The American Military Experience
Spring 2012
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Aim of the Course. In the 21st century, the United States maintains easily the most powerful military establishment in the world. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, force has become the preferred instrument of American statecraft. The premise of this course is that some appreciation of the American military experience is essential to understanding how the United States today plays its role as a global superpower.

Course Themes.
1). The relationship between
   • soldier and country
   • soldier and state
   • soldier and soldier
   • soldiers and civilians
   • commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers
   • military professionals and non-professionals
2). The nature of war
3). The interaction of war and politics
4). Changing popular attitudes and expectations regarding war
5). The significance of race, gender, and sexuality in military affairs

Course requirements:
   Attendance and class participation (20%)
   Response papers (40%) – four per student, each worth ten points
   Final exam (40%)

Lesson 1. Introduction
Lesson 2. Thomas Boyd, *Through the Wheat* (novel), pp. 1-70


Lesson 4. *Through the Wheat*, pp. 161-266

Lesson 5. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (film, 1930) (You Tube)

Response 1: 800 word film review by Thomas Boyd

Lesson 6. *From Here To Eternity* (film)

Response 2: 800 word review for a women’s magazine

Lesson 7. E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (memoir), pp. 5-104

Lesson 8. *With the Old Breed*, pp. 105-174

Response 3: 800 word rebuttal by a Japanese soldier

Lesson 9. Bill Mauldin, “*Willie and Joe,*” (cartoons)

http://www.awon.org/willie/willie2.html

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czkFi_wLMR0

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amERICANEXPERIENCE/features/photo-gallery/warletters-cartoons/

http://www.5ad.org/BillMauldin.htm

Lesson 10. *Twelve O’Clock High* (film)

Response 4: 1000 words on leadership lessons contained in this film.
Lesson 11. *The Negro Soldier* (propaganda film),
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6TvNTiMQz0

Response 5: an 800 word assessment of whether to include this film in the
Library of Congress National Film Registry.


Lesson 13. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 91-285

Response 6: 1000 words explaining the relationship between General Beal and
Benny Carricker.


Lesson 15. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 410-506

Response 7: 1000 words on the role and status of women at Ocanara Army
Airfield

Lesson 16. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 506-631

Response 8: Were Army Air Force policies regarding race during World War II
justified? Answer that question in an essay of not more than 1000 words.

Lesson 17. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (film)

Response 9: 800 words on why these were “best years” – I don’t get it.

Lesson 18. T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (history), Chapters 1-6

Lesson 19. *This Kind of War*, Chapters 7-17
Lesson 20. *This Kind of War*, Chapters 18-28


Lesson 22. *This Kind of War*, Chapters 29-40


Lesson 23. James Salter, *The Hunters* (novel), Chapters 1-9


Response 11: a poem of not fewer than 10 lines and not more than 25 describing the experience of flying fighters in Korea

Lesson 26. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (film)


Response 12: an 800 word dispatch by Neil Sheehan reporting on the events in the film as if they actually occurred


Lesson 30. *Go Tell the Spartans* (film)
Lesson 31. *Reporting Vietnam*, pp. 251-301


Response 13: a 1000 word essay demonstrating media bias in covering Vietnam
or a 1000 word essay refuting that charge.

Lesson 33. *The Deer Hunter* (film)

Lesson 34. *Reporting Vietnam*, pp. 386-462


Lesson 37. *Three Kings* (film)

Response 14: 800 words on why this film flopped; was its failure deserved?


Lesson 41. *The Hurt Locker* (film)

Response 15: you are former President George W. Bush; write an 800 word
assessment of this film in your private diary.

Lesson 42. Conclusions

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