The subfield of civil-military relations deals with the relationship between civil government and the military institutions charged with protecting that government. That relationship by its nature involves tension: how to maintain a military system strong enough to provide security for the government without allowing the military to become so strong that it threatens the government? For the majority of its history, the United States has balanced this tension very effectively. But global events of the past two decades have provided vivid demonstrations that effective civilian control of the military is by no means a given. History and current events abound with examples of the perils of strained civil-military relations.

Scholars who study civil-military relations come from a variety of disciplines. Some are historians; some are political scientists; some are sociologists. The field has a historical dimension, built on empirical research; it also has a theoretical dimension, concerned with abstracts and institutional structures. This seminar offers an opportunity to become familiar with some of the most important scholarship in the field of civil-military relations, particularly the American experience, by analyzing some seminal works and some of the best recent scholarship. A selection of current articles and editorials rounds out the reading list.

In addition, the seminar affords an opportunity to practice some of the most important skills of the working historian. Over the course of the semester, each participant will write book reviews, formulate questions about the readings, and have an opportunity to help guide the class discussion. By the end of the course, students will develop an appreciation for the complexity of this field and be able to apply theoretical lessons to real-world problems.

Reading List

Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*
Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*
Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*
Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*
H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*
Thomas Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from WWII to Today*
William Taylor, *Military Service and American Democracy: From World War II to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*
T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals*
T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals*
Assignments and Grading

Performance in the course will be determined by three short book reviews, participation in individual discussion sessions, and a written exam that models an abbreviated version of the comprehensive exams that doctoral students take as they advance to candidacy.

**Book Reviews:** Each student will prepare three short, 750-word book reviews on three of the course’s reading assignments. Each review should follow the standard format for academic book reviews demonstrated in the *Journal of Military History*, the *Journal of American History*, or the *American Historical Review*. The review should briefly introduce the work (its topic, its author, the details of its publication) before analyzing the substance of the author’s discussion. What questions does the book seek to address? What is the author’s argument? What kind of evidence does the author employ to support that argument? How effective is the argument? Why? What are the book’s chief strengths and weaknesses? Fitting that information into a brief essay is enormously challenging; writing reviews offers class participants practice in synthesis, criticism, and brevity—essential skills for the professional historian.

The choice of which books to review is up to the student. Reviews are due via Bb the day the book is discussed. Students may submit more than three book reviews; the three highest scores will count towards the final grade.

All written work submitted for the class should be in double-spaced, 12-point Times Roman font with standard one-inch margins.

**Participation:** Thoughtful participation in discussion is a vital part of an effective seminar. The ability to think critically in the moment, and to present one’s ideas within a discussion with other scholars is a vital trait in the historical profession. Effective participation in a graduate seminar comprises several skills: preparing for discussion, contributing to the give-and-take of an academic conversation, and following effectively the contributions of others in order to advance the analysis collaboratively.

A short set of reading questions (available each week on Bb) will serve as an outline for our discussions and provides some structure for notetaking.

Zoom sessions will be on Mondays from 7:30-10:00pm, with a short break somewhere in the middle. The Zoom link for Monday night discussions is here:

https://gmu.zoom.us/j/92531148636?pwd=eXM1aUVXMG1zOEiKVVWFBa1pLbnQ2QT09
Meeting ID: 925 3114 8636
Passcode: 993021

The attached handout provides some guidelines for effective discussion contribution.

**NOTE:**
Thoughtful, effective participation in every discussion is a vital part of success in any history seminar. Students who do not participate in every discussion should not expect to pass the course.
**Written exam:** The ability to formulate cogent arguments about a body of scholarship is another crucial skill for a professional historian. Synthesizing ideas across a range of works is critical for a serious scholar, and is one of the reasons that doctoral students sit for comprehensive exams before formally advancing to candidacy. Sitting for written exams also serves another valuable function: it forces students to prepare for the exam, reviewing notes and making connections throughout a particular literature. That process is often as or more valuable than the experience of writing the exam itself.

The other written assignment in the course will be a written exam that requires students to consider the readings as a whole, and to make a synthetic, historiographic argument about the evolving debates and themes that have shaped academic conversation about the field of civil-military relations over the past decades. The exam will present two questions; students will present answers to each in a pair of 10-12 page essays (approximately 2,500 words each.)

Exam questions will go out at **9:00am on Monday, April 18** and are due via Bb at **5:00pm on Monday, May 2.** Seminar will not meet on April 18 or April 25 to provide you time to focus on writing the exam. We will reconvene for a final meeting to discuss our conclusions on May 2.

**Grading:**
Final grades will break down as follows:
- Book reviews, 10% each
- Participation, 30%
- Comprehensive exam: 40%
Class Schedule

**January 24**  Introductions and expectations


**February 7**  Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*


**February 14**  Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*


**February 21**  T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals*

**February 28**  Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*


**March 7**  Thomas Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from WWII to Today*

March 14  SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

March 21  H. R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam


March 28  William Taylor, Military Service and American Democracy: From World War II to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars


April 11  Andrew Bacevich, The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War

April 18  WRITTEN EXAM

April 25  WRITTEN EXAM

May 2  Conclusions