

History 241
War in the Modern World II
1945 to Present
(CRN 33072)

Spring 2022
McKenzie 129
Monday, Wednesday 2–3:20

Professor Alex Dracobly
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Dracobly Office: McKenzie 329

(To get there from main entrance of MCK, take staircase on immediate left up one floor, exit left, go right down the hall until it opens out a second time. My office is there on the left)

Office phone: none; e-mail: dracobly@uoregon.edu

Office hours: Thurs. 2-3; Friday 10-12; anytime directly after class or by appointment (I'm on campus every day)

Graduate Teaching Fellows

The class will be divided in two and each GE will be grading one half of the class (and I'll be pitching in a bit in a random and unpredictable way).

We are lucky to have two very experienced GEs this term:

Emily Cole: ecole3@uoregon.edu
Olivia Wing: owing@uoregon.edu

Emily and Olivia will not be holding formal office hours.
If you wish to meet with your grader, contact them via email.

Topic of this course

This course is an introduction to the history of war since 1945. The main focus of the course is changes in the nature and conduct of war in the context of social, economic, political and technological change. The course thus continues the main themes developed in HIST 240 (War in the Modern World, I), though HIST 240 is not required to take HIST 241.

Much more than in HIST 240, however, a focus on recent trends in the nature and conduct war leads to the point where history and strategic studies converge. A central premise of this class is that the development of a coherent security strategy requires an understanding and recognition of recent trends in war. In other words, answers to the security issues facing the U.S. and the world are intimately bound up with the question of what war *is* in the contemporary world: its nature,

its objects, and its main characteristics. Even if historians are by nature wary of predicting the future, an underlying premise of the course is that one way of imagining what war might look like in the near future is by looking at the wars of the last several decades, which is to say, by studying the history of recent wars.

We will start the term in the aftermath of World War II and several of the national and regional conflicts in Asia that were left unresolved with the defeat of Germany and Japan in 1945. We will look at those wars both in the context of the Cold War and as part of the broader processes of decolonization and national liberation in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the last third of the course, we will turn to "war in the very modern world" using the example of the wars in Afghanistan to think about military developments and war from the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s to the recent Global War on Terror. We will conclude with some thoughts on what the future of war might hold but since we have a new war that is likely to still be going we will focus our attentions on the current war in Ukraine and what that suggests about the future (or not) of war.

Learning objectives: what I expect you to get out of this class

1. An understanding of both the main trends in the conduct and nature of war from the end of World War II to the present *and* the different ways that we can account for those changes. War has been changing over the last half century. What is the nature of those changes and how might we account for them?
2. A sense of some of the major concepts, problems and themes common to military history and strategic studies as these are practiced today. This course will introduce you to some of the conceptual language specific to military history and strategic thought; it will also expose you to several of the exemplary issues that that strategists and military historians are grappling with today.
3. Practice and familiarity with several of the basic methodological moves that historians commonly employ. In particular, we will be comparing different interpretive explanatory frameworks that historians have used, either to explain specific events (such as the outcome of the Chinese Civil War: why did the Communists win?), or to explain general trends. Especially toward the end of the term we will be looking at why these interpretative frameworks matter and what their strategic implications might be.

Grades and assignments

Grades for this course will be calculated on the basis of the following distributions:

Quizzes: 25% (seven mostly multiple-choice quizzes)

On-line discussion groups: 20% (two discussions)

Written assignments: 55%

See the posted assignment calendar for a detailed listing (they are only approximately listed below).

All assignments will be accessible at least several days in advance of the due date. There are all set up so that you can enter and reenter as often as you like before submitting the assignment (if it remains open when the assignment is scheduled to close, Canvas will automatically submit what you have). With the exception of the first quiz on Rupert Smith (which also has a short written component), the multiple choice quizzes are all set up to allow you to take the quiz twice.

Late submissions of written assignments are accepted with a late-penalty: Between two days and one week late: 20% of the value of the assignment. In other words, there is a 48-hour grace period for all written submission **except the discussion board**.

