

Strategies of Modern Warfare  
PSCI / IS-3135

Department of Political Science  
Virginia Tech  
Spring 2021

Professor Paul Avey

Course Information

Course Time: MWF 10:10 – 11:00 AM  
Course Room: Hahn Hall-North Wing 130  
Zoom Link for Online Sessions: [Removed]

Contact Information

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Office Hours: W Noon – 2:00 PM and by appointment  
Zoom Link for Office Hours: [Removed]

Course Description

This course explores conventional military strategy and organization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Students will apply social scientific tools to understand modern warfare. The goal is not to learn how to fight a war but to better understand the use of force in the modern era. Modern wars have killed hundreds of thousands, even millions and seen the destruction of states and empires. Deterring and preventing such conflagrations is understandably at the center of many states' foreign and national security policies. It is therefore important to examine modern warfare in order to better inform, evaluate, and critique these policies.

The course is divided into five overlapping sections. Part I begins with a discussion on the study and nature of war and strategy. In Part II, the course turns to evaluating the core operational and tactical elements of modern mid- and high-intensity land warfare. Part III examines variation in combat effectiveness across countries. In Part IV, we explore the role of strategic air power in compelling adversaries. Part V examines debates surrounding American strategy and operational planning in the twenty-first century, with a focus on the potential for conflict in the Pacific.

This course will be taught in a hybrid format due to safety precautions surrounding COVID-19. If university health guidelines change the course will move entirely online.

Grading

There are 200 total points in the class. Grades are based on discussion participation, reading reactions, one group presentation, group presentation attendance, two film questionnaires, five

online take-home quizzes, and two-take home essay assignments. There is no attendance requirement for in-person classes. 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. 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, etc., you must turn that assignment in *prior* to that class period. All assignments will be done directly on Canvas or uploaded to Canvas. For those assignments that you need to upload to Canvas, submit the assignment as a Word document. If you do not have Word contact the professor to discuss alternative arrangements. When uploading your assignment be certain that you check that it has loaded properly and you can access and read it. If you have trouble uploading the file to Canvas you must notify the professor and email an electronic copy before the assignment is due. If I am unable to access the file or the file is blank the assignment will be marked late. Submissions after the deadline will be marked late even if you completed work on it prior to the deadline. 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 reach out immediately. It is usually possible to address issues early but becomes more difficult over time.

### **Discussion Participation** (7.5 points)

There are five online discussion sessions via Zoom, one at the end of each section of the course. The discussion participation grade is made up of two components: attendance and participation. For attendance: each student will earn 1.25 points for each discussion session that they attend, up to 5 total points. For participation, each student will earn 1.25 points for each discussion session in which they comment, up to 2.5 total points. To get full credit, then, you must attend 4 of the 5 discussion sessions and comment in 2 of the 5 discussion sessions. You are of course encouraged to attend and comment in every session, but are not required to do so in order to get full discussion participation credit.

### **Reading Reactions** (7.5 points)

Each student must comment on one reading in each part of the course. Which reading you want to comment on is up to you, but it must be by 5:00PM on the final substantive class in each part of the course. You can choose to focus on a single article, chapter, or an entire book. Do not comment on a reading if you are presenting on that reading (you may comment on other chapters from the same book, but not the specific chapters you are presenting in your group). You will earn 1.5 points for each reading reaction, up to 7.5 total points. If a reaction does not earn full credit you may post extra reactions by the end of the next part of the course to get to the full point total. Enter your reading reaction in the Canvas Discussion tab for that part of the course. The reading reaction should be 3-5 sentences and identify a major point or piece of information from the reading(s) that you found interesting or generates questions for further discussion. These reactions will inform the discussion sessions.

### **Group Presentation** (30 points)

Students will select one set of cases to present from the assigned readings and join a 3-4-person group to present that material to the class. See the course reading schedule below for each group presentation. In order to best accommodate everyone, students will rank their top three topic choices and be assigned into one group based on their rankings.

