

SC584-01 – SOCIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF WAR

Ritchie Lowry - Fall 2009

Wednesdays - Noon to 2:30 p.m. – 415 McGuinn

Format & Content of Seminar

☛ This seminar will explore the historical change in, nature and current character of war and the use of military power in contemporary society. Of particular interest will be the proper and improper uses of war and force from both utilitarian and ethical perspectives. Specific topics and issues are listed below. We will also consider ways of addressing the problems of war and militarism in contemporary society, particularly through the social, economic and political empowerment of the average citizen and nonmilitary alternatives to war.

☛ We will begin the semester's first several weeks reading and responding to the shared readings below. In addition, material will be provided in course about the changing nature of warfare and related topics. You should also be generating your own reading and reference list for a term project. During the first week, everyone should select a topic for research and analysis during the semester. Rather than asking seminar participants to write a 30-page term paper by the end of the course, you will be asked to write three shorter, sequential papers during the semester. About a third of the way through the course, the first 10-page, double-spaced paper will be due which discusses the significance and nature of the selected topic. This will be followed by a second paper that analyzes the selected topic. At the end of the semester, a final paper will draw conclusions from each of the first two papers. We will be sharing each of these papers in class with one another in order to get the widest possible input. Since this is a small class that depends upon the widest possible involvement of all, please let me know if you have to miss a meeting for health or other reasons.

Shared Readings (in order of reading)

Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, paperback, Random/Anchor
Louis Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, paperback, Random House
Pratap Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc.: A Profitable Occupation*, paperback, Seven Stories Press

(SC584-01, *Sociological Roots of War* - Lowry - 2009)

Office Hours

Mondays & Fridays, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.,
Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or by appointment
in 422 McGuinn

Examples of Possible Topics for Papers

Alternatives to War
Case Studies
Citizen Action
Civilian Defense
Domestic Programs and Civil Rights in a Period of War
Globalization and War
Modernization Versus Traditionalism & Fundamentalism
Nation Building
Nonviolent Action
Origins of War
Nature of and Responses to Terrorism
Reform of the Military
The Evolution of Just War Theory
The Role of Corporations
The Role of NGOs
The Role of the United Nations and Other International Organizations (World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc.)
Women and War

The daily op-ed articles in newspapers such as *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times* will provide you with examples of the kinds of issues and problems that concern journalists, political analysts, and others in the wake of 9/11. Also take a look at the postings on my office door.

Important Dates (all Wednesdays except as noted)

September 9th - First Meeting; Introduction to course; start reading Hedges (similarities in all wars)

September 16th – Submit titles/description and discuss Term Projects

September 23rd – Discuss Hedges; start reading Richardson (terrorism)

September 30th – More on Similarities

October 7th - First Paper Due; discuss Richardson; start reading Chatterjee (privatization/corporatization of warfare)

October 14th – Discuss First Paper

October 21st - Discuss Chatterjee

October 28th - Differences Between Wars

November 4th - More on Differences

November 11th – Second Paper(s) Due; organizational causes of war

November 18th – Discuss Second Paper

November 25th – No Class; Thanksgiving holiday

December 2nd - Additional Theories About War

December 9th - Last Class, summary

Thursday, December 17th– Last Paper(s) Due

Other References of Interest (in addition to Shared Readings)

Bacevich, Andrew (ed.); *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since WWII* (Columbia University Press, 2007)

Clarke, Richard; *Your Government Failed You* (RAC Enterprises, 2008)

Hillman, James; *A Terrible Love of War* (Penguin Books, 2004)

Janis, Irving L.; *Groupthink* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982)

Lifton, Robert Jay; *Home From The War* (Beacon Press, 1973)

Mills, C. Wright; *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 1956)

Murphy, Cullen; *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America* (Houghton Mifflin 2007)

Schell, Jonathan; *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People* (Metropolitan Books, 2003)

Tzu, Sun; *The Art of War* (Oxford University Press, 1963)

Vagts, Alfred; *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (The Free Press, 1967)

Wright, Quincy; *A Study of War* (University of Chicago Press, 1942)

(SC584-01, Sociological Roots of War - Lowry - 2009)

Ways to Contact Me with Questions, Comments, Etc.

✉ The best e-mail address to use is **GOODMONEY1@aol.com** with copies to **lowry@bc.edu**

✉ Also, visit my **GOOD MONEY Home Pages for Socially & Environmentally Concerned Investors, Consumers and Businesspeople** on the World Wide Web @ **http://www.goodmoney.com**

✉ I also have a **Personal Home Page** through the B.C. server @ **http://www2.bc.edu/~lowry**

Topics, Concepts & Issues To Be Considered

Social and Cultural Features of War

Changing Nature of Warfare

Causes of War

 Why and How War Is Fought

 Goals, Purposes, Means, Social Organization, Technology

The Problem of Controls

 Objective and Subjective

Character and Acceptance of Warfare

 Nature of War as Human Activity and a Political Act

 Human Support for Warfare

Force vs. Authority

 The Problem of Legitimacy

 Limits of Force

 Alternatives to Force

Macrosociological Roots of War

Role of the Modern State

 The Military-Industrial Complex

 Imperial Presidency and the Higher Immorality

 Role of Major Institutions (Media, Church, Universities, Thinktanks)

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Topics, Concepts & Issues To Be Considered (continued)

War in a Capitalist Economy

Privatization/Corporatization and War
Commodification of Warfare

Microsociological Roots of War

Organizational Causes of War
Expansive Bureaucracies
Decision-Making
Groupthink
When Ends Become Means (Militarism vs. the Military Way)