COURSE DESCRIPTION

Much is written about the causes and outcomes of particular wars, about the successes in war of particular polities, about preventing or at least limiting wars, about the organization and composition of the armies who fight them, about the quality of military leadership, and about the geopolitical consequences of particular victories or losses. But comparatively little attention is paid to the effects that the experience of war has on the people and societies who actually fight them. What is the experience of combat like? What effects does the experience of combat have on the combatants, on their families and fellow citizens, and on the political systems that they represent? This course will explore some of those effects so as better to understand the human experience of war.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students must complete all assigned readings before each class period and be active participants in each class session. The syllabus is designed so that longer readings (denoted by an arrow: ➔) are assigned to follow light reading days, so that students can begin reading them in advance. In addition to class participation, there will be a group research presentation, which will supplement assigned readings at various points throughout the semester, and a final examination, which will be based on the course readings and class discussion.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following are required texts for this course and are available for purchase at the bookstore.


Other supplemental journal articles and book sections are available online. Access to certain websites is available only via a Calvin College internet connection. All news articles will be provided in a course packet distributed on the first day of class, and all movie clips will be shown in class.

COURSE READINGS

Part I: The Experience of Combat

*January 5 – What is the Experience of Combat Like?*


*January 6 – What is the Experience of Combat Like? (cont’d)*


January 7 – Is combat experienced differently now than in previous eras? [Bytwerk Theater]


- Movie Clip: *Gettysburg* (Turner Pictures, 1993)
- Movie Clip: *Platoon* (Orion Pictures, 1986)

January 10 – Is combat experienced differently now than in previous eras? (cont’d)


January 11 – Do particular weapons or tactics have particular impacts on combatants?


http://www.theamericanscholar.org/shock-waves/

January 12 – Do particular weapons or tactics have particular impacts on combatants? (cont’d) [Bytwerk Theater]


- Movie Clip: *Blackhawk Down* (Columbia Pictures, 2001)
- Movie Clip: *Platoon* (Orion Pictures, 1986)
- Movie Clip: *Gunner Palace* (Palm Pictures, 2005)

Part II: The Allure of Combat

January 13 – Why do people and societies engage in warfare?

⇒ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Man, the State, and War*. Read pages 16–41, 80–84, 96–123, and 159–86.


January 14 – Do human beings harbor a deep-seated attraction to organized combat?


January 17 – Do gender or age differences matter?

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. “The Ferocious Few, the Noncombatant Many.” In Women and War, pp. 163–193. [Moodle]


Part III: The Impact of Combat

January 18 – What effects does combat have on combatants and their loved ones?


January 19 – What effects does combat have on combatants and their loved ones? (cont’d)


Movie Clip: The Best Years of Our Lives (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946)

January 20 – What effects does combat have on political and social systems? [Bytwerk Theater]


Panel Discussion (veterans suffering from PTSD and their spouses)
January 21 – What effects does combat have on political and social systems? (cont’d)

   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch3_18.htm
   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch3_22.htm
   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch3_23.htm
   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch3_24.htm
   http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch3_25.htm

   “Germany’s Armed Forces: At Ease.” The Economist, 17 July 2010.

January 24 – What effects does combat have on political and social systems? (cont’d)


   Heffer, Simon. “We Are Still Lost in the Mystery of that War.” The Telegraph, 1 August 2009.

January 25 – FINAL EXAMINATION