Gerard J. Fitzgerald  
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Office Hours: Tuesday 4:30-6:30

HIST 615-014  
Time and Location

Tuesday 07:20 PM to 10:00 PM — Robinson Hall B120

Course Outline

Experience proves that the man who obstructs a war in which his nation is engaged, no matter whether right or wrong, occupies no enviable place in history. Better for him, individually, to advocate “war, pestilence, famine,” than to act as obstructionist to a war already begun.

 Lt. Ulysses S. Grant, United States Army

To me, the development of new and more gases seemed no more immoral that the manufacture of explosives and guns. . . . I did not see in 1917 . . . why tearing a man’s guts out by high explosive shell is to be preferred to maiming him by attacking his lungs or skin. All war is immoral.

Professor James B. Conant

The course explores the historical evolution of the academic-military-industrial complex in the United States beginning with light arms production at government armories prior to the Civil War and concluding with the successful creation of the world’s first thermonuclear weapon, less than ninety years later, during the Cold War. Through a series of chronological and topical case studies, the history of weapons development will be used as a platform to investigate the cultural impact on the nation and its citizens resulting from the continual creation and deployment of increasingly complex and ever more powerful weapons and weapons systems. The seminar will pay particular attention to the relationship between research and development practices carried out by scientists, engineers, and physicians and the often times unintended consequences on both the body and the environment. Case studies will include the armory system, railroad construction, environmental warfare, naval architecture, chemical warfare, military medicine, strategic bombing, biological weapons, the Manhattan Project, and thermonuclear weapons.

This course fulfills the “1861-1914” or the “1914-Present” distribution requirement in U.S. History, but not both.
TEXTBOOKS (OPTIONAL)


COURSE WEBSITE

We are using the Blackboard website for some course materials:
You should log in through MyMason:
https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

Contemporary documents that may be of relevance to this class are published by the U.S. Government. If they have not been destroyed, hidden, or reclassified, links to the documents can be found at: http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/

Assessment

PAPERS, COURSEWORK AND GRADING

There are two book reviews, based on assigned readings, no longer than 3.5 pages each, double-spaced, 12-point font, and standard margins. These papers are due at the beginning of the class that those books are being discussed. The final historiographic essay of 12 to 15 pages can be on any topic of your choice dealing with cultural, environmental, medical, scientific, sensorial, or technological aspects of war. The instructor must approve your topic in advance by **February 14**. Paper must be based on 8-12 books or a corresponding number of journal articles and books. Papers will graded with emphasis on: (1) insightful argument and analysis; (2) mastery of the assigned readings and class material; and (3) writing that is clear, concise and free of error. It is due **May 10** by noon. Each student will also give a 10-minute presentation of their research.

Students are expected to read all assigned work prior to the class session under which it appears on this syllabus. The instructor reserves the right to change the order of the readings and the lectures. Grades will be calculated as follows:

- **Quality of class participation** 25%
- **Quality of the two essays (10% each)** 20%
- **Quality of in-class presentation** 10%
- **Quality of final essay** 45%
Late assignments are not accepted nor are assignments submitted via e-mail.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

DO NOT BE LATE! Arriving late to class once, much less more than once (!), will result in severe penalties in the class participation grade.
Your class participation grade (25%) is based not only upon your punctual attendance, but also on your willingness to engage in and add to class discussion. You are expected to come to each class fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Attendance is a precondition, but does not fulfill the participation requirement. In exceptional circumstances, I may discount your participation if it is unrepresentative of your performance.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Should you have a learning disability that requires accommodation, I would be grateful if you advise me privately of your situation at the beginning of the semester. I will be open to any necessary and formal accommodations. I appreciate that you bring them to my attention in due time. You will also need to contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

HONOR AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me. More information is available at http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm.

Note: The syllabus may change as the semester progresses at the instructor’s discretion.
WEEK 1
Tuesday January 24

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2
Tuesday January 31

THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD: WEAPONS OF MASS PRODUCTION

Readings

Thomas P. Hughes, “Technological Momentum,” in *Does Technology Drive History*, 101-114. [PDF on Blackboard]

Optional Reading

WEEK 3
Tuesday February 7

THE CIVIL WAR AT SEA: BUILDING SHIPS! DESTROYING MEN?

Readings
David A. Mindell, *War, Technology, and Experience Aboard the USS Monitor* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).


Optional Readings Week 3-6
WEEK 4
Tuesday February 14

THE CIVIL WAR AT SEA II: CONSTRUCTING MACHINES AND SYSTEMS ON LAND

Readings


WEEK 5
Tuesday February 21

THE CIVIL WAR ON LAND: THE IRON HORSE AND NATURE

Readings


Optional Readings
William G. Thomas, The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America (Yale University Press, 2011)
WEEK 6
Tuesday February 28

NAVAL ARCHITECTURE AND FLEET CONSTRUCTION IN AMERICA: 1865-1945

Readings


WEEK 7
Tuesday March 6

THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Readings
*Selected chapters to be announced*


WEEK 8
Tuesday March 13

NO CLASS /SPRING BREAK!!!!!! Remember to keep reading poolside.

WEEK 9
Tuesday March 20
WORLD WAR I: RESEARCH, BODIES, AND DISEASE

Readings

Read either Byerly or Linker. You must read the Kevles’ chapters in The Physicists.


Beth Linker, War’s Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America (University of Chicago Press, 2011)


WEEK 10
Tuesday March 27

WORLD WAR I: THE CHEMISTS WAR

Reading


Optional Readings


WEEK 11
Tuesday April 3

WORLD WAR II AND HUMAN EXPERIMENTATION: RADIATION BIOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Readings


Optional Readings


WEEK 12
Tuesday April 10

WORLD WAR II: SHOOTING DUCKS IN A BARREL BEFORE CYBERNETICS

Readings

WEEK 13
Tuesday April 17
STATEGIC BOMBING

Readings

Optional Readings
David MacIsaac, “Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 624-647. [PDF on Blackboard]

WEEK 14

Tuesday April 24

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT: OPPIE GOES TO THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Readings


Optional Readings


WEEK 15

Tuesday May 2

Readings


Optional Readings
Lawrence Freedman, “The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists,” in Makers of Modern Strategy, 735-778. [PDF on Blackboard]


**Final Papers due in my box on May 10 by noon.**