POSTGRADUATE MODULE HANDBOOK
Department of Politics, Birkbeck, University of London

WAR, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Dr Antoine Bousquet
a.bousquet@bbk.ac.uk
Introduction

Module Aims and Objectives

War, Politics and Society aims to provide students with an advanced understanding of the role of war in the modern world. Drawing on a wide range of social sciences and historiographical sources, its focus will be on the complex interplay between national, international and global political and social relations and the theories and practices of warfare since the inception of the modern era and the ‘military revolution’ of the sixteenth century. The module will notably examine the role of war in the emergence and development of the nation-state, the industrialisation and modernisation of societies and their uses of science and technology, changing cultural attitudes to the use of armed force and martial values, and the shaping of historical consciousness and collective memory. Among the contemporary issues addressed are the ‘war on terror’, weapons of mass destruction, genocide, humanitarian intervention, and war in the global South.

Students completing the module will:

- be able to evaluate and critically apply the central literatures, concepts, theories and methods used in the study of the relations between war, politics and society;
- demonstrate balanced, substantive knowledge of the central debates within war studies;
- be capable of historically informed, critical analysis of current political and strategic debates concerning the use of armed force;
- be able to obtain and analyse relevant information on armed forces and armed conflict from a wide array of governmental, non-governmental, military and media sources;
- have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written and oral presentation and communication.

Background Reading

There is no textbook for this module and a wide range of texts will be discussed throughout the year. Nevertheless there are several general texts which provide both useful historical background and valuable overviews of many of the themes and issues that will be covered in the module. While not strictly indispensable, students would be well-advised to consult some of them and consider acquiring paperback copies for future reference.

Paul Hirst’s War and Power in the 21st Century provides an excellent introduction to many of the themes discussed in the module and, as a brief and synthetic work, would be recommended as the first port of call for students. While it very much approaches the subject from a strictly sociological perspective, Sinisa Malesevic’s The Sociology of War and Violence is nevertheless an excellent textbook that can be called upon for many of the module’s sessions. Lawrence Freedman’s War is an edited volume with contributions covering a variety of relevant topics, from strategy and total war to ethical questions, the experience of war, and conflict in the developing world. John
Keegan’s *A History of Warfare* offers a highly readable account of war throughout world history with particular attention paid to its cultural dimension. William McNeill’s *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* does pretty much what it says on the tin, differing from Keegan in that the central focus is wider social change and war’s role within it. Finally, Michael Howard, *Clausewitz* is a short but insightful introduction to the thought of the most pre-eminent philosopher of war and whose conceptual framework will be a useful point of reference throughout the module.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction: Studying War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clausewitz: Philosopher of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. War and the Rise of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. War, Modernity and the Meaning of History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Citizens in Arms: Civil-Military Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Way of the Warrior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mind and Body in War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. War and Genocide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Nuclear Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Humanising War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Terrorism and the Global War on Terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Globalisation and the “New Wars”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Representations of War: Experience, Memory and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Revision Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading List

NB: Asterisks (*) denote readings of particular interest/relevance

1. Introduction: Studying War

Why study war? What does war tell us about the societies that wage them? How is the history of armed conflict intertwined with wider social and political change?


Howard, Michael, War in European History (London: Oxford University Press, 1976)


2. Clausewitz: Philosopher of War

Almost two hundred years after his death, Carl von Clausewitz continues to enjoy a unique reputation as a theorist of war. But are Clausewitz’s writings mainly of historical interest in providing an insight into a bygone era or do they really still tell us something about contemporary forms of war? Are such concepts as the trinity of war, friction and the fog of war still relevant or merely reflective of the particular setting in which they were devised?

