Capstone Seminar: War

What is a Capstone? Course Objectives

The Capstone seminar in Political Science is designed to be a culminating experience for students. As majors, you all complete a common set of courses early in your program of study that establishes the foundation of the discipline and its primary concerns while initiating processes of skill building. You then branch off into different subfields (American politics and process, global politics and spaces, politics of ideas) and take a variety of courses with different substantive and skill emphases in the “middle” of the major. The Capstone provides a venue where you will be able (and expected) to draw upon the ideas and skills you have gained thus far to explore a new and overarching topic in Political Science that has relevance to your futures. Capstone seminars provide an integrative experience that substantively allow you to employ insights, ideas from work in different subfields and include intensive writing, independent research, oral presentation, opportunities to apply theories and concepts to new problems and cases, and practice in articulating and defending your own views.

This seminar seeks to use the topic of war to accomplish the Capstone’s goals. Although most of you have grown up in an environment of perpetual U.S. involvement in conflict since 2001 (in Afghanistan, Iraq, elsewhere), war is a relatively rare event in the international system. But its impacts are always a part of international relations. Since the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648 creating the modern nation-state system, there have been as many as 80 years in which no war occurred; however, 75 of the interstate wars that have been fought in that time have resulted in over 30 million battlefield fatalities among combatants and tens of millions of civilian deaths. Put another way, more than 100 states in the international system have never been parties to an interstate war but some have been parties to more than ten since the Congress of Vienna in 1815. As Daniel Geller and J. David Singer note, one paradox of war is that most societies are in continuous preparation for what is ultimately a very rare (or nonexistent) event … but when war occurs, the stakes are enormous, not only for participating nations but for those around them.1

The primary purpose of this seminar is to use and build on the backgrounds, skills and insights you have gained in Political Science up to now to explore how and why the United States and other international actors engage in war, how war has affected societies and how war may be changing with the continued evolution of the international system.

As such, this seminar will examine the political, economic, cultural and personal implications of war in contemporary U.S. society, with international examples offered for comparative purposes. In the process, you will confront multiple perspectives on the nature of contemporary war and conduct independent research throughout the semester on an aspect of war that particularly interests you.

Course Content

It is impossible to even begin comprehensively considering the vast theoretical and substantive literatures on war available to students today; thus, with one significant exception, what we will explore will largely be suggestive of the many different directions you can follow consistent with your individual interests. We will open the course by looking at an increasingly popular contention about war, particularly in the U.S.: that the boundaries and possibilities of war are expanding, to the detriment of functions like diplomacy that have been integral to state security and peace. From there we will delve into an empirical research focus on why nations fight, examining theories of war and testing empirical efforts to better understand the nature and evolution of war in the international system, including the contrary idea that war is becoming less prevalent in the world. This will be accompanied by an exploration of some ethical and normative issues that are raised perennially about war. These early discussions will serve as a backdrop to a later consideration of recent work that notes significant changes in the frequency of wars, the ways wars are fought since the breakup of the bipolar structure that characterized the Cold War international system, and the increasing focus on technology and cyberwar in the present and future.

The one substantive exception to the suggestive survey of issues surrounding war will be a more pointed examination of America’s experience in Vietnam. Arguably, no single set of events has more profoundly affected America’s domestic and international politics in the last sixty years … and yet even as its effects remain far-reaching, knowledge of the conflict itself and specific awareness of its lasting impacts continues to wane. We will look more explicitly at America’s Vietnam experience and its aftermath with an eye both toward better appreciating how it continues to affect America in today’s world and how the nature of that war and its legacy may be influencing the larger patterns of war that have been evident in today’s international system.

Learning Objectives and Skills This Course Will Seek to Improve

This course has several learning outcomes and objectives. Substantively, you will emerge from this course with a deeper understanding of a number of pressing past, current and future concerns in domestic and international politics and, given the integrative intent of the course, that you will be able to apply insights developed by different subfields of political science to these issues, while appreciating the contributions made by other disciplines as well. You will also have a more sophisticated and rigorous appreciation for “war” as a concept and you will be able to systematically employ the ideas accompanying this exploration to problems and issues that you face in the public sphere and in your own lives. By the end of the semester, you will be able to better and
more substantively articulate these insights to others. From a practical standpoint, you will learn how to write effective resumes and cover letters, along with know where you can access help as you pursue your career and employment interests in the future.

This course will also attempt to challenge and improve a number of your skills that are considered vital for students of Political Science (and students of the Liberal Arts and Sciences more broadly) to master. These include:

** oral communication (through regular class participation and class discussions, group presentations);

** reading comprehension (through regular reading assignments that will provide the basis for many class discussions);

** critical thinking and analysis (through class reading, discussion of scholarly work about the course theme, group exercises, research paper assignment);

** effective, concise writing and development of critical analysis (through critical analysis, research paper assignments);

** applying theories and concepts to new situations (through class discussions, group exercises and critical analysis, research paper assignments);

** research and hypothesis writing, testing (through research paper assignment);

** comprehending the views of others and articulating, defending one’s own position (through class readings and discussions, group exercises, critical analysis and research paper assignment).