The reason for that exception is for discussion boards to work, you need to post in a timely fashion: otherwise your discussion board partners cannot respond to your posts. Note that both discussion board assignments are designed to generate ideas for the next essay topic.

If you want to submit something more than one week late: you need to contact me, if only to reopen the submission portal (we will not accept submissions via email).

If you find yourself falling behind, you should talk to me. The sooner the better.

Plagiarism, sharing, and cooperation

This course will require a lot of written work. I encourage collaboration but you may not **plagiarize** others' work. **Plagiarism** is "the act of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own." For the purposes of this class, greater emphasis is placed on "work" (as in "written work") than ideas: when submitting written work, make sure that it is your writing, even if you've borrowed many of the ideas. Especially if you are using ideas or arguments that are specific to particular source, you should give credit where credit is due. Thus, if you are using an argument that you are drawing primarily from one of our readings, you should make that explicit. When we get to our first quizzes, I'll post some further guidelines.

For tips on avoiding plagiarism, see:

<https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/plagiarism>

Written work will be evaluated according to the general grading standards posted at

<https://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/grading-policy/>

Assigned readings

All course readings can be found in the “Modules” section of the course Canvas: look for the page that corresponds to a given day or topic.

Schedule of topics and readings

Readings are listed under the day on which they will be discussed in class. In what follows, anything after “Read” is required; anything listed after “Suggested” or “Also” is optional.

March 28: Introduction: "War no longer exists." Or the problem of war since WWII

Read: General Rupert Smith (Ret.), The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World (2005), 1-8 (first part of the "Introduction"). We'll be focusing on what General Rupert Smith (Ret.) means when he says that “war no longer exists.”

>>>>> **Note that we have an early, very short assignment on Smith due on March 31.**

March 30: Guerrilla warfare according to Mao

First, you may want to take a look at the introductory page on “The Chinese Civil War.”

For class, read excerpts from Mao Tse-Tung, Guerrilla Warfare (Yu Chi Chan), pts. 1 and 2 (“What Is Guerrilla Warfare?” and “The Relations of Guerrilla Hostilities to Regular Operations”); and selected documents from Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Harper, 1970), pages 333, 341-42, 367-72.

>>>>> **Quiz on China, WWII, and Mao’s strategic concept**

April 4: The Chinese Civil War

Read: Chapters 12 and 13 of Hans van de Ven, China at War; and we’re heading in the direction of Harold Tanner, Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China, chapters 8-11.

In class, we'll watch a segment of the first part of the movie, “The Assembly,” which opens in China in 1948. This movie is directly connected to one of the topics for the discussion board.

>>>>> **First discussion board: The Assembly: representing battle in the Chinese Civil War**

April 6: The war in Manchuria

Read: you really should have now read Harold Tanner, Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China, chapters 8-11.

April 11: What's in a name: Chinese Civil War versus Chinese Revolution; or the Victory of the Chinese Communists?

Read: Edward L. Dreyer, "Conclusion," from China at War, 1901-1949, pages 350-361.

For those of you who cannot get enough: "The Assembly" provides a bridge to the Korean War (the hero ends up serving in Korea later in the war), if you want to continue and watch the entire film.

Niu Jun, "The Birth of the People's Republic of China and the Road to the Korean War," in The Cambridge History of the Cold War, vol. 1 (2010), 221-243, explains the connection (this reading can be found in the "Korean War" page).

>>>>> **Interpretive essay on Chinese Civil War**

April 13: The Korean War

Read: "The Korean War, 1950-1953," chapter 8 in Richard W. Stewart, ed., American Military History (2009), volume II (available as a download via the link on Canvas).

>>>> **Quiz on the Korean War**

April 18: Korea as a limited war

Read: William Stueck, "Why the War Did Not Expand beyond Korea, November 1950 - July 1951," chapter 5 in Rethinking the Korean War (2002), 118-42.

April 20: Nuclear strategy, military power and the Cold War

Read: Michael Howard, "The Classical Strategists," in Studies in War and Peace, 154-183; and Bernard Brodie, "War in the Atomic Age," from Gerard Chaliand, The Art of War in World History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 991-1003.

