

Course Syllabus:

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HIST248: US Military History

Loyola University New Orleans

8-Week Online

Summer 2018

Tuesday, May 29 – Tuesday, July 17

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Overarching Philosophy

Think Critically, Act Justly

Brief Abstract:

This course is a survey of United States military history, including an overview of the social, political, technological, and cultural underpinnings of war in American history. It covers a time span from the early eighteenth century through the twentieth century.

Assigned Texts: (Both paper or Kindle Format are acceptable)

- John Keegan, *Fields of Battle: The Wars for North America* (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996)
- Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944-1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003)

In addition to these texts, this course uses many links, journal articles, and chapters that you will find available in Blackboard:

Blackboard:

Your use of Blackboard is essential in this class and you should get in the habit of logging into it every day. Not only will you find many of your readings here, but you will also be expected to submit your assignments via Blackboard's assignment system. Be sure to log in and make sure that you are properly enrolled in the course before the first day.

Course Goals and Detailed Overview:

This course considers the influence of war upon society through social, cultural, political, and technological change. In doing so, it offers a narrative of America's wars and the historical forces that dictated their outcomes. From a theoretical standpoint, we will explore the ways in which

broader historical processes such as the frontier experience, establishment of racial concepts, and maturation of American political ideology have shaped the military experience and informed the use of organized violence in American history. We will also consider how the military experience has, in turn, shaped the way that Americans perceive conceptions of citizenship and civic duty. Unlike traditional Military History courses, we devote less time to battles and strategy, what we might call "military science." The course spends much more time discussing the question of "why we fight." (To quote the title from the popular World War II movie series.) This is not to say that we ignore the importance of the battlefield narrative, but unlike some offerings of military history, tales of traditional combat do not occupy the predominant focus of this course. Lastly, we will make extensive consideration of war and remembrance and the role that popular culture plays in shaping it.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students who have successfully completed this course should be able to:

- 1.) Possess an understanding of and chronology for American conflict that is based in broader historical context.
- 2.) Be able to identify the social, political, and cultural impulses that have historically motivated the national apparatus to engage in warfare.
- 3.) Understand the processes by which a nation constructs its memory of the past, particularly of warfare and specifically through popular culture.

Graded Content / Weights

Discussion and Engagement: 30%

Each week will feature a discussion board session that involves entering into an active dialogue with your peers about the material we have engaged. Participation is mandatory. 9 total

Film Analyses (5) / 50%

We will watch 4 different films over the course of the semester. For each, you will write a 750-800 word analysis of the film that follows the guidelines set for in the appendix of this syllabus. The six analyses essays will make up xx% of your grade.

Exams (2) / 20%

We will have two exams in this eight-week period. They will be in essay format and require you to synthesize material from the podcasts, readings, and discussion boards. All exams will be administered through Blackboard. Exams are not cumulative. Each exam is worth xx% of your grade each for a total of xx percent.

Attendance Policy:

Participation in online activities in an online course is evidence of your effort and participation. If we have reached the **third week** of class and you have not engaged with any of the course material, we will have to have a Skype or telephone discussion whether or not you should drop the class.

Late Work:

Being an online and summer class, I try to be flexible on deadlines, but I encourage you to keep up with the work so as not to backload assignments. Assignments are due on the date posted on Blackboard. Blackboard automatically marks assignments "late" when they are submitted past this deadline. Assignments more than a week late will receive a 1 (one) full letter grade reduction. Assignments more than two weeks late will receive a 2 (two) full letter grade reduction. I will not accept any assignments that are more than three weeks late. No assignment other than the final exam will be accepted after the last day of class.

What You Can Expect in Terms of Feedback:

Graded assignments will have written feedback in Blackboard. I will write a paragraph of feedback for your work in the class at the mid-term that outlines successes, challenges, and goals.

Tenth Amendment:

Anything not covered by this syllabus may be addressed at a later date by the instructor. This syllabus is a working document. Expect revisions.

Disabilities:

The earlier that I receive some notification from you that you need an accommodation the better as it will enable us to arrive at the best solution.

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. If you perceive disability-related barriers in a course, please let the ODS know immediately. ODS welcomes your feedback that will assist in improving the usability and experience for all students. Loyola is committed to offering classes that are inclusive in their design. ODS contact information is as follows:

Marquette Hall, Room 112
504-865-2990 (front office)
ods@loyno.edu

Evacuation Policy:

The university has a boilerplate evacuation policy that is supposed to appear on every syllabus. In the interest of time, you might find it linked here: <http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/syllabus-template-policy-undergraduate-and-non-law-graduate-courses>

We can debate the utility of the university's 10 evacuation points, but below are the non-debatable demands for this class:

- 1) Make sure you can get on Blackboard for this class.
- 2) Check your university email as frequently as possible
- 3) Know that a long evacuation or unpredictably long power outage will result in my invoking the Tenth Amendment (above) designed to enable us to complete our coursework as best as possible.

