

## **HIST-UA 670: War and Knowledge**

Prof. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite and Stefanos Geroulanos  
53 Washington Square South, #701  
Thursdays 2-4:45

You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.  
—Leon Trotsky

The purpose of this seminar is to discuss, interrogate, and explore the relationship between war and knowledge in human history. Not intended to discuss specific wars and military history, this course focuses on war featured in thought, science, and the arts. This course is a history of war, and it is not a policy course. In this seminar, we ask how did people think about war--politically, practically, theologically, morally, and legally. We also ask how did they represent it artistically--in literature and the visual arts. At the same time, we trace the evolution of war through looking at the transformations of the battlefield as the leading site where “war happens”—from the open plain field location where humans threw stones at each other, to cyberspace. As part of this discussion, we will review and discuss significant turning points in the history of warfare.

**Prerequisites:** None. Students must be inquisitive, curious, open-minded, and ready to think and work.

**Workload:** This seminar is an intensely active collaborative work. We all know what war is—and yet we don’t. Discussion is thus essential. Students will be strongly encouraged to conduct active research during the semester and present their thoughts as we proceed. Each student will be required to develop their own research project at an early point in the seminar and advance it towards a final paper of 20-25 pages. This format means that in addition to discussing the question of war and knowledge we will be learning how to write a paper like this. Each student will have to work with the instructors, and with the rest of the class, as the course proceeds. There will be 4 steps:

Step One (by Week 4): Pick a topic and write a two-page “proposal” explaining the topics, the rationale behind it and its significance.

Step 2: (by week 7): Produce a bibliography and preliminary outline of the paper explaining its main elements.

Step 3: (by weeks 11 and 12): produce the first draft of a paper and prepare a short (10 minutes) presentation of the topic and the paper. We will dedicate some time to hearing and discussing these presentations in class.

Step 4: (End of the semester): Submit the final paper and attain Nirvana.

**Grading.** Participation 25%, Presentation, 15%, First paper 10%, Final Paper 50%.

### **Instructors**

Prof. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite [zbd1@nyu.edu](mailto:zbd1@nyu.edu) Office Hours Th 1-2 53 Washington Sq. S., #517  
Prof. Stefanos Geroulanos [sg127@nyu.edu](mailto:sg127@nyu.edu) Office Hours MW12:30-1:30 53 Washington Sq. S., #418

## Week-by-Week Breakdown

### Introduction Week (1/30/2020)

Alexander Kluge, "The Air Raid on Halberstadt on 8 April 1945," in *The Air Raid*

### Week 1 (2/6). War: Battle, the Battlefield, and Knowledge

Friedrich Kittler, "Media Wars: Trenches, Lightning, Stars," in *Literature, Media, Information Systems*, 117-130.

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, introduction.

Azar Gat, "Why War: the Unsolved Mystery," in *The Causes of War & the Spread of Peace*, 1-37.

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 1-14.

Priya Satia, *Empire of Guns: The Violent Making of the Industrial Revolution*, 1-24.

### Week 2 (2/13). Definitions of War

Clausewitz, *On War*, 13-30, 61-68.

Christopher MacDonald, *The Science of War, Sun Tzu's Art of War Re-translated and Re-Considered* (all of part 1).

Eyal Weizman, "The Art of War: Deleuze, Guattari, Debord and the Israeli Defence Force" in

<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/art-war-deleuze-guattari-debord-and-israeli-defence-force>

Carl Schmitt, "Forms or Imperialism in International Law" (1933), in *Spatiality, Sovereignty, and Carl Schmitt*, ed. Stephen Legg, 29-45.

### Week 3 (2/20): Just War and Laws of War.

John Kelsay, *Arguing Just War In Islam*, 97-124.

Howard M. Hensel, ed. *The Prism of Just War: Asian and Western Perspectives on the Legitimate Use of Military Force*, specifically the following chapters:

Gregory A. Raymond, "The Greco-Roman Roots of the Western Just War Tradition," 7-29.

Tyler Rauert, "Early Modern Perspectives on Western Just War Thought," 87-114.

David A. Graff, "The Chinese Concept of Righteous War," 195-216.

Students may choose to compare some of these perspectives with essays on Shi'i, Hindu, Japanese and Korean perspectives of just war available in the book.

### Week 4 (2/27): Codes of Battle: Chivalry, Samurai & Nomadic warfare: Medieval & Modern Incarnations

Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, 56-61. Boydell & Brewer, 2013.

"On Examining the Squire who Wishes to Join the Order of Chivalry" 56-61.

"On the Beginning of Chivalry," 40-43. "On the Meaning of the Knight's Arms," 66-70.

(Students may choose to work on the entire Llull book).

Ikegami Eiko. "Shame and the Samurai: Institutions, Trustworthiness, and Autonomy in the Elite Honor Culture." *Social Research* 70:4 (2003): 1351-78.

Nitobe, Inazo. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. La Vergne: Neeland, 1908/2018 (Available on Proquest). Read the entire book (190 pp).

Claude C. H. Williamson, "Chivalry." *The Irish Monthly* 47, no. 552 (1919): 330-39.

Screening: *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (Paul Schrader, 1985)

Week 5 (3/5). The Battlefield: What is it?

Lorraine Daston, "The Coup d'Oeil: On a Mode of Understanding" in *Critical Inquiry* 45 (2019), 307-331—concentrate on the middle section, but make sure to read the rest.

Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in *Makers of Modern Strategy* (1986 edition), 376-407.

Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 78-117 (Agincourt)

Sven Reichardt, "Fascism's Stages: Imperial Violence, Entanglement, and Processualization," pdf (forthcoming in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*)

First Assignment due 3/9: From the "Military Manuals Library," or the US Army Center for Military History, pick one document and analyze it in detail (4-5 pages).

<http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16040coll3>

<https://history.army.mil/catalog/index.html>

Week 6 (3/12): To the Concrete! Open-field battles, humans and animals.

Clausewitz, *On War*, 193-220, 223-240.

US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (1940), ch.7:1-40 (on animals)

Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902–1914*, pp. 3-113

(3/19) Spring Break. *Please make use of spring break for carrying out research!*

Week 7 (3/26): Siege Warfare, Trenches and Walls.

Kate Raphael, "Mongol Siege Warfare on the Banks of the Euphrates and the Question of Gunpowder (1260-1312)." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 19, no. 3 (2009): 355-70. [www.jstor.org/stable/27756073](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27756073).

Excerpts from Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak. *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, & Military Studies*. Ashgate, 2017.

Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, 5-22, 51-111.

Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 207-290 (Somme).

Week 8 (4/2): Naval Warfare (From Actium, To Naples, to Tsushima, etc)

Martin van Creveld, "Naval Warfare," in *The Art of War: War and Military Thought*, 145-160

Susan Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare, 1000–1500*, 1-56

Jeremy Black, *War and Technology*, 55-100

Jeremy Black, *Naval Warfare: A Global History since 1860*, pp. 21-56; 229-250

Benjamin Elman, "Naval Warfare and the Refraction of China's Self-Strengthening Reforms into Scientific and Technological Failure, 1865–1895."

Week 9 (4/9): Guerilla Warfare: Armies vs. "Bandits and Militias" Reading Mao, Giap, Che.

Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 3-57

Pamela Reynolds, *War in Worcester*, 1-133.  
US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (1940), ch.1:1-32, ch.5:13-20.

Week 10 (4/16): Going Gering: Air and Space

Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing*, selections

David Bates, "On Revolutions in the Nuclear Age: The Eighteenth Century and the Postwar Global Imagination" in *Qui Parle* 15, No. 2 (2005), pp. 171-195.

Optional: Carl Schmitt on air war in *The Nomos of the Earth*

Week 11 (4/23): Automatization, Psychological Warfare, and the Cold War

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 15-66.

Anders Stephansson, "14 Notes on the Very Concept of the Cold War"

Nicolas Guilhot, "Cyborg Pantocrator: International Relations Theory from Decisionism to Rational Choice," in *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 47:3 (2011), 279–301.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jhbs.20511>

Week 12 (4/30): Missile, Drone, and Cyber

Grégoire Chamayou, *Theory of the Drone*

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, selection

Week 13 (5/7): The End of War--What are Victory and Defeat (and what to do with them)? [Conclusion]

Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City*, 9-44

Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End*, 1-18, 77-100.

### **Books to order**

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema* (Verso 2009, preferably)

Clausewitz, *On War* (please buy only the Oxford University Press edition)

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (whatever edition)

Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan* (Telos Press, 2007)

Pamela Reynolds, *War in Worcester* (Fordham University Press, 2012)

Grégoire Chamayou, *Drone Theory* (Penguin, 2015)