

**America Goes to War!**  
**History 601, section 80**  
**5:45-8:30p, main hall 313**  
**West Chester University**

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**To Sergeant Rock by Michael Casey (*Obscenities, 1972*)**

Gentlemen  
One year over there  
An you'll age ten  
Am I exaggeratin, Sergeant Rock?  
You ask Sergeant Rock  
If I'm exaggeratin  
Sergeant Rock was in the army  
Since the day he was born  
He was in the war of the babies

**Books:**

Thomas Childers. *Soldier From the War Returning: The Greatest Generation's Troubled Homecoming from World War II*. Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2009.

John W. Dower. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq*. New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Paul Fussell. *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

David M. Kennedy. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. Twenty-fifth Anniversary edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Dominic Tierney. *How We Fight: Crusades, Quagmires, and the American Way of War*. New York, Boston and London: Little, Brown and Company, 2010.

**Overview:**

In 2006, the Public Broadcasting Service dubbed its documentary film about the French and Indian War, or the Seven Years War, *The War That Made America*. The title is certainly appropriate as England's victory over the French in that conflict affirmed British control over North America and precipitated America's War for Independence.

That being the case, war has remade America ever since. From quasi wars to total wars, the United States has taken on all comers throughout its history. The nation has gone to war against empires, superpowers, former colonies and non-state actors, at times reluctantly and at others enthusiastically, time and time again. Historians have debated endlessly the merits of American intervention in each case. Whether judged as just or unjust, necessary or tragic, however, the conflicts have all proven transformative for Americans, both individually and collectively.

Our task this semester is to consider the history of America at war, a prominent theme of our nation's past and present. Our first task will be to examine how and why America goes to war. Some of the questions that we take up will include: Is there an American way of war? What is it? Has it evolved over time and place? How do the nation's crusades transform into quagmires? Is nation-building a function of war-making?

Our second aim this semester is to gain insight into our nation at war. Here, we will ask: What role has propaganda played in America's times at war? Has it hindered or furthered the national cause? How does war shape national culture? How does it effect individual psychology? What is the relationship between the home front and the front lines?

From here, we'll look at the legacy of war on America. What is the experience of soldiers returning from war? How does the nation demobilize? How are wars re-imagined in collective memory? Popular culture? Politics? Memorials? This line of questioning will lead us to our final topic – cultures of war. To what extent has the United States grown militaristic as a consequence of its history of going to war? Are there other implications of our past uses of state violence?

### **Requirements (400 possible points):**

**Book review:** 600 words maximum. See guide/models for style and substance. Choose any one of the required books to review. Submit your copy the last night we discuss that book. For example, if you choose Tierney's work to review, submit on 15 Sept. **50**

**Attendance/Participation:** Each week we gather for an informed discussion about whatever it is we are reading. Hence, what you do not say will be held against you. In contrast, what you do say will go far, particularly if it invigorates our conversation about the topic. Each night is worth a potential five points, giving us a total of 50, and you the luxury of having one off night. 0 – absent, 1-2 – present physically, 3-4 – informed responses to questions, 5 – adds some insight, initiates discussion. **50**

**Thesis, three points, so what?:** Five times throughout the semester, submit your response to the evenings readings by: 1. briefly stating a thesis you have developed regarding the night's topic (a few sentences), 2. three points from the reading that support your point of view, 3. why this insight is important for historians. These should be cited properly, and should not exceed one page. For citation style, see:

[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

**100**

**Multimedia:** At any one meeting (no more than two students per night), introduce the rest of us to some piece of music, video game, film, or other piece of culture that you suggest offers insight into America's experience in going to war. This will work best by placing the piece in historical context, and by situating it within the historical record. How, for example, does *Platoon* compare to testimonies offered by those who were there, to what historians have had to say based on evidence? In what ways does the film affirm or refute America's collective memory about that war? How is the film a product of the time of its creation? How does it compare to other films?