** working collectively to develop and communicate an idea through oral presentation (group exercises, components of research assignment)

** Intended Long-Term Impact of the Course

Beyond helping you refine your skills as a political science major, this course seeks to make a more lasting impact on your professional development in anticipation of your transition to the workplace. As one employer of college graduates recently observed, young employees “are very good at finding information but not as good at putting it into context … they are really good at technology, but not at how to take those skills and resolve specific problems” (emphasis added). Skills and abilities that employers repeatedly say they most value in their young employees include: written and oral communication skills, adaptability and flexibility, the ability to deal with ambiguity and complexity, managing multiple priorities, collaboration and interpersonal skills, the capacity to make decisions and the ability to creatively solve complex problems. Firms want graduates with “soft skills” – people who can work well in teams, write and speak clearly, engage in critical thinking, adapt quickly to changing conditions, solve problems on the fly, handle pressure effectively, interact with colleagues from different countries
and cultures. As another employer said “soft skills tend to differentiate good college graduates from exceptional college graduates”.

This course seeks to work on many of those “soft skills” both directly and indirectly and it offers you space to improve in many of these areas. In addition, you should consider accessing the many resources available through the College of Charleston’s Career Center as you begin to think about and plan for life after college. For more information, consult the Career Center’s website at http://careercenter.cofc.edu, visit the office in the Lightsey Center, Room 216 or call (843) 953-5692.

Method of Presentation

This course will be run as a seminar. Formal presentations by the instructor will be rare. Class sessions will serve as a venue for exploration and informed discussion of the materials we are reading and otherwise considering. We will also spend considerable class time working on aspects of your research and presenting these throughout the semester.

Class Participation

Given the purposes of the Capstone and the way class sessions are structured, class participation is a vital component of this course and your Active involvement in all class sessions is absolutely essential. Participation in class discussion is expected and will be considered carefully in the final course evaluations. Such participation includes listening carefully and critically to the views expressed by classmates, as well as the expression of your own ideas. It is also expected that you will be willing to periodically take the lead in discussing issues and ideas based on the materials you are reading and researching. You should always be prepared during each class session to discuss current political events as they relate to the subject of the course.

Due to the structure of the course, you should not expect to do well without regular class attendance and consistent, active participation. Anyone missing more than three class sessions over the course of the semester (excused or unexcused – no distinctions are made) should expect to have their participation grade lowered significantly (this means being present for the entire class session – leaving early for any reason constitutes absence).

Special Circumstances

If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should know about, please make me aware right away. For example, if you have a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) learning challenge, if you have a physical condition of any kind that affects your learning, or if you are an athlete or a club member who will travel during the semester, I need to know that at the start of the term in order to make certain that your needs can be met. It will be infinitely more difficult to accommodate you sufficiently if you delay in disclosing your needs. Confidentiality will be respected in all instances. In addition, if
you are a student who has problems writing papers, taking class notes, presenting material orally, there are many resources and programs you can take advantage of to improve your class performance. All you have to do is ask and I can direct you to the appropriate help.

**Please note:** If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodation, you MUST provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises. If you are a student athlete who will miss class time due to away events, you MUST follow the procedures set out by the College in order to expect due consideration. In both cases, I will not guarantee granting your request if I have not received proper notice.

**Office Hours**

I have designated sets of office hours that are established for you to use in order to meet with me outside of class. Do not be reluctant to come by my office at these times, especially if you have questions that are left unanswered from class or if you are experiencing any difficulties or uncertainties in the course. If these times conflict with your schedule, we can work out a mutually convenient time to meet. I am around a lot – do not hesitate to make use of me outside the classroom.

**Course Ground Rules**

**Attendance:** You are expected to be present for all of the class sessions in this course. Absence from more than three class sessions during the term, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive. Students missing more than three class sessions (including leaving early from class sessions) will lose one full letter grade from the participation portion of their total average for each additional absence.

**Late Work:** Given the nature of this capstone and its structure, late work will not be tolerated. Work that is turned in after the date and time due will lose ten points off the total automatically (i.e. a paper with a numerical grade of 85 becomes a 75) and an additional ten points will be subtracted for each subsequent extra day. Work is considered late (and the clock begins ticking) if it is not handed in at the time requested. All due dates and times are listed in the syllabus – you know right now when everything you are expected to produce should be finished so there should be no excuse for late work.

**Electronic Submission:** NO written work may be submitted to me electronically for credit under any circumstances. You must have legible printed copies of papers for me to collect when assignments are due.

**Academic Dishonesty:** You were bound by an Honor Code when you enrolled at the College of Charleston. I expect you to abide by that code. If you are found to have plagiarized any of your written work, you will automatically fail this course and be
turned over to the Honor Board for further disciplinary action. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating of any kind, ask before you act.

