delusions of Peace,” *Prospect*, September 21, 2011 (approximately 6 pages) on the web at: <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/john-gray-steven-pinker-violence-review>

²*Cramer, “Ch.2: Categories, Trends and Evidence in Violent Conflict,” in *Violence in Developing Countries*, pp.49-87.

²*Singh, Ritika, “A Meta-Study of Drone Strike Casualties” (12 pages) on the web at: <http://www.lawfareblog.com/2013/07/a-meta-study-of-drone-strike-casualties/>

Wk.4 (February 3 and 5): Theories of the Origins of War, Part I: Rational Choices (98 pages)

¹*Video: “TED Talks: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita: A Prediction for the Future of Iran,” February 2009, (approximately 19 minutes) on the web at: http://www.ted.com/talks/bruce_bueno_de_mesquita_predicts_iran_s_future.html

¹*Fearon, James, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” in *International Organization*, Vol.49, No.3 (Summer 1995), pp.379-414.

¹*Hirshleifer, Jack, “The Dark Side of the Force,” *Economic Inquiry*, Vol.32 (January 1994), pp.1-10.

²*Cramer, “Ch.3: Deviant Conditions,” in *Violence in Developing Countries*, pp.87-139.

Wk.5 (February 10 and 12): Theories of the Origins of War, Part II: Ideas, Beliefs, and Values (93 pages)

¹*Marvin, Carolyn and David Ingle, “Ch.1: Introduction,” and “Ch.2: That Old Flag Magic,” in *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.1-40.

²*Bacevich, Andrew J., “Preface”, “Ch.3: Left, Right, Left”, “Ch.5: Onward”, in *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.69-97, 122-147.

Wk.6 (February 19): Theories of the Origins of War, Part III: Structures, Systems, Institutions (76 pages)

¹*Cramer, “Ch.4: Angola and the Theory of War” and “Ch.6: Passionate Interests,” in *Violence in Developing Countries*, pp.139-170, 199-245.

²*Film: “Darwin’s Nightmare (2004), directed by Hubert Sauper (107 minutes).

Wk.7 (February 24 and 26): Military-Industrial Complexes (63 pages)

¹*C. Wright Mills, “The Structure of Power in American Society,” *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.9, No.1 (March 1958), pp.29-41.

¹*Film: “Why We Fight” (2005), directed by Eugene Jarecki (98 minutes).

²*Fordham, Benjamin, “Paying for Global Power: Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Postwar U.S. Military Spending,” in *The Long War: A History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. Andrew Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp.371-399.

²*Bilmes, Linda J., “The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan: How Wartime Spending Decisions Will Constrain Future National Security Budgets,” Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series (March 2013), pp.1-22.

²*Talent, Jim, “Don’t Cut Military Spending,” National Review Online, November 4, 2010, on the web at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/252458/don-t-cut-military-spending-jim-talent/page/0/1>

Wk.8 (March 3 and 5): Military-Academic-Media Complexes (82 pages)

¹*Chomsky, Noam, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,” *New York Review of Books*, Vol.8, No.3 (February 23, 1967), pp.1-24.

¹*Video: Buckley Jr., William F., and Noam Chomsky, “Firing Line: Vietnam and the Intellectuals,” Public Broadcasting System, April 3, 1969 (51 minutes), on the web at: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL899398E3C3D47FB0>

¹*Calhoun, Craig, “Social Science Research and Military Agendas: Safe Distance or Bridging a Troubling Divide?”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.8, No.4 (December 2010), pp.1101-1106.

²*Chomsky, Noam, and Edward Herman, “Introduction” and “Preface” in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp.xi-lxiv.

Wk.9 (March 10): That’s Entertainment! (41 pages)

¹*Bacevich, Andrew J., “Preface” in *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), pp.1-7.

¹*O’Neill, William L., “The ‘Good’ War: National Security and American Culture,” in *The Long War: A History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II*, ed. Andrew Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp.517-551.

Wk.9 (March 12): Midterm Exam

MARCH 17-22: SPRING RECESS: NO CLASSES

Wk.10 (March 24 and 26): Gender, War, and the Military (78 pages)

¹*Lowe, Keith, “Introduction,” “Ch.5: Moral Destruction,” and “Ch.14: Revenge on Women and Children,” in *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2012), pp.xiii-xx, 41-60, 163-179.

¹*Tickner, J. Ann, “Introducing Feminist Perspectives into Peace and World Security Courses,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.3/4 (Winter 1995), pp.48-57.

²*Cohn, Carol, “Sex and Death in the World of Defense Force Intellectuals,” in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, eds. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), pp.354-363.

²*Kilshaw, Susie, “Gulf War Syndrome: A Reaction to Psychiatry’s Invasion of the Military?”, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, Vol.32 (2008), pp.219-237.

Wk.11 (March 31 and April 2): Psychology of War and War-Planning (105 pages)

¹*Glover, Jonathan, “Part II: The Moral Psychology of Waging War,” in *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp.47-119.

²*Lifton, Robert Jay, “Psychological Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima: The Theme of Death,” *Daedalus*, Vol.92, No.3 (Summer 1963), pp.462-497.

²*Film: “Dr. Strangelove,” (1964) directed by Stanley Kubric (approximately 90 minutes).

Wk.12 (April 7 and 9): Normative Theory: “Just War” and the Bombing of Civilians in World War II and the Korean War (67 Pages)

¹*Cumings, Bruce, “Ch.6: ‘The Most Disproportionate Result’: The Air War,” in *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2011), pp.147-163.

¹*Weingartner, “Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941-1945,” *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol.61, No.1 (February 1992), pp.53-67.

¹*Grayling, A. C., “Ch.3: The Experience of the Bombed” in *Among the Dead Cities* (New York: Walker and Company, 2006), pp.81-117.

¹*Stimson, Henry, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,” *Harpers Magazine*, Vol.194, No.1161 (February 1947), pp.97-107.

²*Film: “The Fog of War” (2003), directed by Errol Morris (107 minutes).

Wk.13 (April 14 and 16): A Case Study of War, Part I: Four Hours in My Lai (163 pages)

¹⁻²*Bilton, Michael, and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Penguin, 1992), pp.1-102, 102-163.

Wk.14 (April 21 and 23): A Case Study of War, Part II: Four Hours in My Lai (152 pages)

¹⁻²*Bilton and Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai*, pp.163-248, 248-315.

Wk.15 (April 28 and 30): Final Reflections on War, Democracy, and Citizenship (94 pages)

¹*Bilton and Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai*, pp.315-379.

²*Bacevich, Andrew J., “Part I: Nation at War” in *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), pp.17-47.

FINAL PAPER DUE DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2PM