Workflow:

As an online class, much of the reading and other material for this course might be completed on your own time as best fits your schedule. Please consider three factors, however, when planning out your time:

1. Make sure that you have completed all of the work on the schedule that appears on the calendar before our discussion session period begins, whether synchronous or using the textual comments. This will enable us to fully discuss the material in question and lead to an overall more productive time for everyone.
2. Consider reading and viewing the materials in the order presented on the syllabus. I have arranged them in this order for a reason.
3. Try to space out your work as closely to the calendar as possible. Putting things off for too long will not allow you enough time to keep up. Remember, this is a 16-week course stuffed into 8 weeks. This requires discipline on everybody's part.

Week 1/Sequence 1: Savage Wars of Conquest and Annihilation: Europeans, Colonists, and Indians.

Objectives: Exploring how the conquest of British North America, interaction and warfare with Native Americans, and the struggle for empire over the French planted the seed of American military philosophy.

Podcast 1: The conquest of Colonial America and racialized wars of annihilation.

Demos, "The Deerfield Massacre," *American Heritage*, 1993.

This is a brief popular article that introduces you to the Deerfield Massacre of 1704 and the key historical questions that surround it. Demos is professor emeritus at Yale University and wrote *The Unredeemed Captive* about the Deerfield Raid and its consequences. This book won the Francis Parkman prize in 1995.

Discussion session 1: Introduction to class and discussion of readings.

Keegan, Chapter 2: "The Forts of New France," 65-133. (chapter)

This chapter is a sprawling overview of what Americans call "The French and Indian War," culminating in the dramatic victory of Wolfe over Montcalm at Quebec City, a battle that effectively eliminated France from political influence in North America. Keegan was one of the best known military historians of his generation and taught for many years at the British Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Image: Benjamin West, *The Death of Wolfe* (1770)

Slotkin, "Introduction: The Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History," from *Gunfighter Nation*, 1-28. (chapter)

I am using the work of Richard Slotkin to bolster our theoretical approach to understanding the use of military force and socio-political violence in American culture, particularly in the ways that one might ground it in the nation's westward expansion. *Gunfighter Nation* is the third volume in

a trilogy on this theme by the author, who teaches English and American Studies at Wesleyan Univ.

Week 2/Sequence 2: A Civilian Nation Founded in Military Revolution.

Objectives: This week encourages us to consider the relationship between the use of military force and how we define the United States as a republic in terms of citizenship, civic duty, and civilian control.

Discussion Session 2: Discuss previous readings and film and introduce new material.

Podcast 2: Defining the military's role in a representative democracy during the age of Washington.

Keegan, Chapter 3, "The Fort at Yorktown," 135-186. (chapter)

A sprawling chapter that offers an overall narrative of the American Revolution but places emphasis on the final year of the war and the events that led to British defeat at Yorktown.

Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d'Etat," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1970. (journal article)

This article explores an event that tested the premise of a military that functions at the behest of a civilian representative republic. Richard H. Kohn is professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and one of the nation's leading experts on the relationship between military leadership and political vision during the Revolutionary era.

Image: Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851)

Drums along the Mohawk (1939).

John Ford's classic was one of the films of 1939, long considered the "greatest year" in American cinematic history. While technically about the American Revolution, it also deals with the war on the western frontier and engages many of the themes explored in Slotkin. As a fairly "straightforward" film, it offers up a good opportunity for you get your feet wet in film analysis using the guidelines set out in the appendix of this syllabus.

Week 3/Sequence 3: War, National Identity, and Expansionism in Antebellum America.

Objectives: This sequence explores how the military experience of the early national and antebellum periods helped define national institutions and create a civic mythology that remains with us today, particularly with regard to the tension between patriotism as expressed through military aggression or anti-war passivism.

Discussion session 3: discuss previous film and reading material, and to preview new material.

Podcast 3: Defining the adolescent republic through military prowess at home and abroad.

Smith, "Fighting a War on Terror or, "Our Country, Right or Wrong!" in *Reviews in American History*, 2007. (review essay)

A review essay of Robert Allison's 2006 biography of early American naval hero Stephen Decatur that not only serves as a good synopsis of Decatur's career but also places it into context with key historical themes. Gene Allen Smith teaches at Texas Christian University and has written extensively about the early national and War of 1812 eras.

Swain, "Every Second Counts: The Decatur-Barron Duel of 1820," in *Boundary Stones*, 2013. (website)

This is a brief, popular article written about Decatur's fatal duel and adds more detail and personality to the Smith piece. Claudia Swain is a journalist who writes historical vignettes for WETA in Washington, D.C.

