

**Strategies of Modern Warfare
PSCI / IS-3135**

**Department of Political Science
Virginia Tech
Fall 2023**

Paul Avey

Course Information

Course Time: MWF 10:10 – 11:00 AM

Course Room: Randolph Hall 208

Contact Information

Office: 513 Major Williams Hall

Telephone: (540) 231-6814

Email: pcavey@vt.edu

Office Hours: MW Noon – 1:15 PM and by appointment

Course Description

This course explores conventional military strategy and organization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The goal is not to learn how to fight a war. Rather, students will apply social scientific tools to better understand conventional conflict. Modern wars have killed thousands, even millions, inflicted widespread suffering, and seen the destruction of states and empires. Deterring, preventing, and managing such conflagrations is understandably at the center of many states' foreign policies. Having completed the course, students will be more capable of informing, evaluating, and critiquing these policies as well as utilizing social science tools to assess complex phenomena.

The course is divided into five overlapping sections. Part One begins with a discussion on the study and nature of war and strategy. In Part Two, the course turns to evaluating the core operational and tactical elements of modern mid- and high-intensity land warfare. Part Three examines variation in combat effectiveness across countries. In Part Four, we explore the role of strategic air power in compelling adversaries. Part Five examines the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine as well as debates surrounding American strategy and operational planning in the twenty-first century, with a focus on the potential for conflict with China.

Course Outline

Part: I Basics

August 21 (M)	Class 1	Introduction
August 23 (W)	Class 2	War
August 25 (F)	Class 3	Strategy and Force, I
August 28 (M)	Class 4	Strategy and Force, II

August 30 (W)	Class 5	Civil-Military Relations
September 1 (F)	Class 6	Air-Ground Forces
September 4 (M)	No Class	Labor Day
September 6 (W)	Class 7	Discussion

Part II Land Warfare

September 8 (F)	Class 8	Land Warfare, I
September 11 (M)	Class 9	Land Warfare, II
September 13 (W)	Class 10	Land Warfare Cases: World Wars
September 15 (F)	Class 11	Land Warfare Cases: Gulf War and Iraq
September 18 (M)	Class 12	State and Nonstate Actors
September 20 (W)	Class 13	Conventional Deterrence
September 22 (F)	Class 14	Film: Stalingrad
September 25 (M)	Class 15	Conventional Deter Cases: World War II
September 27 (W)	Class 16	Conventional Deter Cases: Postwar
September 29 (F)	Class 17	Discussion

Part III Sources of Combat Effectiveness

October 2 (M)	Class 18	Combat and Authoritarian Regimes
October 4 (W)	Class 19	Authoritarian Regimes Cases: Vietnam
October 6 (F)	No Class	Fall Break
October 9 (M)	Class 20	Tactical Decision Game
October 11 (W)	Class 21	Authoritarian Regimes Cases: Iran-Iraq
October 13 (F)	Class 22	Military Cohesion
October 16 (M)	Class 23	Military Cohesion Cases: World War II
October 18 (W)	Class 24	Military Cohesion Cases: Vietnam
October 20 (F)	Class 25	Discussion

Part IV Air Power and Compellence

October 23 (M)	Class 26	Air Power, I
October 25 (W)	Class 27	Air Power Cases: World War II
October 27 (F)	Class 28	Air Power Cases: Korea and Vietnam
October 30 (M)	Class 29	Air Power, II
November 1 (W)	Class 30	Air Power Cases: Gulf War and Iraq
November 3 (F)	Class 31	Film: Twelve O'clock High
November 6 (M)	Class 32	Air Power Cases: Kosovo
November 8 (W)	Class 33	Air Power Cases: Yemen
November 10 (F)	Class 34	Discussion

Part V Great Power Competition

November 13 (M)	Class 35	Command of the Commons
November 15 (W)	Class 36	Russia, I

November 17 (F)	No Class	No Class [Makeup day if needed]
November 20-23	No Class	Thanksgiving Break
November 27 (M)	Class 37	Russia, II
November 29 (W)	Class 38	China, I
December 1 (F)	Class 39	China, II
December 4 (M)	Class 40	The Nuclear Shadow
December 6 (W)	Class 41	Discussion

A detailed schedule with readings and assignment due dates is on pages 8-13, below.

