

HIST 378-001 (HIST 389-003)-History of Aviation

3 credit hours

Spring 2018; Monday, 7:20 pm-10:00 pm

Planetary Hall 120

Dr. Jeremy R. Kinney, ([jkinney3@gmu.edu](mailto:jkinney3@gmu.edu));

([http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/people/jkinney3?\\_ga=1.62456300.1983227336.1453129682](http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/people/jkinney3?_ga=1.62456300.1983227336.1453129682))

Office: Robinson Hall Rob B 226C

Hours: Monday, 6:00 pm-7:00 pm or by appointment

This course is an introduction to the history of aviation from its origins to the present day. It examines selected topics on flight within the Earth's atmosphere from an international perspective with particular emphasis on events in the United States. Overall, the course stresses the history of flight within the broader context of culture, economics, politics, society, technology, and war through lecture, readings, film, writing assignments, and discussions.

The course surveys the seven major periods in the history of aeronautics: the origins of flight, 1783-1903; early flight, 1903-1914; World War I, 1914-1918; the Aeronautical Revolution, 1918-1938; World War II, 1939-1945; the Aerospace Industry, the Cold War, and Postwar Growth, 1947-1990; and late twentieth century developments, 1990-2003. Major themes and issues within those eras include: the emergence of aeronautical engineering as a professional discipline; airships, balloons, and blimps; aviation in the Third World; commercial airlines; culture and society with an emphasis on aviation art, literature, music, and film; the evolution of aeronautical technology; government support of aviation; the growth of the aviation industry; the idea of progress in the development of the airplane; manufacturing and design; military air power doctrine, theory, and practice; the minority experience in aviation; naval aviation; rotary-wing flight; flight as spectacle; and sport and recreational aviation.

### **Required Books and Films:**

Hynes, Samuel. *The Unsubstantial Air: American Fliers in the First World War*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

Kinney, Jeremy R. *Airplanes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Meyer, Alan D. *Weekend Pilots: Technology, Masculinity, and Private Aviation in Postwar America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. BOOK REVIEW AND DISCUSSION: Students will read Hynes' *The Unsubstantial Air* and Meyer's *Weekend Pilots*, submit a 1-2 page summary, and discuss the work in class.
2. SHORT EXAMS: Students will take 2 short exams. The short exam will consist of multiple choice, brief identification, and short essay questions.
3. RESEARCH PAPER: Students will complete one 8 page research paper that focuses on a significant aspect of the history of aeronautics. A statement of the research topic, including a bibliography of at least 8 secondary works, is part of this assignment.
4. PARTICIPATION: Students will be graded for their participation in general class discussions.

5. EXTRA CREDIT: Students have 2 extra credit opportunities. 1. Write a 1 page review of an aviation-themed movie (to be approved by the instructor). 2. Build a model airplane and discuss the history it represents and your experience building it in class.

### **Grade Determination:**

Book Discussion/Summary #1	15%
Book Discussion/Summary #2	15%
Short Exam #1	15%
Short Exam #2	15%
Research Statement	5%
Research Paper	25%
Participation	10%
Total	100%
Extra Credit #1	1-3 points added to final grade
Extra Credit #2	1-10 points added to final grade

### **Course Policies**

Please read these policies and make sure you understand them. If you have questions, please ask. You are expected to know these policies and to plan your work schedule, transportation, etc. accordingly.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University is an academic community. Its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. Mason students are bound by an Honor Code (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>), which states, “Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are treated gravely. In this course, academic integrity means that:

1. When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task.
2. When you rely on someone else’s work in any aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.
3. All aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.
4. You will tell the truth about the status of your work.

For a discussion of what constitutes plagiarism, go here: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/>

When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I will report students suspected of dishonesty to the University’s Honor Board for disciplinary action, including failure of the course and even expulsion.

### Attendance and Punctuality

Regular and punctual attendance is required. If you need to miss class for any reason, please inform the instructor ahead of time if possible. Please sit near the door to minimize the disruption if you need to arrive late or leave early. If you have a serious illness, please do not come to class. Take care of yourself first.

Regarding religious holidays and observations, it is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments. Please refer to the calendar of religious holidays and observations (<https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>).

### Inclement Weather

On bad-weather days, consult the University's homepage for cancellation information. If the University is open, we will be having class.

### Assignments

1. All assignments will be submitted **electronically** to me at [jkinney3@gmu.edu](mailto:jkinney3@gmu.edu) no later than 7:20 pm the day they are due.
2. If you have a reason for missing class, especially one with an in-class examination or book discussion, you must contact the instructor before the date and have him consent to your absence if you wish to make up the work. Be prepared to show documentation if you miss an assignment and want a make-up.
3. **Unless you make other arrangements with the instructor, late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each day of tardiness.**

### Decorum

1. In every class meeting, students are expected to be intellectually engaged, to behave in a professional manner, and to be respectful of others.
2. **No sleeping, texting, unrelated internet surfing, instant messaging, e-mail correspondence, talking, giggling, smirking, or any other form of non-class related activity or misuse of electronic technology will be tolerated during class meetings.** Students who behave in the ways described here will be warned the first time and may be dismissed from class if the behavior persists.
3. Note-taking on laptops is permitted, but to prevent internet surfers from distracting other students, **all laptop users are required to sit at the back of the room behind everyone else.**

### Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact the Office of Disability Resources (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please talk to me as soon as possible (though you can wait until office hours, in the interest of privacy).

## **Diversity**

George Mason University promotes a learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. For more information, go to: <https://diversity.gmu.edu/>.