Essential Reading


Howard, Michael, Clausewitz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) - now part of the “Very Short Introductions” series


Further Reading


Rasmussen, Mikel, V., *The Acme of Skill: Clausewitz, Sun Tzu and the Revolutions in Military Affairs*, (Copenhagen: Dupi, 2001)


Reid, Julian, “Foucault on Clausewitz: Conceptualizing the Relationship between War and Power” *Alternatives* (vol.28, no.1, 2003)


Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (any number of editions)


3. War and the Rise of the State

What has been the role of war in the ascendancy of the nation-state as the dominant political unit of the modern world? What is the relationship between the domestic monopolisation of violence and the intensification of warfare? What is the place of the emergent capitalist mode of production in the conjoined histories of state and war?

**Essential Reading**

**Any two of these three:**


Further Reading


4. War, Modernity and the Meaning of History

With the Enlightenment and the achievements of the Scientific Revolution, a powerful belief in progress and historical destiny took hold of the modern mind. What was the role attributed to war and revolution in fulfilling the grand narratives being read into the course of history? How did competing nationalisms and political ideologies clash to assert their respective interpretations or stakes in the meaning of history? Did the unwinding of the Cold War effectively bring ‘History’ to an end?

Essential Reading

Fukuyama, Francis, “The End of History” The National Interest (Summer 1989)

Further Reading

*Coker, Christopher, War and the 20th Century: The Impact of War on the Modern Consciousness (London: Brassey’s, 1994) – chapters 2, 4, 5
Fukuyama, Francis, “Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle” (The National Interest, Summer 1999)
Fukuyama, Francis, “Has History Started Again?” Policy (Winter 2002)
*Gray, John, Al Qaeda and what it means to be Modern (London: Faber, 2003)
5. Citizens in Arms: Civil-Military Relations

What is the historical relation between citizenship and military service? Why and to what effect did Western societies adopt universal conscription before abandoning it in the last few decades? Do we now live in post-military societies in which the military’s influence on the rest of society is waning? Or do the increasingly blurred boundaries between military and civilian spheres mask a new militarisation of society?

Essential Reading


Further Reading

Elshtain, Jean Bethke, Women and War, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995
Forster, Anthony, Armed Forces and Society in Europe (Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave, 2006)
Hanson, Victor Davis, Why the West Has Won: Carnage and Culture from Salamis to Vietnam (Faber & Faber, 2002)
Mershon, Sherie & Schlossman, Steve, Foxholes & Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces (Baltimore, MD & London: Johns Hopkins University, 1998)

6. The Way of the Warrior

An archetypal figure throughout the ages, what does the warrior tell us about the experience of battle? Why does the warrior fight? Can one speak of an existential commitment to combat as a trans-historical feature of war in excess of the political uses to which armed conflict is put? Who are the warriors in contemporary military organisations and are they still needed?

Essential Reading


Further Reading

Bowden, Mark, Black Hawk Down (London: Corgi, 2000)
Brooks, Geoffrey, Sniper on the Eastern Front (Leo Cooper, 2005)
Clastres, Pierre, Archeology of Violence (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010) – chapter 12
*Coker, Christopher, Waging War without Warriors (Lynne Rienner, 2002) – chapter 1, 2, 3 & 4
*Coker, Christopher, The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror (London: Routledge, 2007) – chapter 2, 5 & 6


Jünger, Ernst, *Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1996)


Leebaert, Derek, *To Dare and to Conquer: Special Operations and the Destiny of Nations, from Achilles to Al-Qaeda* (New York, NY & Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 2006)


Murphy, Audie, *To Hell and Back* (Saint Martin's Press, 2002)

Olsthoorn, Peter, “Honor as a Motive for Making Sacrifices” *Journal of Military Ethics* Vol. 4, No. 3 (2005)


Ricks, Thomas E., *Making the Corps* (New York; Scribner, 1997)


**Novels:**

Webb, James, *Fields of Fire* (Bantam, 2001)


**Films:**


*Armadillo*, Janus Metz Pedersen (2010)

*Black Hawk Down*, Ridley Scott (2001)

*Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola (1979)

*The Hurt Locker*, Kathryn Bigelow (2009)

*Jarhead*, Sam Mendes (2005)

*Patton*, Franklin J. Schaffner (1970)

**A TV series:**

*Generation Kill* (2008)
7. Mind and Body in War

War is a social activity in which minds and bodies are produced as much as they are destroyed. What are the roles of discipline, combat motivation, and group solidarity in maintaining military organisation under the stress of battle? Is the military a laboratory for the emergence of a wider disciplinary power in modern societies? In what ways are the histories of medicine and psychiatry intertwined with that of war?