Bring to class no more than a one page analysis of your chosen piece for sharing with the rest of us. Be sure to cite whatever it is you are discussing, at the top of the page. Your grade will be derived in equal measure from the clarity of your presentation and the strength of your analysis. **50**

**Facebook:** Each of you must enlist in a squad – ALPHA, BRAVO, CHARLIE, DELTA, or ECHO. Prior to class, that squad is responsible for uploading to the class facebook page a list of questions for discussion about the night's reading, any kind of supplementary material (short videos, photos, essays, links to songs, etc). Class page is on facebook at America Goes to War, West Chester University. **50**

**Final paper:** Choices! One is to write a review essay about one of the topics we discuss in class, perhaps by building off of the book you choose to review. Select a topic of interest, say "American propaganda during wartime." Then, survey the literature, five books or so, any recent journal articles, and offer your analysis of the works you select. This works best when approached thematically, as opposed to laundry list style. In other words, you will detect themes across the literature – identify them for the reader, underscore the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces that you have looked at accordingly. Note also any holes you find (maybe none of the works in our example, for instance, discuss the government's role in promoting patriotic music). Conclude with an overall assessment – one that concretely addresses the question of So What? by indicating the importance of this topic for American historians. **100**

Your second choice here is to do a primary source based paper – one that briefly discusses the historiography of your topic, uses both primary and secondary sources to support a thesis (which you clearly state up front), and then addresses the implications of your work by, you guessed it, concretely addressing the question of So What?

**Extra credit:**

Show and tell – bring something to share with the rest of us that is pertinent to what we are talking about that night. Take a few minutes and, informally, tell us about whatever it is you brought with you – these can really be anything, from video game demonstrations to songs to youtube clips to readings (articles). I'll use these for fence sitting. Meaning, I'll make note of your contribution and, if you end up sitting between say an A- and an A

(perhaps you have earned 365 points out of 400, about 91%), with a reasonable amount of show and tells, in this case 4 or 5, the A- becomes an A.

### **Schedule:**

1 Sept: Hello!

#### ***War American Style***

8 Sept: Read: Tierney, *How We Fight*, 3-119; Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1973), xvii-xxiii; Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda From the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-45. ALPHA

15 Sept: Read Tierney, *How We Fight*, 120-267; Brewer, 230-285. BRAVO

21 Sept – Dominic Tierney at U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA, 7:15pm

22 Sept: Paper appointments anyone?

#### ***Hearts and Minds, Over Here & Over There***

29 Sept: Read Kennedy, 3-190; song selection from Max Arthur, *When This Bloody War is Over: Soldiers' Songs of the First World War* (London: Piatkus, 2001); see also <http://www.firstworldwar.com/audio/index.htm> CHARLIE

6 Oct: Read Kennedy, 191-390. DELTA

13 Oct: Read excerpts from John Bush Jones, *The Songs That Fought The War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939-1945* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England); Frederic Krome, editor, *Fighting the Future War: An Anthology of Science Fiction War Stories, 1914-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2012). ECHO

19 October: National Civil War Museum, Harrisburg, PA.

20 Oct: Research/Writing Time

27 Oct: Read Fussell, 3-114; Childers, 1-44. ALPHA

3 Nov: Read Fussell, 115-297; Childers, 45-101. BRAVO

### *Soldiers from War Returning*

10 Nov: Read Childers, 105-290; excerpt from Stewart O’Nan, editor, *The Vietnam Reader* (New York: First Anchor Books, 1998); excerpt from Lee Andersen, *Battle Notes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Superior, WI: Savage Press, 2003); see also [www.soldierstoscholars.com](http://www.soldierstoscholars.com); <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/author/matt-gallagher/> CHARLIE

11 November: Veteran’s Day Parade, PA Veteran’s Museum, Media, PA.

### *Culture of War*

17 Nov: Dower, part one; excerpt from Nina B. Huntemann and Matthew Thomas Payne, editors, *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Robert J. Kodosky, “Holy Tet Westy!: Graphic Novels and the Vietnam War,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 44:5 (October 2011). DELTA

24 Nov: Gobble, gobble!!

1 Dec: Dower, part two and three. ECHO

8 Dec: *So What? – Roundtable-like discussion of semester projects.*

### **Reviewing Books**

A book review is an essay which comments on a particular work or a series of works bearing upon a single subject or related subjects. The most important element about a book review to remember is that it is a **commentary**, not merely a summary. You should devote relatively little space to surveying the contents. Simply present a brief outline or synopsis, indicating the general topic, the chronological scope, the major emphasis (political, economic, intellectual, etc.) and which, if any, aspects of the subject are totally ignored. The bulk of your review, therefore, should concentrate on your evaluation of the way the author(s) handled the issues discussed. What is (are) the overall thesis(es) -- the points of view or conclusion? what is your informed response to the work’s argument? Did the book(s) enhance your understanding of the issues? Be as direct as possible. Remember, you are the expert.