**Courtesy and Tolerance:** As this course progresses, you will doubtlessly find that your ideas about politics and war do not always match the views of your fellow students, the authors of your texts, or your instructor. This is the stuff of politics and war. However, if this course is to prove rewarding for everyone, it is absolutely essential for each participant to respect and tolerate the ideas and opinions of others in the class. It is equally important for everyone to discuss issues on the basis of information and analysis rather than emotion and volume. By adopting such a posture, you will hopefully find the course will be a challenging and enlightening experience where you will have many opportunities to rethink what you know or believe to be true about politics and war.

**Time Spent Outside of Class:** I have high expectations for you in this course and have crafted it with that in mind. Given the nature of a Capstone experience, you will need to spend at least two to three hours working outside of class for every hour you spend in the classroom in order to successfully complete the work in this course. Some weeks may require more time. Students who are not committed to spending that kind of time studying and preparing for class should expect to struggle. It is important to note that time alone does not automatically ensure success – the kind of time you devote to your work and how you approach the endeavor may be just as critical. You can devote time to preparing and studying that is effective and ineffective. If you ever wish to discuss these issues with me, feel free – there may be important changes we can make to your approach that can maximize your effort.

One underutilized student resource is the **Center for Student Learning (CSL)**, which offers academic support services for assistance in study strategies, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills consultations and workshops. For example, the Writing Lab is staffed with trained consultants offering one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information on what help is available to you for free as students, visit the CSL website at [http://csl.cofc.edu](http://csl.cofc.edu), call (843) 953-5635 or visit the office on the library’s ground floor.

**Warning:** There is really only one way you can get yourself into serious trouble in this course – and that is not to do the work. This would seem obvious – but it is telling how often it happens and how predictably the consequences turn out to be a surprise after the fact to students who chart this course. The way to assure you succeed in this course is simple – just do what is asked of you when it is asked of you – and if you begin to struggle in some way, come and see me and let’s talk about it. If someone is burying themselves, I promise you I will not intervene. In the world you are about to enter, nobody will be coaxing you and prodding you to do what is asked of you; they will simply expect it of you and respond accordingly if you fail to produce. The same rules apply here.
Readings and Texts

Reading assignments will be made out of the following books:


All required texts are available at the College of Charleston Bookstore. Additional required readings are marked with an asterisk (*) in the course outline. These are available via the course OAKS content page.

The following list of scholarly journals may provide useful resources for your independent work:

International Security    International Interactions
Journal of Conflict Resolution    Journal of Peace Research
International Studies Quarterly    Perspectives on Politics
American Political Science Review    International Organization
American Journal of Political Science    Journal of Politics
European Journal of International Relations    Security Studies
International Political Science Review    Cooperation and Conflict
Conflict Management and Peace Science    International Peacekeeping
Conflict and Terrorism Studies

It is also important for you to keep up with current events as you take this course. The Charleston Post and Courier will be of limited help in this regard. I am therefore urging you to read The New York Times as often as possible.

The following resources may also be useful to you in exploring current events. If you are unfamiliar with many of these, you should take it upon yourself to explore them before you complete your undergraduate education, as many of them can be very helpful in tracking events as an informed citizen throughout the rest of your life.
Method of Evaluation

Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

1. **Class Participation (10%)**: Your constructive input is an essential component of this course. It is expected that you will attend class consistently and that you will be prepared to discuss the required readings on the day they are assigned, including roundtable discussions staged during the middle portion of the course. At the end of the semester, you will receive a grade based on the contribution you have made to class proceedings.

2. **Weekly Reading Reactions and Questions (10%)**: Each week (sometime by Sunday at 10:00 p.m. prior to our Monday meeting), you will email me a reaction to the most recent and upcoming week’s readings along with at least two thoughtful discussion questions. Your reaction narratives should encompass at least two paragraphs of reflection discussing the week’s readings and may go beyond that minimum depending on how much you have
to say. What struck you? What did you find interesting? Or not interesting? What – if anything – did the readings make you think about? These reactions are designed to be fairly casual and promote some out of class dialogue with me – no need to stress about whether or not you are saying something profound. Your reactions should, however, demonstrate that you have carefully read and critically assessed the material assigned for our upcoming class sessions. You may choose to focus on one of the readings or several of them in your narrative.

3. **Analytical Essay (10%)**: To follow up on our discussion of the Vietnam War, you will complete a 5-7 page analysis paper that will apply the theories and concepts explaining war to the Vietnam experience. More guidelines on this assignment will be distributed in class.

4. **The Capstone Independent Research Assignment (70%)**: Over the course of the entire semester, you will be engaged in your own research on some aspect of war – either generally or specific to a particular conflict, period of time, country, topic or region of interest. After completing two initial reflection essays early in the term, you will be conducting your research in stages throughout the semester. Each of the components listed below will be graded and the final integrative paper will be turned in at the end of the semester. The components of the research paper include:

   a. an annotated bibliography (5%)
   b. a formal proposal (5%)
   c. a literature review (10%)
   d. a normative essay (10%)
   e. an empirical essay (10%)
   f. oral presentations of your work and peer review efforts (10%)
   g. an integrated final research paper (20%)

Due dates for each of these assignments are listed in the course outline below. More information on the research project is contained in an accompanying handout and instructions/guidelines for specific portions of the paper will be distributed during the semester.