Essential Reading

Foucault, Michel, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) – Part III, chapter 1: Docile Bodies

Further Reading

Blackmore, Tim, War X: Human Extensions in Battlespace (University of Toronto Press, 2005)
*Cooter, Roger, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (eds.), War, Medicine and Modernity (Stroud: Sutton, 1998) – Introduction
Cooter, Roger, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (eds.), Medicine and Modern Warfare (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999)
Jones, Edgar & Simon Wessely, Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War (Hove: Psychology Press, 2005)
Ricks, Thomas E., Making the Corps (New York: Scribner, 1997)
Rostker, Bernard, Providing for the Casualties of War (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2013)
Shils, Edward and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II” Public Opinion Quarterly 12 (1948)
War and Medicine (Black Dog Publishing, 2008)

An extended bibliography on war and medicine: http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/hsmt/courses_reading/advanced_papers/biblios/medicine_warfare_bib.htm

VACATION

8. War and Genocide

What is the relationship between war and genocide? Is genocide an irrational throwback to pre-modern times or is there something specifically modern about the organised killing of the Holocaust?

Essential Reading


Further Reading


*Bauman, Zygmunt, Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989) – esp. chapter 1


A film:
Night and Fog, Alain Resnais (1955)

9. Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Nuclear Age

What has been the significance of the introduction of nuclear weapons for the conduct of war? Have they made armed conflict more or less likely? Are we entering a new age of nuclear proliferation in which the Cold War strategy of deterrence no longer holds?

**Essential Reading**


**Further Reading**

Blight, James & Lang, Janet, The Fog of War (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2005) – chapter 2

Boyer, Paul, By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985)

Brodie, Bernard, Strategy in the Missile Age (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1959)


Gusterson, Hugh, People of the Bomb: Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex (Minneapolis, MN & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)

Laqueur, Walter, “Postmodern Terrorism: New Rules for an Old Game” Foreign Affairs Vol.75 No.5 (September/October 1996)


*Sagan, Scott D. & Waltz, Kenneth N., The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate
(New York: W.W. Norton, 1995)


Schelling, Thomas, Arms and Influence (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008)

Smith, P.D., Doomsday Men: The Real Dr Strangelove and the Dream of the Superweapon (Allen Lane, 2007)

Sprinzak, Ehud, “The Great Superterrorism Scare” Foreign Policy No.112 (Fall 1998)

Thompson, Nicholas, “Inside the Apocalyptic Soviet Doomsday Machine” Wired 17.10 (2009)


*Windsor, Philip (edited by Berdal, Mats & Economides, Spyros), Strategic Thinking: An Introduction and Farewell (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002)

Wohlstetter, Albert, “The Delicate Balance of Terror” (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1958)


Two films:
Atomic Café, Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty (1982)
Dr Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, Stanley Kubrick (1964)

10. Humanising War

Can war be made more humane for both combatants and civilians? Is the drive for riskless war inherently oxymoronic and self-defeating? Do military interventions in the name of universal human rights mask profound asymmetries in the valuations of life? What are the effects of treating such interventions as forms of international policing?