In framing your review, you should provide some information on the author(s). What are his or her relevant qualifications and background (or lack thereof) for writing on this subject? What were his or her reasons for writing this book? (Often the preface contains such information) What evidence is cited, and has new documentation become available? If so, identify the new documentation. Or, does the book present a novel interpretation based on previously available documents, or does it provide a new literary or dramatic account of a subject already treated by others? Your conclusions and assessments regarding these aspects, of course, will affect your comparative evaluations of the works. You should also consider the time during which the book was written and, if evident, the author’s values and biases. For example, in all likelihood a biography of Senator Joseph McCarthy written by a conservative Republican journalist in 1954 will differ from a biography written by a neo-Marxist academic in 1974.

It will probably be necessary to refer to specific portions of the books to illustrate your statements and conclusions, but it is generally not advisable to quote extensively from it. When reviewing more than one book, choose aspects of the subject that are sufficiently broad to cover all of them and compare the books from these particular perspectives. Do not try to make more points than can be accomplished thoroughly in your review. It is better to make a few points well than many points poorly. Once you have decided on the central points you intend to make, treat each one as a separate section of your review. Each section should explain the one point, supporting it with your own arguments and with brief examples from the book(s) under review and drawing conclusions as to the meaning and importance of the point.

Your review should conclude with your personal critique. Refer back to your introductory paragraph(s). What is your ultimate judgment of the style, format, contents, and historical value of each book? Has each author achieved the purpose, explicit or implicit, for writing the book? Has he or she persuasively argued the thesis to your satisfaction? Why or why not? Compare the evidence cited and argumentation used to support the respective conclusions. Has the book challenged you intellectually, increasing your knowledge, raising new questions, and/or presenting the material in a novel, even provocative manner? Or does the author simply rehash what everyone already knows? Would you recommend any or all of these books, and at what level -- secondary, undergraduate, graduate? What book on this subject still needs to be written?

### **Dr. Kodosky's Guide to Writing History Papers**

1. Historians do not describe the past, they analyze it. For our purposes, you must do the same.
2. Identify an area of interest and narrow your focus as much as possible. For example, if interest is American intervention in Vietnam (not a bad choice if in HIS 399!) – acquire as much context as possible then zero in on what you find interesting (let's say PSYOP, for example).
3. Acquire all you can about psychological operations (PSYOP) in Vietnam and, during this process, start asking questions. One might be, what did PSYOP contribute to American policy in Vietnam.
4. Now you are off. You have a question to build your paper on – note here, you are not writing a chronological description of PSYOP, rather you are asking a question to which your paper suggests an answer.
5. Do your research, work from big picture to small picture, perhaps limiting yourself (pending on limitations of space and time) to a particular time (say 1965-68), an administration (Kennedy maybe), an event (Tet) or a geographical area (Saigon perhaps).
6. To help streamline, develop an outline. Begin with your thesis – idea is to clarify to your reader where the journey is beginning, and where it ends. “This paper argues that American psychological operations (PSYOP) in Vietnam, as orchestrated by the administration of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, failed to fulfill its potential in building support for President Ngo Dinh Diem and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). This situation occurred due to the inability of officials, in both Saigon and in Washington, to grasp circumstances as ordinary Vietnamese perceived them”
7. Now that you have a thesis, it is your responsibility to persuade your reader of its validity. To accomplish this task, bring on the evidence!
8. Think of yourself as an attorney attempting to convince a jury. You must present a preponderance of evidence – cite, cite and cite again – general rule is to provide two pieces of evidence for every point you make.
9. Stay focused. Ask yourself at each juncture, how is this passage advancing my argument?

10. Conclude by addressing what your reader is surely thinking – So What? What are the lessons one should take from your analysis? Re: PSYOP example – “This inability of officials to win Vietnamese hearts and minds helps explain why, despite its subsequent application of overwhelming force, the United States failed to eradicate RVN opposition in Vietnam.”
11. Check and double check final version for citations. Remember, historians use Turabian, diligently follow this guide.

### **Grading:**

A = Well written analysis with copious evidence – all relevant course material. Argument is logical, convincing. Conclusion persuades me that I should care – resoundingly addresses So What? Grammar and sentence structure correct, minimal structural problems. Citations are in order – meaning, follows Turabian’s *Chicago Manual of Style*, utilizes notes (end or foot) and contains works cited page.