Grading

There are 200 total points in the class. Grades are based on five quizzes, five reading reactions, two film questionnaires, one group presentation, a paper outline, a research paper, discussion participation, and attendance. Any late assignments will automatically lose 10% of the grade for each day that it is late. There are no extensions for any assignment except in the case of documented health or family emergencies. All such cases must be documented by a Class Absence Verification through the Dean of Students: https://dos.vt.edu/our_services.html. Information and a request form is available on their website. If you are not able to come to class the day an assignment is due for any reason that you know of in advance, including excused absences for athletics, religious holidays, military orders, etc., you must turn that assignment in prior to that class period.

All assignments will be done on or uploaded to Canvas. Upload material as a Word document. If you do not have Word, contact the professor for alternative arrangements before the assignment is due. It is your responsibility to make sure that documents upload properly. Check that you can access and read the document after you upload it. Documents that do not appear or cannot be opened by the professor will be marked late.

The grade you receive at the end of the semester is final and will not be rounded up or down. The only exceptions are if there is a calculation error in your point total. If you believe there are any errors or omissions with your grade immediately contact the professor. There is no extra credit. Your grade is based on the assigned work so that every student has the same opportunity.

Additional information on grading and university and course policies removed from public version.

Required Reading

The following books are required and are available as eBooks through the Virginia Tech library. Note that the link and access may not work if you are not on campus or logged in to Virginia Tech. If you are not able to access an eBook, first check that you're logged in properly. There are often multiple eBook options (e.g., one might be through the publisher and one might be through JSTOR), so if you don't like one version try the other(s). If you continue to have difficulty accessing the eBook contact the professor immediately. Physical copies are available for purchase through online distributors such as Amazon or the university press that published it

such as Cornell University Press. Readings not from these books will either have a link or indicate that they are available on Canvas in the Course Reading Schedule, below. As with eBooks, some readings with a link require you to sign in with your Virginia Tech email or otherwise be logged into Virginia Tech for access. If you have difficulty accessing a reading with a link contact the professor.

Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/705945381>.

Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/889315364>.

Phil Haun, Colin Jackson, and Timothy P. Schultz, eds., *Air Power in the Age of Primacy: Air Warfare since the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1292404740>

John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/971492838>.

Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/887802636>.

Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/918561556>.

A note on the readings. The amount of reading varies throughout this class, with some weeks having more than 100 assigned pages. Check the syllabus and plan ahead as necessary.

Course Reading and Assignment Schedule

PART I: Basics

August 21 (M) Class 1. Introduction

- No Reading

August 23 (W) Class 2. War

- Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret (trans.), pages 75-89. Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.
 - NOTE: Use the Howard and Paret version on Canvas even if you have another translation.

August 25 (F) Class 3. Strategy and Force, I

- Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3-28 (chapter 1), <https://virginiatech.on.worldcat.org/oclc/639166426>

August 28 (M) Class 4. Strategy and Force, II

- Tami Davis Biddle, “Coercion Theory: A Basic Introduction for Practitioners,” *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2020), 95-109, <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/8864>

August 30 (W) Class 5. Civil-Military Relations

- Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist No. 8: Consequences of Wars Between the States,” (November 1787), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed08.asp
- Eliot Cohen, “Appendix: The Theory of Civilian Control,” in *Supreme Command*, (2002) pages 241-264. Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.

September 1 (F) Class 6. Air-Ground Forces

- No reading

Remember to post a reading reaction for Part I by the start of class (10:10am)

September 6 (W) Class 7. Discussion

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom: join online Zoom discussion

Quiz 1 available on Canvas beginning at 3pm on September 5 and closes at 10:10am on September 6. Once you start the quiz you will have fifteen minutes to complete it.

PART II: Land Warfare

September 8 (F) Class 8. Land Warfare, I

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 1-13, 28-51 (chapters 1 & 3)

September 11 (M) Class 9. Land Warfare, II

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 52-77 (chapter 4)

September 13 (W) Class 10. Land Warfare Cases: World Wars

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 78-131 (chapters 5 & 6)

Presentation by Group 1

September 15 (F) Class 11. Land Warfare Cases: Gulf War and Iraq

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 132-149, 181-190 (chapters 7 & 9)
- Stephen D. Biddle, "Speed Kills: Reevaluating the Role of Speed, Precision, and Situation Awareness in the Fall of Saddam," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (February 2007), pages 3-46: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1080/01402390701210749>

Presentation by Group 2

September 18 (M) Class 12. State and Nonstate Actors

- Stephen D. Biddle, *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerillas, Warlords, and Militias*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), pages 22-45 (chapter 2). Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.

September 20 (W) Class 13. Conventional Deterrence

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 13-66 (chapter 2)

Film questionnaire for Stalingrad available on Canvas at the end of class (11:00am)

September 22 (F) Class 14. Film: *Stalingrad*

- Skim: Jonathan M. House and David M. Glantz, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 129-147 (chapter 9). Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.
- Do not come to classroom; watch film on your own time and complete questionnaire

September 25 (M) Class 15. Conventional Deterrence Cases: World War II (Group 3)

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 67-133 (chapters 3 & 4)

Presentation by Group 3

September 27 (W) Class 16. Conventional Deterrence Cases: Postwar

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 134-188 (chapters 5 & 6)

Film questionnaire for Stalingrad due by the start of class (10:10am)

Remember to post a reading reaction for Part II by the start of class (10:10am)

September 29 (F) Class 17. Discussion

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom: join online Zoom discussion

Quiz 2 available on Canvas beginning at 3pm on September 28 and closes at 10:10am on September 29. Once you start the quiz you will have fifteen minutes to complete it.

PART III: Sources of Combat Effectiveness

October 2 (M) Class 18. Combat and Authoritarian Regimes

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 1-40 (chapters Introduction & 1)

October 4 (W) Class 19. Authoritarian Regimes Cases: Vietnam War

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 41-138 (chapters 2 & 3)

Presentation by Group 4

October 9 (M) Class 20. Tactical Decision Game

- No reading

October 11 (W) Class 21. Authoritarian Regimes Cases: Iran-Iraq War

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 139-232 (chapters 4 & 5)

Presentation by Group 5

October 13 (F) Class 22. Military Cohesion

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 1-43 (chapters 1 & 2)

October 16 (M) Class 23. Military Cohesion Cases: World War II

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 44-140 (chapters 3 & 4)

Presentation by Group 6

October 18 (W) Class 24. Military Cohesion Cases: Vietnam War

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 164-215 (chapters 6 & 7)

Presentation by Group 7

Remember to post a reading reaction for Part III by the start of class (10:10am)

October 20 (F) Class 25. Discussion

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom: join online Zoom discussion

Quiz 3 available on Canvas beginning at 3pm on October 19 and closes at 10:10am on October 20. Once you start the quiz you will have fifteen minutes to complete it.

PART IV: Air Power and Compellence

October 23 (M) Class 26. Air Power, I

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 12-86 (chapter 2)

October 25 (W) Class 27. Air Power Cases: World War II

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 87-136, 254-313 (chapters 4 & 8)

Presentation by Group 8

October 27 (F) Class 28. Air Power Cases: Korea and Vietnam

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 137-210 (chapters 5 & 6)

Presentation by Group 9

October 30 (M) Class 29. Air Power, II

- Haun, “Air Power in the Age of Primacy,” in *Air Power in the Age of Primacy*, ed. Haun et al, pages 1-25 (chapter 1)

November 1 (W) Class 30. Air Power Cases: Gulf War and Iraq

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 211-253 (chapter 7)
- Heather Venable, “The Result is Never Final: Operation Iraqi Freedom,” in *Air Power in the Age of Primacy*, ed. Haun et al, pages 121-147 (chapter 6)

Presentation by Group 10

Film questionnaire for Twelve O’clock High available on Canvas at the end of class (11:00am)

November 3 (F) Class 31. Film: Twelve O’clock High

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom; watch film on your own time and complete questionnaire
- The film is available for rent (or purchase if you like) on Amazon and YouTube.