Opportunities for “extra credit” are not available.

Grades will be assigned consistent with the following scale:

   A – Superior (100-92)        A minus – Excellent (91-89)
   B plus – Very Good (88-86)   B – Good (85-82)
   B minus – Promising (81-79)  C plus – Fair (78-76)
   C – Average (75-72)          C minus – Acceptable (71-69)
   D minus – Barely Passing (61-59)  F – Failing (58-0)
Hints for Reading and Writing – Tips to Excel in the Capstone

When seeking to understand and explain war, it is important to wrestle with its complexities and appreciate the many key events and facets of its make-up. We will be reading several works through the semester that will help us in this endeavor. At times, the reading may prove to be difficult for some of you; thus, I have some suggestions to help you in your reading.

First, complete as much of the assigned reading as possible before you come to class on the days we are slated to discuss the topic. My purpose here is not to torment you. Rather, if you have even a vague familiarity with the subject matter upon entering class, you will find that our discussions will mean more to you. You will be able to more readily recognize important points and add context to what you have read. Our class discussions of reading are also the perfect time to ask questions about readings and get clarification on issues or points you do not fully understand or feel comfortable with. If you wait and read later, you are unaware of what problems you might have and the opportunities to work them out sufficiently have often vanished.

Second, after you read work for the first time, consider going back and taking some notes. Much of what we read we do not retain for very long. However, committing information to paper in our own words can help stretch our retention capabilities. Attempting to summarize what someone is saying in your own words can also be a useful way of discovering what you understand and do not understand. In addition, notes are a helpful study tool when you are reviewing for exams or considering ideas for papers. The notes you take on readings need not be extensive or recount every detail. You might simply seek to identify what the major themes and key points of an article or book chapter are, identify and try to define new terms used in the chapter, and think about why the material is important and how it relates to other topics we have already discussed in the course. This exercise can be helpful when considering your weekly emailed reading reactions and questions.

Lastly, once we have discussed a topic in class, you should consider reviewing the assigned readings and your notes to see that you have indeed identified the major points and that you feel you understand the material sufficiently. If the readings were very confusing when you read them before class or you did not feel you got much out of them, you might even reread the material after the class discussion to see if you understand it any better. There is an unstated (and faulty) assumption among many students that we should only read pieces once in order to gain a full appreciation of them; however, it often takes two or three readings to attain the full measure of what an author has to offer. We often see more if we give ourselves the opportunity of a second time around.

***If you want more information on developing strategies for critical reading, please ask for the handout with examples which I am happy to provide you.

To succeed in this class, it will also be important for you to hone your writing abilities. During the semester, you will complete a series of writing assignments designed to help you refine and polish your skills in synthesizing other’s ideas and constructing your own. Just as reading effectively is a process with many often overlooked stages, so too is writing. As you prepare written work for this class, consider the following steps:

Invention: When you prepare to write, allow yourself ample time to think about what it is you intend to say, how you wish to say it, and who will be your intended audience. The process of invention is one that can and probably should begin long before you actually start writing your assignment. This is the time when you should be finding out about what it is you intend to write about, which strategies for writing you intend to employ to reach your audience effectively, and what tentative main point or thesis you hope to express and substantiate in your paper. As you make decisions and come up with ideas, it is useful to commit them to paper.
Drafting: Once you think you have some direction for your written work, begin setting more concrete goals of what you want or need your paper to say, what kind of opening you will use, what kind of end message you want your reader to walk away with. Plan the organization of your paper by constructing an outline of the entire work and then after refining that plan, write a rough draft. Allow yourself plenty of time before the due date to complete a rough draft. No narrative ever emerges from one’s head to paper in perfect form and most do not emerge in anything close to what we are finally capable of producing. The more opportunities we allow ourselves to create, rethink and rewrite, the stronger our final effort will be.

Revising: With a rough draft of your ideas committed to paper, it is infinitely easier to begin the process of recrafting your thoughts and words into a successful final version. Hopefully, you've given yourself time to allow your paper to sit idle (preferably for at least a day or two) before you go back to working on it. Getting a little distance and perspective on your ideas often helps you to see weaknesses, flaws and areas of new potential that otherwise go unnoticed. When you return to your paper, evaluate your work in terms of its focus (Am I saying exactly what I want to say?), organization (Is my paper structured appropriately to make my points?), content (Is my work complete and authoritative? Does it include all the necessary information but not too much?), and readability (If I were the reader and not the author, could I follow my points easily?). Revise your draft until you are satisfied that you have attained your goals.

Proofreading: Once you have finished making substantive changes in your draft, always proofread it for errors in spelling, usage and punctuation.

In both the case of reading and writing, allowing yourself plenty of time to do the work required is vital -- last minute efforts are always less successful and often reflect badly on your abilities and performance.