B = Adequately written analysis with a substantial amount of textual evidence. Argument is well conceived, thoughtful, if not convincing. So What? Raised, not sufficiently addressed. Problematic citations, grammar and sentences require more than minimal revision (one plus instance per page).

C = Analysis with some substantiating evidence. Argument is seriously flawed or trite (Argues “water is wet,” or lacks context). No attempt to deal with So What. Mostly uninformed opinion. Citations and/or grammar, sentence structure are seriously flawed – obscure understanding on occasion.

D = A summary with supporting textual evidence, but no analysis. Laundry list of readings, cut and past like. Citations missing, flawed. Serious grammar and structural problems, numerous errors per page. So What? Missing, thesis unclear.

F = A summary with no supporting textual evidence, no citations, no evidence of thinking.

Write right!

#### 1. Avoid contractions:

Get rid of “can’t”, “doesn’t”, “wouldn’t”, etc., unless you are using these words in a quotation of direct speech. Avoid dangling “this” and “that.” This one is an example of correct usage.

#### 2. Put sentences into the active voice; avoid the passive voice:

Robert Strange McNamara was the Secretary of Defense (**Bad**). Robert Strange McNamara served as Secretary of Defense (**Good**). The French were defeated at Dienbienphu (**Bad**). The French lost the Battle of Dienbienphu (**Good**).

#### 3. Move prepositions to the front of sentences:

The speech was made in 1965 at Johns Hopkins University (**Bad**). In 1965 at Johns Hopkins University, President Lyndon Baines Johnson promised economic development (**Good**).

#### 4. Use tense consistently, the past tense is preferred:

During his administration, Richard Milhous Nixon demonstrates little tolerance for dissent which he deems divisive (**Bad**). During his administration, Richard Milhous Nixon demonstrated little tolerance for dissent which he deemed divisive (**Good**).

5. Make sure you have pronoun agreement: The United States acts cautiously; they do not rush into war. (**Bad**). The United States acts cautiously; it does not rush to wage war (**Good**).

6. Be specific, who is doing what to whom? In colonial Vietnam, peasants were oppressed and exploited (**Bad**). In colonial Vietnam, the French oppressed and exploited Vietnamese peasants (**Good**).

7. Number your Pages!

8. When inserting quotations into your text, be sure to cite the author, book, and the page number you got it from utilizing notes [insert]:

“Actually, Tet was a military as well as psychological defeat from which the US effort to impose its power on Vietnam never recovered” (David L. Anderson, *The Vietnam War* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 68). For subsequent citations (notes), if this one is only book from this author – (Anderson, 42).

9. Start paragraphs with topic sentences. Do not start off paragraphs with quotations:

#### **Good**

Even as their nation waged war there, many Americans remained uninformed about Vietnam. For example, Deidre English, editor of *Mother Jones* magazine, recalls that as a high school senior in 1966 she wondered, “How can my country be at war and I don’t know about it, and my teachers don’t talk about it?” (Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* [New York: Penguin Books, 2003], 30).

#### **Bad**

“How can my country be at war and I don’t know about it, and my teachers don’t talk about it?” (Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* [New York: Penguin Books, 2003], 30. Even as their nation waged war there, many Americans remained uninformed about Vietnam.

10. Make sure you have a thesis statement (i.e. something that your paper is trying to prove: American intervention in Vietnam spanned three decades (**Bad**). Americans made little effort to win Vietnamese hearts and minds (**Good**). The former statement is bad because it is a fact—it can’t be disproved. The latter statement is better because it is an interpretation that can be either proved or disproved.

11. Either italicize or underline titles of books, magazines, movies, journals and magazines. Do not put in quotes! Instead, put article and chapter titles in quotes (but no italics!). “New York Times” (**Bad**) *New York Times* (**Good**)

12. Use however correctly by placing it in the middle of a sentence, surrounded by commas, sparingly employed. However, the team fared badly this time (**Bad**). The Steelers generally win playoff games at home, however, this time the team played poorly (**Good**)

13. Use “on the other hand” only after utilizing “On one hand.” On the other hand, General George Washington understood the war’s true nature and ordered his soldiers to treat civilians well (**Bad**). On one hand, the British terrorized the country side. On the other hand, General George Washington understood the war’s true nature and ordered his soldiers to treat civilians well (**Good**).

14. This thing happened **then** another incident occurred. Four is greater **than** three.
15. Vary diction – rule of thumb, avoid using the same word more often than once per page.
16. Write out once before abbreviating – Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ).