War in European History

Course Content and Learning Outcomes

As its title indicates History 145A explores war rather than wars: it examines the evolving forms and scope of warfare in European history since the Middle Ages, from the days of mounted knights to the age of smart bombs and cruise missiles. Other countries, notably the United States and former colonies, are included as they encounter or join Europe in armed conflict.

The course consists of lectures and discussions, the latter based on the assigned readings, all of which are in the bookstore or on the course website (Latte). I urge you to purchase the four available at the bookstore – Christon I. Archer et al., World History of Warfare (Nebraska, 2002), Archer Jones, The Art of War in the Western World (Illinois, 1987), John Keegan, The Book of War (Penguin, 2000), and James J. Sheehan, Where have all the Soldiers Gone (Mariner, 2008).

Upon completion of this course, students should be familiar with the principal periods of warfare in European history since the fall of the Roman Empire and the main differences between them. They should acquire the ability to regard any armed conflict as a window onto the society or societies in which it takes place: to recognize the social determinants of military organization, the links between armed conflict and state formation, and the cultural dimensions of war. They should as well learn to analyze military conflicts not only in terms of outcomes but in terms of the mentalities of those waging them. They should, finally, learn to criticize primary texts narrating distant military events and treat them not only as sources but as objects of study in themselves.

Course Requirements

Requirements, all of which must be completed, require class attendance, a mid-term and a final exam consisting of choices of essay questions, and a ten page paper, due April 12, analyzing a battle of your choice. Guidelines for the paper are attached to the syllabus. The paper and the midterm will each account for about 25% of the course grade, the final about 50%, although I will also take classroom participation into account.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
Schedule of Classes

1. Wednesday, January 20: Introduction

2. Thursday, January 21: Barbarian warfare

   World History of Warfare, 103-116

3. Monday, January 25: Warfare in the middle ages

   World History, 140-152, Art of War, 102-126

4. Wednesday, January 27: War in the middle ages

   Art of War, 154-173

5. Thursday, January 28: Europeans and others in the middle ages: Vikings, Arabs, Mongols

   World History, 152-169; Art of War, 95-109, 134-144

6. Monday, February 1: Discussion

   Book of War: Froissart, Wavrin, Wheatcroft; Tacitus, Germania (selections on latte)

7. Wednesday, February 3: Early modern war

8. Thursday, February 4: Early modern warfare: the impact of gunpowder

   World History, 217-256

9. Monday, February 8: Early modern warfare: The impact of sail

   World History, 256-273; Art of War, 209-213

10. Wednesday, February 10: Early modern war: the impact on state and society

    World History, 278-316; Art of War, 214-220, 252-256

11. Thursday, February 11: Discussion

    Book of War: Mendoza, Correggio; Machiavelli, Art of War (on Latte)

BREAK
12. Monday, February 22: War in the age of reason
   *World History*, 319-369; *Art of War*, 267-274

13. Wednesday, February 24: Colonial wars (i)
   *World History*, 440-459, 369-376

14. Thursday, February 25: Revolutionary warfare
   *World History*, 380-396; *Art of War*, 320-330

15. Monday, March 1: Napoleonic Warfare
   *World History*, 396-408; *Art of War* 330-372

16. Wednesday, March 3: Discussion
   *Book of War*: Dunbar, Myers, Zimmerman, Lawrence, Roeder, Wheeler, Wellington

17. Thursday, March 4: The industrialization of warfare (i)
   *World History*, 410-438; *Art of War*, 387-392, 407-409

18. Monday, March 8: The industrialization of warfare (ii)
   *Art of War*, 377-386, 423-433

19. Wednesday, March 10: Midterm

20. Thursday, March 11: War and national consciousness

21. Monday, March 15: Colonial wars (ii)
    *World History*, 459-480

22. Wednesday, March 17: Discussion
    *Book of War*: Bodell, Clifford, Campbell, Fitchett, Isandhlwana and Rorke’s Drift; Clausewitz, *On War*, Book I, chapter 1, on Latte)

23. Thursday, March 18: World War I (i) Stalemate
World History, 483-501; Art of War, 419-423, 434-441, 459-463

   Art of War, 463-475, 483-488

BREAK

25. Wednesday, April 7: World War I (iii) Impact on state and society
   Where have all the Soldiers Gone, 69-91

26. Thursday, April 8: Discussion
   Book of War, Graham, Rommel, Mackenzie, Rogerson, Glubb, Spears, Graves

27. Monday, April 12: Interwar
   Where have all the Soldiers Gone, 92-118; Art of War, 489-507

   Research paper due

28. Wednesday, April 14: World War II (i) Blitzkrieg
   Art of War, 508-539

29. Thursday, April 15: World War II (ii) attrition
   Art of War, 544-595

30. Monday, April 19: World War II (iii) Total war
   World history, 511-535

31. Wednesday, April 21: Discussion
   Book of War: Stahlberg (1), Shand, Milner-Barry, Cremer, Stahlberg (2), Schweppenburg, Osmont, (selections from Paul Addison and Angus Calder, eds., Time to Kill: The Soldier’s Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945, on Latte)

33. Thursday, April 22: Nuclear and conventional strategies
   Art of War, 596-602; James Sheehan, Where Have all the Soldiers Gone?, 147-171, on Latte
34. Monday, April 26: Colonial wars (iii)

World History, 579-587

35. Wednesday, April 28: The Demilitarization of Europe

Sheehan, Where Have all the Soldiers Gone, 172-197 on Latte

36. Thursday, April 29: Discussion

Book of War: Bowman, Fenton

37. Monday, May 3: Europe as a Superpower?

Sheehan, Where Have all the Soldiers Gone, 198-221

38. Wednesday, May 5: Review and Conclusions

Guidelines for paper due April 12

This paper, of eight to ten pages in length, should analyze a single battle in European history since the Middle Ages.

It should answer, roughly speaking, the following questions, paying particular attention to some as appropriate:

1. Introduction: general summary of the battle, of the war in which it took place, and of its importance for that war (e.g. Waterloo marked the end of the Napoleonic wars and of French expansion in Europe).

2. Why did the battle turn out the way it did: what was the relative weight of disparities in forces, human error before or during the battle, quality of arms and morale, etc. (e.g. Ney’s failure to attack at Waterloo, greater size of allied coalition forces, quality of British infantry, etc.)

3. What does the battle reveal about the prevailing conceptions and limitations of warfare (e.g. use of cavalry at Waterloo).

4. What does the battle reveal in general about the societies that waged it – for example about their social structure, level of national or other collective sentiment, or systems of recruitment?

5. Conclusion: does the battle contain any single most important lesson or historical revelation?