Dates to Remember (details in course outline)

- Monday, September 3: Academic Autobiography due (in class)
- Tuesday, September 11: War Project Narrative due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Friday, September 21: Annotated Bibliography due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Monday, October 1: Research Proposal due (in class)
- Friday, October 19: Literature Review due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Friday, November 2: Normative Essay due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Friday, November 16: Empirical Essay due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Friday, November 30: Analytical Essay due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
- Monday, December 10: Integrated Research Paper due (4:30 p.m. – my office)
Course Outline

(*) denotes reading found on the course OAKS content page

Part I – The Evolving Nature of War (August 22 - September 12)

A. Course Introduction – What is a Capstone? – August 22

Reading: None

Assignment: Think about and write your academic autobiography and then think about it in terms of possible directions for your capstone research direction. What questions/issues have motivated your choice of courses and research topics throughout your years in college (this is not only limited to your POLI classes)? Have you found that you are consistently writing on a similar set of problems or issues, or are you consistently researching using one set of methodological approaches? Look back at the papers and projects you have done over the past years -- where did you learn the most? (Choose 2 or 3 particular assignments from courses and talk about your process and your results.) Which ones have made you think about your future life plans? In what ways? What kinds of writing/communication do you expect you will be doing in five years? Are there links between your future plans and classes you have taken? Using examples from your own coursework and the papers and projects that you have produced, write an essay of approximately 1200 words (4-5 double spaced pages) and come to class on Monday, September 3 prepared to talk about the connections (or not!) between work you have done and your Capstone paper. You will pass this paper in at the end of class

B. The Military is Everything – August 27-29

These class sessions will explore the changing nature of the military in US domestic and foreign policy, particularly its quiet evolution from being primarily a defensive overseas fighting force to serving as first-responders called upon to execute many different missions at home and abroad. This expansion of responsibilities has had immense effects on the military services themselves and on policymakers who now reflexively call upon the military in diverse circumstances. Overall, these changes provoke questions about what functions a military serves in a democratic society, whether its expansive presence makes war more or less likely, and whether the characteristics of war become more or less prevalent in daily life as the military and its ways become more omnipresent. Comparisons with the roles militaries play in other societies will be investigated.

1. Windows of Opportunity (August 27)

Reading: Brooks, pp. 1-79.

(note: you should be reading Brooks as both an introduction to the course and a guide to the myriad of research possibilities you have to choose from when thinking about your own semester-long projects)

2. What’s an Army For? (August 29)

Reading: Brooks, pp. 79-165;

(*) “Combat High: America’s Addiction to War” Harper’s (June 2018), pp. 25-34.
C. Everything is War – September 3-10

These class sessions begin an investigation into the changing nature of war – primarily by discussing America’s predilection to call so many different phenomena “war”. How we utilize the term “war” and what it has come to mean will be a focus – and we will delve into the costs of placing so much of life on a war footing.

1. **Putting War in a Box (September 3)**


   **Assignment due:** Your written academic autobiographies are due in class and you should be prepared to discuss these in class on this date.

   **Assignment:** Write a typed two to three page narrative (500-750 words) of interesting issues, questions surrounding war (generally or specific to a conflict) that you might find worthy of exploring in more depth over the course of the semester AND discuss why these ideas currently interest you, seem worthy of more examination. Consult class readings, description of Capstone research guidelines for ideas – think too about what you have been exposed to in other courses that might have relevance to this assignment. You will submit this essay to me before our next class session – it is due in my office by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 11. Bring a copy of your narrative to class on Wednesday, September 12, as it will form the basis for part of our class discussion.

2. **If It Walks Like a Duck (September 5)**

   **Reading:** Brooks, pp. 234-281; (*) Mary Tetreault and Ronnie Lipschutz, “People and War” in Global Politics as if People Mattered (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), pp. 107-124.

3. **War Everywhere, Law Nowhere? (September 10)**

   **Reading:** Brooks, pp. 282-366.

   **Assignment due:** Your narrative of research ideas is due on Tuesday, September 11 (by 4:30 – my office) and you should be prepared to discuss this in class on Wednesday, September 12.

D. Research Ideas – September 12

Taking the results of assignments one and two, this class session will be devoted to exploring possibilities for individual research projects.

**Assignment:** Based on the class discussion we have had today about possible research topics on war and what you have found interesting, begin compiling an annotated bibliography of scholarly readings in your particular area of choice. Your initial bibliography must contain at least ten scholarly citations. This preliminary written annotated bibliography is due to my office by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, September 21.
**Part II – Why Nations Fight (September 17-26)**

These class sessions will explore the many competing theories of “why war?” that inform international relations and delve into the factors (or correlates of war) that are judged to most heavily influence the emergence of interstate conflict. As such, we will begin examining war from several different levels of analysis and specifically assess the state of knowledge borne by the more recent methodological efforts to study war “scientifically”. We will also identify different kinds of wars and debate why war has been a relatively understudied topic in American politics, even as it has been the overriding concern of scholars in international relations and comparative politics.

