

# **The American Military Experience**

**Spring 2013**

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**Aim of the Course.** In the 21<sup>st</sup> 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.** What we want to explore:

- 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, at least one from lessons 4-10.

Final exam (40%)

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

Lesson 2. *Through the Wheat*, pp. 71-160

Lesson 3. *Through the Wheat*, pp. 161-266

Lesson 4. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (film, 1930) (You Tube)

Response 1: 800 word film review by Thomas Boyd

Lesson 5. *From Here To Eternity* (film)

Response 2: 800 word review for a 1950s “women’s magazine”

Lesson 6. E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (memoir), pp. 5-104

Lesson 7. *With the Old Breed*, pp. 105-174

Response 3: You are a Japanese soldier who fought in the Pacific War. Write an 800 word rebuttal of Sledge’s account.

Lesson 8. *The Caine Mutiny* (film)

Lesson 9. *Twelve O’Clock High* (film)

Response 4: You are columnist for *Business Week*. Write a 1000 words on leadership lessons contained in this film or in the one preceding it.

Lesson 10. James Cozzens, *Guard of Honor* (novel), pp. 1-285.

Response 5: 1000 words reflecting on the relationship between General Beal and Benny Carricker.

Lesson 11. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 289-410

Lesson 12. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 410-506

Response 6: 1000 words on the role and status of women at Ocanara Army Airfield

Lesson 13. *Guard of Honor*, pp. 506-631

Response 7: 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 14. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (film)

Response 8: 800 words on why these were “best years” – I don’t get it.

Lesson 15. James Salter, *The Hunters* (novel), Chapters 1-12

Lesson 16. *The Hunters*, Chapters 13-25

Response 9: a poem of not fewer than 10 lines and not more than 25 describing the experience of flying fighters in Korea.

Lesson 17. *Seven Days in May* (film)

Response 10: Couldn’t happen here, right? Or could it? Make the case in an essay of 1000 words.

Lesson 18. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (film)

Response 11: You are a retired SAC B-52 pilot. Assess the movie in 800 words.

Lesson 19. Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*, pp. xiii-75

Lesson 20. Caputo, pp. 75-150

Lesson 21. Caputo, pp. 153-248

Lesson 22. Caputo, pp. 249-346

Response 12: Vietnam was like every other war. No, it was different. Write a 1000 word essay on either view.

Lesson 23. *Three Kings* (film)

Response 13: 800 words on why this film flopped; was its failure deserved?

Lesson 24. Evan Wright, *Generation Kill* (embedded reportage), pp. 1-107

Lesson 25. Evan Wright, *Generation Kill* (embedded reportage), pp. 108-198

Lesson 26. Evan Wright, *Generation Kill* (embedded reportage), pp. 199-370

Response 14: 800 words explaining why these Marines accurately represent your generation – or why they do not.

Lesson 27. *Restrepo* (film)

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

Lesson 28. Conclusions

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