Image: Dennis Malone Carter, *Decatur Boarding the Tripolitan Gunboat* (1878).

Jensen, "Battle of Horseshoe Bend," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*.

A brief overview of Andrew Jackson's victory at Horseshoe Bend written by Ove Jensen, Chief Interpretive Officer at the Horseshoe Bend Military Park.

Cummings and Gebhard, "Treaties and Memorials: Interpreting Horseshoe Bend National Military Park," in *The Public Historian*, 1996. (journal article)

This essay explores how we choose to interpret historical sites that engage significant political figures and racial reappraisal. Mary-Ellen Cummings formerly taught English at Auburn University and A. Caroline Gebhard teaches history at Tuskegee University in Alabama.

Podcast 4: A peek into the future: The war with Mexico 1846-1848.

Carney, "The Occupation of Mexico, May 1846-July 1848," US Army, Center for Military History. (chapter)

This chapter covers in concise format the United States' war with Mexico and pays special attention as to the problems that the US Army confronted once it had begun to win military victories in Mexico. Stephen A. Carney is a staff historian at the US Army's History Center.

Week 4/Sequence 4: Soldiering, Political Ideology, and Nation Building in the Civil War

Objectives: This week is devoted to exploring the defining nature of the nation's first "big" war, the American Civil War.

Discussion session 4: Materials in sequence 3 and a look toward discussing the Civil War.

Podcast 5: Redefining the nation through war.

+ Understanding the military movements of the Civil War in 30 minutes : Civil War Trust animated movie of the entire Civil War

Keegan, Chapter 4: "Fortifying the Confederacy," 187-247.

An exploration that focuses mostly the Northern Virginia theater of war and the efforts (failed) of the Union to conquer Richmond.

McPherson, *What They Fought For: 1861-1865*

This short volume comes out of McPherson's Walter Lynwood Fleming Lecture Series, hosted annually at LSU. It explores the motivations of soldiers both Union and Confederate, including how personal, moral, and ideological values shaped their actions. This shorter version is the preview of the full book, the award-winning *For Cause and Comrades*. McPherson is professor emeritus of history at Princeton University and is easily the best-known Civil War scholar of his generation.

Cold Mountain (2003)

There are a number of movies out there on the Civil War, but I always seem to come back to this adaptation of the novel of the same name by Charles Frazier. Most Civil War films, with the exception of the recent *Free State of Jones* (2016), are sympathetic to old neo-Confederate conceptions of the conflict. *Cold Mountain* is not, yet is nuanced and sympathetic in its portrayal of the South, particularly its home front. A film worth considering for the ways that it breaks with convention.

Discussion Session 5: discussion of Civil War materials

Midterm Exam prompts issued.

Week 5/Sequence 5: American Empire Ascendant, 1865-1914.

Objectives: We will consider how new conceptions of modernism in the late 19th century played out in the conquest of the American West and the Philippine Insurrection, particularly in terms of the implementation of rapidly advancing technology, pseudo-scientific racial ideologies, and America's bid for empire on the global stage.

Podcast 6: Technology and the Progressive mindset in American military conquest

Special note on readings: This is a reading-heavy week. Please stay on top of it. Next week is a light week.

Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*: 29-124

Chapter 1: The Winning of the West: Theodore Roosevelt's Frontier Thesis, 1880-1900.

Chapter 2: The White City and the Wild West: Buffalo Bill and the Mythic Space of American History, 1880-1917.

Chapter 3: Mob, Tribe, and Regiment: Modernization as Militarization, 1883-1902.

These three chapters are not the easiest thing you will read in college, but they are terribly important for understanding late 19th and most of 20th century America, particularly with regard to its attitude toward military entanglements in foreign lands, military service, and the use of organized violence. Your instructor considers it one of the top ten most insightful works of history on the time period.

Keegan, Chapter 5, Forts on the Plains.

Keegan places some narrative context for the theoretical framework provided by Slotkin.

Discussion Session 6: Understanding the war for the West as essential to American ideology of war.

Week 6/Sequence 6: Life in America during the Great War: Safe for Democracy?

Objectives: This week builds on the readings of the previous sequence and leads us to the grand climax of late 19th and 20th century modernistic thinking and the World-changing cataclysm of the First World War.

Podcast 7: World War I and the emergence of Modern War.

Du Bois, "Close Ranks," *Chicago Defender*, 1917.

This brief editorial by noted intellectual and African American thought leader W.E.B. Du Bois is one of his most controversial and difficult to plumb.

Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*, Chapters 14 – 17 (p. 156 -224)

William Alexander Percy, son of Senator LeRoy Percy and uncle of novelist Walker Percy was a Catholic, Mississippi Delta elite, man of letters, and an unabashed devotee of the cultural and social worldview destroyed by the First World War. The United States has few memoirists of World War I to rival the great British and German authors like Graves, Sassoon, and Junger, but Percy comes pretty close in this long excerpt from his 1941 classic. This should be read as a literary and primary historical source, one that you will need to interpret in historical context.

Discussion Session 7: The collision of technology and blood in the Great War

Our World War, Episode 1: "The First Day," (2014) BBC

While not depicting Americans in the First World War (there are very few worthwhile cinematic depictions of the American experience in the First World War, this hour-long episode conveys a great deal about what happens when the technologically ascendant West turns its weaponry on itself.

Week 7/Sequence 7: World War II: Heroism and Candor

Objectives: While we don't spend a great deal of time on the military complexities of World War 2, the military and social implications of the conflict were enormous for the United States, and we will spend our time looking at the way that the war shaped the nation and its people.

Podcast 8: The Greatest Generation and The Complexities of Just War

Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade*.

Paul Fussell was a World War II veteran of the European theater and one of the nation's foremost scholars on both World War I and World War II. This work is a good balance of the skepticism and clarity that he felt both as a soldier and a scholar writing about the 1940s.

Why We Fight Series, "December 7th," by John Ford.

This is a propaganda film made by the U.S. State Department. Part of the famous "Why We Fight" series, the government hired big name filmmakers to produce these pieces to be shown to soldiers and civilians in order to sustain support for the war effort. This installment by John

Ford (and assisted heavily by William Wyler) is one of the most famous of the bunch. Consider the intersection of racialized portrayals and democratic ideology used in this piece.

Best Years of our Lives (1947)

In addition to being one of the best movies about World War II and its impact upon America ever made, this William Wyler is simply an excellent film in general.

Sequence 8: Wars Hot and Cold Since World War II

Objectives: The United States emerged from World War 2 as a nuclear superpower a status that has governed in some way its relationship with the rest of the world ever since. We will look at this dynamic in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well as its 18th and 19th century roots.

Discussion session 8: Wrapping up World War II and previewing the Cold War and beyond.

Podcast 9: Containment and proxy wars or just more of the same?

Americanization of Emily (1964)

Starring a young James Garner and Julie Andrews, this film is a real treat to watch. Ostensibly it is about World War II, but it is a 1960s reflection upon the rhetoric of the World War II generation during the Cold War. It is a comedy with biting satire.

Discussion session 9: Semester recap

Final exam prompts issued

Appendix: Guide to writing about films:

The point of producing an analysis of the films we watch is to give you an opportunity to apply what you are learning in our readings, podcasts, and discussions to a work of popular culture. Rightly or wrongly, cinema does so much to shape the public understanding of history. Indeed, there is perhaps even more to learn when a film perpetuates a mythology or deviates from accepted historical narratives, for the story they tell reveals much about the way the filmmaker and his or her audience understands the past. Films are a powerful weapon in shaping a nation's self conception of its history.

One thing to consider from a technical standpoint when watching films is that they are broken down into scenes or "sequences." Each sequence – whether it is action, reflective, or predominantly dialogue, is trying to make a point. Sometimes through the failure of the screenwriter, director or, cast, the point gets lost. Sometimes a scene exists for mere comic relief. But more often than not in a drama, a scene or sequence is there for a specific purpose, usually to impart meaning or further the plot. It can be overwhelming to analyze a movie in its entirety, so it makes sense for you to begin analyzing the film first by trying to digest what the director and screenwriter are trying to accomplish in each scene. Most films have a key scene or series of key scenes upon which the overall plot narrative pivots. You should be able to identify

these sequences. Often the deeper message of the film is not placed in the key plot developments, but instead appears alternately in dialogue that may be less pivotal to the plot but is crucial to the film's overall meaning. Each film will have a series of key moments that, just like plot pivot points, make up the movie's essential meaning. These scenes are often dialogue but not always. In this course, you need to pay attention to the elements of a film that impart meaning. A film's overall plot is substantially less important when making your analysis.

Apply the analytical framework engaged by your readings to the following five areas:

1. Who are the protagonists and what are his/her/their overarching goals or motivations? Consider that these goals may be stated or unstated and that you may be able to rank them in order of importance.
2. Who is (are) the enemy(ies)? How does their portrayal speak to the literature that we have read for class thus far? Be sure to consider that the enemy can take many different forms, including otherwise "allies" who serve as a foil to the protagonist(s).
3. What portrayals of political ideology do we find in this film? Be sure to consider core political ideologies such as civic virtue/duty (what we might call republican values), democracy, and conceptions of "progress" or "civilization."
4. What portrayals of heroism or masculinity do we find in the film? How do portrayals of heroism convey the core message of the film or social constructions of manhood? Do women embody warlike "masculine" qualities in this film? Has the concept of heroism been gendered?
5. Consider the film in the historical context of its making. What message about historical memory does the film attempt to make?