**A. Explanations for War -- September 17**

**Reading:** Lebow, pp. 1-62;


**B. Lebow’s Theory -- September 19**

**Reading:** Lebow, pp. 65-127;


**Assignment Due:** Your preliminary annotated bibliography is due **Friday, September 21** by 4:30 (my office)

**C. Arguing about War: The Ethics of Conflict – September 24**

This class session will center on the ethical questions surrounding war that have been raised over time and the place they occupy in explaining and understanding different forms of conflict. A portion of this discussion will focus specifically on the concept of “just war”.

**Reading:** Lebow, pp. 131-170;


(*) Ian Clark, “Taking ‘Justness’ Seriously in Just War: Who are the Miserable Comforters Now?” International Affairs 93 (May 2017), pp. 327-341;

(*) Jovana Davidovic, “Should the Changing Character of War Affect Our Theories of War?” Ethical Theory and Moral Practice 19 (June 2016), pp. 603-618;


(*) Cian O’Driscoll, “The Irony of Just War” Ethics and International Affairs 32 (Summer 2018), pp. 227-236.
Assignment: Using the preliminary annotated bibliography of last week and the comments you have received as a foundation, complete the preliminary research proposal framework that is handed out in class. This assignment is due in class on Monday, October 1.

D. War in the Future – September 26

Reading: Lebow, pp. 171-226;
(*) David Cunningham and Douglas Lemke, “Beyond Civil War: A Quantitative Examination of Causes of Violence within Countries” Civil Wars 16 (September 2014), pp. 328-345;

E. The Process of Research – October 1

Assignment Due: Your preliminary research proposal framework is due in class today, Monday October 1

Part III – America’s Vietnam War (October 3-November 19)

A. Background to America’s War – October 3

Prior to the introduction of American advisors and later ground forces into Vietnam, there was a longstanding military and political contest underway in southeast Asia that Americans knew little about, even though the conflict involved many of the country’s allies and adversaries stretching back to World War II and was arguably about values and ideas that Americans held dear. This portion of the course is designed to provide you with some of that background to America’s war in Vietnam, explore how early decisions concerning Southeast Asia were made by the Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower administrations, and initiate the exploration of why America’s war in Vietnam remains such a vital topic of study today.

Reading: Langguth, chapters 1-2;

Assignment: Based on the direction of your proposal and the feedback you have received on it, you are to take the scholarly sources you have found and craft a literature review that introduces and effectively summarizes the relevant published material surrounding your topic. Specific
guidelines on writing a literature review will be handed out in class. This assignment is due to my office by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 19.

**B. Kennedy’s War – October 8-10**

This week’s seminar examines America’s movement toward direct involvement in Vietnam under the leadership of President Kennedy and places portions of those initiatives in the larger historical context of America’s Cold War policies, which were initially thought by many to be the driving motivation behind America’s interest in the fate of Vietnam. It also examines the debate that quickly emerged within American decision-making circles about how deeply to engage the politics of Vietnam, a debate that was forever influenced by the assassination of President Kennedy.

**Reading:** Langguth, chapters 3-5;  
(*) *Talking Vietnam*, Phil Ochs  
(*) *Goodbye High School, Hello Vietnam*, Tommy Dee  

**C. LBJ and Escalation – October 15-17**

Lyndon Johnson’s unscripted rise to the presidency after President Kennedy’s assassination categorically changed the nature of America’s involvement in Vietnam, for reasons that scholars continue to debate. This week’s seminar will examine elements of those decisions and how they are variously explained. It will also begin to assess the ways the American military projected force in the conflict, focusing on the use of herbicides and other chemical agents, which affected life in Vietnam for generations to come and that have echoes in the debates over the treatment of American forces since the end of the Vietnam War.

**Reading:** Langguth, chapters 6-7;  
(*) *The Ballad of the Green Berets*, Barry Sadler and Robin Moore;  
(*) *I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag*, Country Joe McDonald;  

**Assignment:** You will write an essay on your normative question which will be due on Friday, November 2 (details of the assignment will be passed out in class)

**Assignment due:** Your literature review is due on Friday, October 19 by 4:30 p.m. (my office)

**D. Light at the End of the Tunnel … or Not – October 22-24**

The middle of Lyndon Johnson’s term as president witnessed bitter debates – in public and in secret – over the status of America’s War in Vietnam. This week’s seminar investigates those
conflicting assessments and the personalities engaged with them, with a special focus on Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who in many ways becomes identified with and a casualty of the Vietnam War. It will also investigate the impact of the university academy in the war effort, including an examination of National Security Advisor Walt Rostow, whose theories of statebuilding and national development became an object of testing during the wars in Southeast Asia, and the effects of dissent by America’s most prominent international relations scholar of the time. In addition, the session will begin an examination of how America’s military adapted (or failed to adapt) to the challenging combat conditions it faced in Vietnam, with a particular emphasis on America’s increasing reliance on extensive bombing of states in Southeast Asia as a primary method of prosecuting the war, again with an eye toward the ongoing debates about air power in a contemporary context.

**Reading:** Langguth, chapters 8-9;
(*) *We Got to Get Out of this Place,* The Animals;
(*) Anne Morrison Welsh, “It was like an Arrow was Shot from Norman’s Heart,” in Christian Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (New York: Viking, 2003), pp. 150-155;

**Roundtable:** You will choose (or be assigned) one of the readings below to prepare for class – we will have a discussion on the 24th of October that will incorporate the findings, observations of all articles.


**E. Tet and the Secret Plans – October 29-31**

In the eyes of many, the Tet Offensive launched by North Vietnam in 1968 changed the nature of America’s Vietnam War, though the debate rages on as to how and why that was the case. For sure, this was a period of time that seemed to puncture the stability of American society in profound ways. In response, it spawned much talk of “secret” initiatives to end the war in
Vietnam, while also revealing many horrific events of the war, all of which left political as well as military casualties in its wake, both in Southeast Asia as well as in the United States. This seminar session will examine the events around Tet and its aftermath, including the ways in which this period of time not only sowed the seeds of Richard Nixon’s accession to the presidency but his demise as well. It will also assess the effects of conscription in America with an eye toward discussing the growing anti-war movement around Vietnam and the relevance of this concern for the way America fights its wars today.

**Reading:** Langguth, chapters 10-11;
- (*) *The Unknown Soldier*, The Doors/Jim Morrison;
- (*) *Fortunate Son*, Creedence Clearwater Revival/John Fogerty;
- (*) *Okie from Muskogee*, Merle Haggard
- (*) *Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley*, C Company featuring Terry Nelson

**Roundtable:** You will choose (or be assigned) one of the readings below to prepare for class—we will have a discussion on the 31st of October that will incorporate the findings, observations of all articles.


**Assignment:** You will write an essay on your empirical question which is due on **Friday, November 16** by 4:30 p.m. (my office). Details about this assignment will be passed out in class.

**Assignment due:** Your normative essay is due on **Friday, November 2** by 4:30 p.m. (my office)

**Monday, November 5 – Fall Break (no class)**

**F. It All Falls Apart – November 7-12**

Richard Nixon’s pledge to find “peace with honor” while extracting America from its Vietnam experience deepened both the military and political crises that grew during the years after Tet. This seminar session examines the many motivations behind Nixon’s strategies of widening the war in Southeast Asia in order to generate leverage at peace talks with the North Vietnamese and the effects this strategy had in America and beyond. It will secondarily look at the effects of
publishing the Pentagon Papers and what impacts other acts of dissent had on Nixon’s prosecution of the war and the prevailing politics in America at the time and beyond.

Reading: Langguth, chapters 12-14;
(*) Ohio, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
(*) Ken Hughes, “Fatal Politics: Nixon’s Timetable for Withdrawing from Vietnam” Diplomatic History 34 (June 2010), pp. 497-506;
(*) Nicholas Lemann, “The Decision Theorist Who Leaked the Pentagon Papers” The New Yorker (November 4, 2002)

Roundtable: You will choose (or be assigned) one of the readings below to prepare for class – we will have a discussion on the 12th of November that will incorporate the findings, observations of all articles.


G. The Vietnamese Graveyard – November 14-19

The end of America’s Vietnam War does not come easily or painlessly – and before the process ends, Richard Nixon resigns as president and America’s first unelected chief executive – Gerald Ford -- seeks to find the “honor” in extracting America from the war that had eluded Nixon. This portion of the course assesses the processes that led to the Paris Peace Accords and widens the focus to analyze the concept of American exceptionalism that not only becomes a matter of debate at this time in America’s history but that remains an issue going forward when thinking about the war’s legacies.

Reading: Langguth, chapters 15-17;
(*) What’s Going On, Marvin Gaye;
(*) War, Edwin Star;
(*) Still in Saigon, Charlie Daniels Band;
(#) Born in the USA, Bruce Springsteen;
(#) The Big Parade, 10,000 Maniacs/Natalie Merchant;
Roundtable: You will choose (or be assigned) one of the readings below to prepare for class – we will have a discussion on the 19th of November that will incorporate the findings, observations of all articles.

(*) Dominic Tierney “America’s Quagmire Mentality” Survival 49 (Winter 2007), pp. 47-65;
(*) Heather Marie Stur, “Hiding behind the Humanitarian Label: Refugees, Repatriation and the Rebuilding of America’s Benevolent Image after the Vietnam War” Diplomatic History 39 (April 2015), pp. 223-244;

Assignment: You will write an analytical essay on the Vietnam War which will be due on Friday, November 30 by 4:30 p.m. (my office). Details of this assignment will be passed out in class.

Assignment due: Your empirical essay assignment is due by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 16 (my office).
Part IV – The Future of War? (November 26-December 3)

This final portion of the course introduces you to new debates about “new” forms of war involving artificial intelligence, robotics and cyberweapons. One obvious question emerging from this discussion is how “new” all of this is – does it require rethinking the prevailing understandings of war that have operated in political science? Another clear question is the extent to which states and populations are prepared to wage war with one another along these parameters. Like so much of the course, this section will not provide definitive answers to these questions – provoking you to think about them and begin drawing your own conclusions is enough.

A. From Russia with Love – November 26

Reading: Sanger, pp. xi-xxiii; 1-99;
(*) H. R. McMaster, “Learning from Contemporary Conflicts to Prepare for Future War” *Orbis* 61 (June 2017), pp. 303-321;

Assignment due: Your analytical essay assignment is due by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 30 (my office)

B. The Perfect Weapon – November 28

Reading: Sanger, pp. 100-193;

Assignment due: Your analytical essay assignment is due by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 30 (my office)

C. The Future of War – December 3

Reading: Sanger, pp. 194-308;

Assignment due: Your final integrated capstone research paper that includes your revised literature review, empirical essay and normative essay is due on Monday, December 10 by 4:30 p.m. (my office).
The Capstone Independent Research Project

One of the major purposes of the Capstone course is for you to employ the skills you have developed through your program of study in conducting your own research on a topic of your choosing connected to the course theme. In the process, this will provide you with an opportunity to refine a number of the abilities you have been encouraged to master over your time as a Political Science major and you will have the chance to work collaboratively and constructively with other members of the class as you complete your own project.

In this particular Capstone seminar, you are all going to conduct independent research on some aspect of war that both interests you and can readily meet the requirements of the assignment described below. Given how broad the topic of “war” is, that means you have wide discretion initially about what your research focuses on. You may decide to concentrate on an aspect of war that encompasses several conflicts (such as examining the role scarce resources – or abundant resources – plays in fostering conflict in the developing world or how the volunteer military has changed the face of who fights America’s wars); look at a topic central to a particular conflict (such as the part played by foreign funders in supporting the Nicaraguan war of the 1980’s or the Yemen civil war today); examine a specific time period (such as the prevalence of “proxy wars” fought between the U.S. and Soviet Union during the Cold War); or analyze conflict in a particular country or region (such as the factors contributing to Africa’s “world war” or contrasting the 1967 and 1973 wars between Israel and the Arab states). Topics related to peace-building (the amelioration or absence of war) may also be perfectly appropriate.

The key to any successful research topic is that it must be relevant in some clear way to the course theme and it must contain researchable and related empirical and normative questions, which themselves will become the specific focus of your work. An empirical question is essentially a question answerable through observation or description of reality – by marshalling data and evidence to detail what we know and how we know it. A normative question, by contrast, deals with how we should use our knowledge – developing and examining subjective goals, values and moral rules to guide us in applying what we have learned to that reality.

Virtually all issues have empirical and normative elements to them and often you can identify multiple questions in each category. For example, if one were studying the use of the War Powers resolution in the United States since 1973, one could ask the empirical question of how often the President has invoked or abided by the legislation (or alternatively how and why it was applied as it was to a specific conflict, say the 1982 American military presence in Lebanon) – you could then collect evidence and data to support or undermine a hypothesis and provide an answer to that question. A related normative question that could be posed and debated is whether or not a president should be subject to the War Powers resolution (or alternatively what Congress should do given that presidents repeatedly ignore or misapply aspects of the resolution) – here you are
examining and evaluating different values and rules (presidential power, congressional oversight) in answering the question, rather than collecting data and evidence to answer the question (although data and evidence are relevant in potentially establishing and legitimizing the goals and rules you are promoting).

You will be conducting your own research in an area of your interest in stages. It will begin in the first weeks of the semester, when we brainstorm possible ideas and directions for research. As a result of your thinking, you will then complete the following steps:

a. preparing an annotated bibliography of existing scholarly literature you have found on the topic you are interested in pursuing;

b. preparing a formal proposal for your research, including what specific and related empirical and normative questions you are intending to pursue and how you intend to approach them

c. drafting a literature review of what scholars have already published relating to your specific topic;

d. writing an essay that wrestles with the normative question you have identified;

e. writing an empirical essay that explores and seeks to answer the empirical question you have identified;

f. integrating your literature review, normative and empirical analyses into a coherent narrative that comes to terms more completely and synthetically with the topic you have pursued;

Additional guidelines and examples of component portions of your research will be handed out in class. Due dates for different assignments are listed in the course outline of the syllabus.

As part of this work too, you may be grouped with other members of the class working on similar or related topics. There will be an expectation that you will be reviewing and commenting on one another’s work as the semester proceeds – serving as support and collaborators as you do your own work. We will devote significant portions of class sessions to discussing and evaluating one another’s work and periodically individual class members will be presenting portions of their work in these sessions. Over the course of the semester, individual (or perhaps group) presentations of work will be conducted.

The ideal end result of the class effort will be a volume of essays on different aspects of war that could be read by other POLI students. For individual class members
with future graduate school or professional aspirations, portions of your research could serve as writing samples if done well.

As an addendum to each person’s research work, you will leave the Capstone with a completed resume/cv and a sample cover letter for future use.