Note that the Howard piece is a work of "secondary" literature (basically, a short history of nuclear strategic thought); while the second piece (the Brodie) is a primary source document (an example of early nuclear strategic thinking).

>>>> Quiz on nuclear strategy (which we'll work on in class)

April 25: France in Indo-China

Read: Daniel Moran, "Southeast Asia," in Wars of National Liberation, ch. 3, pages 84-107; Bernard Fall, Vietnam Witness 1953-66 (New York: Praeger, 1966), chs. 1 and 3, pages 15-21 and 30-40; and Bernard Fall, Street without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-54 (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1961), 137-58.

April 27: The U.S. in Vietnam

Read: George Herring, "The Vietnam War, 1961-1975: Revolutionary and Conventional War in an Era of Limited War" (from Doughty, Warfare in the Western World, vol. 2); and two documents (3.2 and 3.6 from Michael H. Hunt, ed., A Vietnam War Reader): Communist Party Central Committee, resolution 9, on strategy, Dec. 1963; and McGeorge Bundy, memo to President Johnson, Dec. 1963.

May 2: Explaining the U.S. failure in Vietnam

Read: Peter M. Dunn, "The American Army: the Vietnam War, 1965-1973," in Ian F. W. Beckett and John Pimlott, eds., Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 77-111.

>>>>> Vietnam Wars essays

May 4: Afghanistan: introduction to our last major unit

Read: Thomas Barfield, Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History (2010), pages 166-72. Also, watch the videos in the "Afghanistan: introduction" page on the Canvas site, and then move onto the following page for the links to the readings.

May 9: The Saur Revolution and Soviet intervention

Read: Bruce Riedel, What We Won, pages 3-19. And watch the documentary, “Afghanistan 1979: The War That Changed the World.” (You can find a link on the “Afghanistan: The Saur Revolution ...” page on the Canvas site).

Also read for class (we will talk about it in class): the transcript of the March 17, 1979 Politburo discussion of the situation in Afghanistan (see the same Canvas page for the link).

>>>> Second discussion board on the Soviet intervention

May 11: Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the mujahideen resistance

Read: selections from Bruce Riedel, What We Won (2014); Barnett Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan; Gregory Feifer, The Great Gamble; Thomas Barfield, Afghanistan; and then the analysis of an ambush discussed on one of the videos.

>>>> for details and links see the two pages on Canvas, “Afghanistan: the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the resistance” and “Afghanistan: the end of the Soviet occupation and civil conflict.”

May 16: The Afghan Civil War of the 1990s

Read: Barfield, Afghanistan, 185-206 (or 242-270 in the print edition).

May 18: 9/11 and U.S. occupation of Afghanistan

Read: Anand Gopal, No Good Men Among the Living (2014), pages 6-49; and to understand the international military context, at least as this was understood in some circles, that led to heightened expectations after the rapid defeat of the Taliban, see the videos in the Canvas page, “Afghanistan in context: the Persian Gulf War ...”

May 23: U.S. military operations and politics in Afghanistan

Read: Barfield, Afghanistan, 207-53 (or 272-336 in the print edition); the interview with Lieutenant General David Barno; Gopal, No Good Men, ch. 5; and Malkasian, War Comes to Garmser, ch. 8 and the conclusion.

>>> I’ve split these materials into two pages, the first devoted to “the U.S. war in Afghanistan,” and the second to “U.S. military operations.”

May 25: Are the Afghan Wars over? And lessons learned?

Read: see the Canvas course page on “The war today.” This page is now dated but I think I’m going to leave it because it concerns the debate that was taking place the last time I taught this course on a potential U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan (that was fall 2020: we took a look at the issue shortly after President Trump lost the election but much of the material was generated during that fall campaign).

May 30: Memorial Day (no class)

But you are welcome to watch the Memorial Day/Veterans Day video on the Canvas site.

June 1: The war in Ukraine and conclusions

Readings TBA: depending on events ... but see the concluding video in the “Conclusion” page

Final essays due on Wednesday, June 8 at 11:59 pm.