## **Schedule:**

### **Week 1-January 22**

Introduction, Course Requirements, and Historiography

Balloon flight and the origins of heavier-than-air flight, 1783-1895

### **Week 2-January 29**

The Invention and the Early Development of the Airplane, 1896-1903

The Early Flight Era, 1903-1914

Read: Kinney, Introduction, Chapter 1

### **Week 3-February 5**

World War I: The First Air War, 1914-1918

Read: Kinney, Chapter 2

### **Week 4-February 12**

An Aeronautical Revolution during a Golden Age of Flight, 1918-1938: Aviation, Society, and the Spectacle of Flight

The Role of Government and the Aeronautical Design Revolution

Read: Kinney, Chapter 3

### **Week 5-February 19**

RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC THESIS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Golden Age: The Emergence of the Modern Aviation Industry

Interwar to World War II

### **Week 6-February 26**

BOOK REVIEW DUE

Discussion of Hynes, *The Unsubstantial Air*

### **Week 7-March 5**

SHORT EXAM #1

World War II:

Naval Aviation and War in the Pacific

American Strategic Bombing in Europe and the Morality of War

Read: Kinney, Chapter 4

**Week 8-March 12**  
**SPRING BREAK-No Class**

**Week 9-March 19**

World War II:

From “Rosie the Riveter” to “Fifinella”: Women in World War II Aviation

The African-American Experience

**Week 10-March 26**

The Air Age and the New Jet Technology

Second Aeronautical Revolution

Read Kinney, Chapter 5

**Week 11-April 2**

Cold War:

The Atomic Menace

Air War in Korea

Read: Kinney, Chapter 6

**Week 12-April 9**

Cold War: Air War in Vietnam

Airpower in the Post-Vietnam World, 1975-2000

**Week 13-April 16**

Postwar Trends in Commercial Aviation

The World Aerospace Industry, 1980-2000

Read: Kinney, Chapter 7

**Week 14-April 23**

BOOK REVIEW DUE

The Airplane for Everyman: General Aviation in the United States

Discussion of Meyer, *Weekend Pilots*

Read: Kinney, Chapter 8

**Week 15-April 30**

SHORT EXAM #2

RESEARCH PAPER DUE 7:20 pm **by e-mail**

EXTRA CREDIT DUE

Conclusion, Class Discussion, and Review: Was the airplane the most significant technology of the twentieth century?

Read: Kinney, Conclusion

**Final Grades Submitted-Friday May 14, 7:30 pm**

**Research Paper Guidelines:**

Each student will conduct an independent study of a significant aspect of aviation history that will generate an 8 page research paper. The project constitutes 25% of your final grade. Overall, the papers and presentations must stress the history of flight within a broader context, which includes perspectives on culture, economics, politics, society, technology, and war.

You are required to use the Chicago citation format for endnotes as outlined in guides such as *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker. I strongly urge you to contact the University Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>) to assist you in writing your paper.

Students can select topics based on the list below on a first-come, first-serve basis. A paragraph stating your research topic, including a bibliography of at least 8 scholarly works is due **electronically** and will count 5% of your final grade. The final papers are due **electronically** on **Monday, April 30, 7:20 pm.**

Lighter-than-air Flight, 1783-2003

Flight before Wilbur and Orville, 1799-1896

The French and the Birth of Flight

The Aerial Age, 1908-1914

The First War in the Air, 1914-1918

The U.S. Government and the Airplane,  
1920-40

Charles A. Lindbergh and American  
Aviation

The Battle of Britain, 1940

The Air War in Europe, 1939-1945

The Air War in the Pacific, 1941-1945

The Enola Gay and the First Atomic Bomb

The Minority Experience in Aviation

The Culture of Aviation in the 20th Century

The Turbojet Revolution, 1945-1960

The X-Planes and Flight Research, 1945-  
1990

The Air War in Korea

The Air War in Vietnam

Commercial Aviation Enters the Jet Age

Private Flying in the United States

A History of Gliding

A History of the Helicopter

A History of Aerodynamics

A History of Aircraft Structures

A History of Aircraft Propulsion

A History of Aircraft Control

**Book Review:**

Students will write a 1-2 page review of Hynes' *The Unsubstantial Air* and Meyer's *Weekend Pilots*. The main point of the exercise is to summarize the book and place it within an appropriate historiographical context.

**Guidelines for book reviews:**

1. What questions does the book/film seek to answer?
2. What's the significance of the question?
3. What's the main body of evidence?
4. Brief summary of the book.
5. Author's conclusions.

Beyond that, consider these points:

1. Gaps or weaknesses in logic or conclusion.
2. What further questions does the book invite?
3. When comparing with other books, how do these writers ask and interpret questions?  
How do they differ in how they ask their questions?

**Extra Credit #1: Film Review:**

The main point of the exercise is to summarize the plot and place the film within an appropriate historical context (i.e., What does the film say about the time it represents as well as the time in which it was made?). You can use the book review guidelines above if you need a framework to start.

Potential movies to review:

*Hell's Angels* (1930)  
*Test Pilot* (1938)  
*Captains of the Clouds* (1942)  
*Strategic Air Command* (1955)  
*The Great Waldo Pepper* (1975)  
*Top Gun* (1986)  
*Memphis Belle* (1990)  
*The Tuskegee Airmen* (1995)  
*October Sky* (1999)  
*Dark Blue World* (2001)  
*Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (2004)  
*The Aviator* (2005)  
*Flyboys* (2006)  
*The Red Baron* (2008)  
*Red Tails* (2012)

**Extra Credit #2: Build a Model Airplane:**

A key element of the popular culture of aviation during the interwar and post-World War II periods involves the building of model airplanes by enthusiasts of all ages. Get a model, build it, bring it to class, and tell the history it represents and your experience building it for up to 10 points added to your final grade.