Research Paper Outline due electronically via the course Canvas page by the start of class (10:10am)

November 6 (M) Class 32. Air Power Cases: Kosovo

- Andrew L. Stigler, “Hoping for Victory: Coercive Air Power and NATO’s Strategy in Kosovo,” in *Air Power in the Age of Primacy*, ed. Haun et al, pages 76-96 (chapter 4)

November 8 (W) Class 33. Air Power Cases: Yemen

- Ralph Shield, “Coercing a Chaos State: The Saudi-Led Air War in Yemen,” in *Air Power in the Age of Primacy*, ed. Haun et al., pages 201-228 (chapter 9)

Film questionnaire for Twelve O’clock High due by the start of class (10:10am)

Remember to post a reading reaction for Part IV by the start of class (10:10am)

November 10 (F) Class 34. Discussion

- No reading

- Do not come to classroom: join online Zoom discussion

Quiz 4 available on Canvas beginning at 3pm on November 9 and closes at 10:10am on November 10. Once you start the quiz you will have fifteen minutes to complete it.

PART V: Great Power Competition

November 13 (M) Class 35. Command of the Commons

- Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pages 5-46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137574>

November 15 (W) Class 36. Russia, I

- CNN “Russian Invasion of Ukraine: A Timeline of Key Events on the One Year Anniversary,” <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/02/europe/russia-ukraine-war-timeline/index.html>
- United States Department of Defense, “Russian War in Ukraine: Timeline,” <https://www.defense.gov/Spotlights/Support-for-Ukraine/Timeline/>
- Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Josh Holder, and Marco Hernandez, “21 Miles of Obstacles,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/06/28/world/europe/ukraine-counteroffensive-obstacles.html>

November 17 (F) No Class. Makeup day if needed.

- No reading

November 27 (M). Class 37. Russia, II

- Mary E. Sarotte, “Containment Beyond the Cold War: How Washington Lost the Post-Soviet Peace,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2021), pages 22-35, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/fora100&i=1156>

November 29 (W) Class 38. China, I

- Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, “The End of China’s Rise: Beijing is Running Out of Time to Remake the World,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1, 2021, pages 1-10. Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.
- Oriana Skylar Mastro and Derek Scissors, “China Hasn’t Reached the Peak of Its Power: Why Beijing Can Afford to Bide Its Time” August 22, 2022, pages 1-9. Reading available on Canvas in Files - > Readings.
- Optional: Carlos Lozada, “A Look Back at Our Future War With China,” *New York Times*, July 18, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/18/opinion/china-usa-relations-books-war.html>

December 1. (F) Class 39. China, II

- Derek Grossman and John Speed Meyers, “Minding the Gaps: US Military Strategy Toward China,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter 2019), pages 106-

108 (the 'Contending US Military Strategies toward China' section),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26815048>

December 4. (M) Class 40. The Nuclear Shadow

- Caitlin Talmadge, "Beijing's Nuclear Option: Why a U.S.-Chinese War Could Spiral Out of Control," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 6 (November/December 2018), pages 44-50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26797931>
- Jeffrey Lewis and Aaron Stein, "Who is Deterring Whom? The Place of Nuclear Weapons in Modern War," *Foreign Affairs*, June 16, 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/06/who-is-deterring-whom-the-place-of-nuclear-weapons-in-modern-war/>

Remember to post a reading reaction for Part V by the start of class (10:10am)

December 6. (W) Class 40. Discussion

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom: join online Zoom discussion

Quiz 5 available on Canvas beginning at 3pm on December 5 and closes at 10:10am on December 6. Once you start the quiz you will have fifteen minutes to complete it.

Research papers due electronically via Canvas by the start of class (10:10am)