

**Good Books on Bad Wars
CSPL 116F First Year Seminar
Professor Bob Cassidy
Fall 2019**

Seminar meets on Tuesdays from 1:20 to 4:10 PM in Allbritton Room 004. Office hours are 9:00 to 12:00 on Tuesdays in Allbritton Hall Room 213. Contact via email at rcassidy@wesleyan.edu or cell phone 910-489-8311.

This course explores war through some of the best books of theory, fiction, and non-fiction. The purpose of war is to achieve a policy that leads to a better peace after the war's end than the peace that existed before the war began. But the nature of war is to serve itself if policy does not guide and constrain war. This course begins with discussion of some key theoretical works on war to build an understanding of war's nature. The students will then read, analyze, and discuss some of the good books of non-fiction and fiction on the Civil War, World War I, the Vietnam War, and the post-9/11 Afghan War. These wars are bad when judged by quality of strategy, magnitude of losses, or duration of fighting. The readings and seminar discussions vary from the reasons why the wars began to the conduct and the outcomes of the wars. This course lies at the intersection of history, international relations, and conflict studies. This course will increase the students' knowledge of how policy, strategy, and war interact. A central aim of this seminar is to improve critical thinking and writing.

Readings: These books are available at Wesleyan R.J. Julia Books.

Elliot Ackerman, *Green on Blue*, 1st paperback ed. (ISBN 978-1-4767-7855-6). New York, NY: Scribner, 2016.

Bruce Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 1st ed. (ISBN 0-385-04451-8) New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (ISBN: 0-691-01854-5) Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

C.S. Forester. *The General*, 7th printing (ISBN 1-877853-39-9). Charleston, SC: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Country of America, 1999.

Fred C. Ikle, *Every War Must End*, 2nd revised ed. (ISBN: 978-0-231-13667-9). New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn* (ISBN 13-978-0-8021-1928-5). New York, NY, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2010.

Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels* (ISBN 0-679-64324-9). New York, NY, Modern Library, 2004.

Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, 1st edition (ISBN 0-679-72414-1). New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989.

Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. by Samuel B. Griffith, 1st paperback ed. (ISBN 0-252-06892-0). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (ISBN 0-345-38623-X) New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. by Samuel B. Griffith (ISBN 978-0-19-501476-1) New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 1st edition (ISBN 978-1-4000-3084-2). New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2007.

The main readings are the good books but there are parts of four books and a few articles on Moodle that require reading to provide context and understanding. The seminar begins by covering the meaning and theory of war and then proceeds to explore a war every two weeks with about one book or parts of one book a week. The descriptions of the weekly seminar sessions list the required readings for each week. Guidance in class will pare down the bigger books.

Grading approach:

First analytical essay	25 percent
Second analytical essay	25 percent
Final analytical essay	25 percent
Seminar Participation	25 percent

Essays: Students will write two six-page double-spaced (font 12 aerial) essays that critically analyze why the wars began, how the sides performed in the wars, how the wars ended, or what the wars implications were. Essay assignments will be distributed in time by war and by week, beginning with the Civil War on the fourth week. Students will turn in essays for the book and war the week the essays are assigned by midnight on Sundays to me (rcassidy@wesleyan.edu) with a cc to all other students in the seminar. The students with assigned essays for that week will receive their graded essays at the end of seminar on Tuesdays. The final essay will be eight pages and answer a question that synthesizes and analyzes factors across two or more wars.

Participation: The quality of the first year seminar relies on factual and passionate discourse. Reading the books and articles prescribed for homework are required to inform and animate the in-class dialogue. This grade will reflect your regular contributions. Actively contributing to the weekly discussions is key for every student in the seminar to contribute and gain value from the course.

Students with Disabilities: It is Wesleyan University policy to provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making me aware of requests right away. If you require accommodations for this seminar, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible so that we can make the required arrangements. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services are at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>.

Week One (3 SEP) – Course Purpose, Structure, and Context

Required Reading:

J. Boone Bartholomees. "Theory of Victory." *Parameters* (Summer 2008): 25-36.

Matthew J. Schmidt. "War as Political Work: Using Social Science for Strategic Success." *Military Review*. (July-August 2014): 50-57.

Thomas Waldman. "Politics and War: Clausewitz's Paradoxical Equation." *Parameters*. (Autumn 2010): 1-13.

In class: PBS [Going to War](#) or NF [Medal of Honor \(E3\)](#) 2018.

Week Two (10 SEP) – What is War

Required Reading:

Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. (Books One, Two, and Eight)

A. Bradley Potter. *Reading On War for the First Time*. Johns Hopkins SAIS. February 2016.

Week Three (17 SEP) – The Purpose and Object of War

Required Reading:

B.H. Liddell Hart. “The Objective in War.” *Naval War College Review* (December 1952): 1-30.

Fred C. Ikle. *Every War Must End*. 2nd revised ed. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Week Four (24 SEP) – Gettysburg and the Civil War’s Strategic Culmination

Required Reading:

Michael Shaara. *The Killer Angels*. New York, NY, Modern Library, 2004.

Week Five (1 OCT) – Grant and the Long Last Campaign of the Civil War

Required Reading:

Bruce Catton. *A Stillness at Appomattox*. 1st ed. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

Week Six (8 OCT) – Marching into the Abyss of World War I

Required Reading:

Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Week Seven (15 OCT) – A Terrible War Horribly Executed

Required Reading:

C.S. Forester. *The General*, 7th printing. Charleston, SC: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Country of America, 1999.

Week Eight (29 OCT) – Master Mao and the Harbinger of Asymmetry

Required Reading:

George C. Herring. “America and Vietnam: the Unending War.” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1991): 104 -119.

Mao Tse-Tung. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith, 1st paperback ed. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Week Nine (5 NOV) – The Vietnam Morass and the Dim Dull Delusion

Required Reading:

Neil Sheehan. *A Bright Shining Lie*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989.

Week Ten (12 NOV) – Fighting a War without Reason

Required Reading:

Karl Marlantes. *Matterhorn*. New York, NY, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2010.

Week Eleven (19 NOV) – History and Harbinger to the 9/11 Attacks

Required Reading:

Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower*, 1st edition. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2007.

Week Twelve (26 NOV) – The Fog and Friction of Malice in Wonderstan

Required Reading:

Elliot Ackerman, *Green on Blue*, 1st paperback ed. (ISBN 978-1-4767-7855-6). New York, NY: Scribner, 2016.

Week Thirteen (3 DEC) – Final Thoughts and Synthesis

Required Reading:

Robert M. Cassidy and Jacqueline Tame. “The Wages of War without Strategy, Part I: Clausewitz, Vietnam, and the Roots of Strategic Confusion.” *War on the Rocks*. January 2017. <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/the-wages-of-war-without-strategy-part-i-clausewitz-vietnam-and-the-roots-of-strategic-confusion/>

Robert M. Cassidy and Jacqueline Tame. "The Wages of War without Strategy, Part II: How We Twitterized Clausewitz and Ended Up Bogged Down in Afghanistan and Iraq." *The Strategy Bridge*. June 2017. <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/6/20/the-wages-of-war-without-strategy>

Robert M. Cassidy and Jacqueline Tame. "The Wages of War without Strategy, Part III: Beyond the Present – A Call to Clausewitz and to Conscience." *The Strategy Bridge*. August 2017. <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/8/23/the-wages-of-war-without-strategy>

Hew Strachan. "The Lost Meaning of Strategy." *Survival* (Autumn 2005): 33-54.

Bonus in class film – *The Journey's End*

Supplementary Reading:

Susan Sontag. "Looking at War." *The New Yorker*. 9 December 2002.