Essential Reading


Khan, Paul, “War and Sacrifice in Kosovo” Philosophy and Public Policy (Spring/Summer 1999)
Further Reading

Robert, Adam, “NATO’s ‘Humanitarian War’ over Kosovo” *Survival* (Autumn 1999) – an overview of the Kosovo War


*Ignatieff, Michael, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Vintage, 2001)


Kahn, Paul W., “The Paradox of Riskless Warfare” *Philosophy & Public Policy Quarterly* Volume 22, Number 3 (Summer 2002)

*Krauthammer, “The Short, Unhappy Life of Humanitarian War” *National Interest* (Fall 1999)

Luttwak, Edward, “Towards a Post Heroic Warfare”, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 1995) and “Post Heroic Military Policy” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996)

McInnes, Colin, *Spectator-Sport War: the West and Contemporary Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002)
11. Terrorism and the Global War on Terror

What is the purpose and logic of terrorism as a tactic? Are al-Qaeda and the wider jihadist movement best understood as the manifestation of a reactionary backlash to the modern world? Is the “War on Terror” the expression of an epochal clash of civilisations?

Essential Reading


Asad, Talal, On Suicide Bombing (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) – chapter 1

Further Reading


Arquilla, John & Ronfeldt, David (eds.), Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 2001)

Barkawi, Tarak, Globalization and War (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) - chapter 5


*Devji, Faisal, Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst, 2005) - esp. preface and chapter 1


*Gray, John, Al Qaeda and what it means to be Modern* (London: Faber, 2003)


Huntington, Samuel P., “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993)


*Mamdani, Mahmood, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004) – esp. Chap 1


The last decade has seen the rapid emergence of a new weapon system, the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) most commonly referred to as the drone. Among its most controversial uses has been the increasingly normalised practice of targeted killings. What are the implications of drones for established spatial, legal and ethical understandings of armed conflict?

Essential Reading

Gregory, Derek, “From a View to a Kill: Drones and Late Modern War” Theory, Culture & Society Vol. 28 (2011)


Further Reading


DeLanda, Manuel, War in the Age of Intelligent Machines (Zone Books, 1991)


Gregory, Derek, “The Everywhere War” The Geographical Journal Vol. 177 No. 3 (2011)


Mégret, Frédéric, “War and the Vanishing Battlefield” Loyola University Chicago International Law Review (2011)


Other resources:
Dronestagram - http://dronestagram.tumblr.com/
Drone Wars UK - http://dronewars.net/
13. Globalisation and the “New Wars”

Does the era of globalisation herald the advent of “new wars” dominated by warlords, mercenaries and other non-state actors? What is the political economy of war in the developing world? Does the privatisation of military force signal a terminal weakening of the state’s monopoly on violence?

Essential Reading


Required Reading:


*Cramer, Christopher, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries* (London: Hurst & Co, 2006)*


Kaplan, Robert, *The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy* (Vintage, 1997)

*Kalyvas, Stathis N., “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”* *World Politics* 54.1 (2001)


*Shearer, David. “Outsourcing War”* *Foreign Policy* No.112 (Fall 1999)


14. **Representations of War: Experience, Memory and Media**

Wars occupy a special place in national narratives and are powerful constituents of collective identity. But is there an inevitable tension between private memory and collective remembrance? Is there a politics of memory, and if so, what is at stake? What do the representations of war in popular culture tell us about the societies from which they are issued?

**Essential Reading**


**Further Reading**


Der Derian, James, Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network (Boulder, CO, Oxford: Westview, 2001)

*Evans, Martin & Lunn, Ken (eds.), War and Memory in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Berg, 1997) – chapter 8 & 11


Jünger, Ernst, The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front (New York: Howard Fertig, 1996)


Hynes, Samuel, The Soldier’s Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War (Pimlico, 1988)

*Mosse, George, Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars (New York Oxford: Oxford University, 1990)


Weber, Cynthia, Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics and Film (London: Routledge, 2006)

Winter, Jay, Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) – esp. chapter 4
*Young, Marilyn B., “In the Combat Zone” [review of Saving Private Ryan, Pearl Harbor, Black Hawk Down, and We Were Soldiers] Radical History Review Issue 85 (Winter 2003)*

**Novels and Poetry:**
Brian Turner, *Here, Bullet* (Bloodaxe Books, 2007)

**Films:**
*Waltz with Bashir*, Ari Folman (2008)