Grades will be partially based on overall group performance (25 points) and individual performance (5 points). That means that every member of the group needs to be involved during the presentation. If you are not present during your group presentation you cannot receive credit for the individual performance. If you know that you will be absent on particular days during the semester you must not select a group that will present that day. If you learn that you will be absent after submitting your rankings you must inform me immediately and I will work to rearrange the schedule if possible. If the group decides that a member is not participating they should inform me immediately. If the group is unanimous that one student is not participating, then that student will not receive credit for the group portion of the grade. Groups can create group pages on the course Canvas page to communicate and share material, as well as get in touch with one another through other means. I know that group assignments can sometimes be challenging. A group format facilitates covering the cases in this course in a timely matter. Additionally, working in a group setting is an important skill to develop for many career paths.

The presentation should focus on communicating the basics of the case(s) under review and how that fits into the author's broader argument. You may also assess the strengths and weaknesses of the case. The point of this assignment is to assess your ability to engage, summarize, and communicate a set of information – which will you have to do in nearly any career that you pursue. As such, you do not need to engage with any material outside of the course readings. Be sure to demonstrate your mastery of the material at hand first and foremost. The presentation should be approximately 40-45 minutes to allow a few minutes for setup as well as questions.

On the day of the presentation, each group must also email me a 2-3 page paper summarizing the key points they will make in the presentation. Submit as a word document (contact me if no member of the group has word) and submit only one document for each group with everyone's name on it (whoever submits can CC their fellow group members). This paper should be in narrative form; do not use bullet points.

Note that group presentations require detailed reading of multiple chapters and articles. This includes those that you are presenting, but also chapters that outline the general argument so that you can consider how the evidence fits within the broader argument. That means frequently 50-100 pages of material to cover. I strongly encourage groups to begin to meet at least 2-3 weeks in advance to begin preparing their presentation.

### **Group Presentation Attendance** (10 points)

Each student must attend at least 7 group presentations other than your own. You will earn 1.25 points for each session that you attend, up to 10 points. Students are also encouraged to ask questions of the presenters, you can ask a question by typing your question into the comments box on Zoom. You are of course encouraged to attend every presentation, but are not required to do so to get full group presentation attendance credit.

### **Film Questionnaires** (10 points each – 20 points total)

There are two assigned films for the class: *Stalingrad* and *Twelve O'Clock High*. The questionnaire for each will be available on Canvas the class before the scheduled film date and will be due the first or second class after the scheduled film date. You can watch the films on your own time. The films depict battle sequences, and *Stalingrad* has graphic images and content. If you believe that you will be unable to view one film or the other please contact me to arrange an alternative assignment.

### **Take Home Quizzes** (10 points each – 50 points total)

There are five take-home quizzes throughout the semester. Each will be available on Canvas. The quizzes will be available at 5:00 PM the night before each discussion session and will close by the beginning of the discussion session class. The quizzes are open note and open book but each student must complete them on their own. The quizzes draw from both lecture material and readings. Students will have a set amount of time to complete each quiz once they begin. I will provide additional details in class prior to the quizzes.

### **Take Home Essays** (25 points for the first; 50 for the second – 75 points total)

There are two take home essay assignments throughout the semester. The first will require students to write one essay and is worth 25 points. The second will require students to write two essays and is worth 50 points (25 points for each essay). The essays will be due by the beginning of the following discussion sessions. I will provide additional details in class prior to the essay assignments.

### **Required Reading**

The following books are required and are available at the University Bookstore or through online distributors such as Amazon.

Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004)

Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014)

John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)

Aaron L. Friedberg, *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate Over US Military Strategy in Asia* (London: IISS, 2014) – Note: May not be available through University Bookstore

Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996)

Dianne Pfundstein-Chamberlain, *Cheap Threats: Why the United States Struggles to Coerce Weak States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016)

Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015)

Some readings with links are behind paywalls and the link will not work if you are not on campus or logged in to Virginia Tech. If the link doesn't work, first check that you're logged in properly to access the article. Additional readings marked with an \* are available on the Canvas course webpage. You can access Canvas at [removed] or vial the Quick Links tab on the Virginia Tech homepage. To access the readings, click on the Files tab and open the Class Readings folder.

A note on the readings. We will be reading seven books throughout the course of the semester in addition to articles and chapter selections from other books. In some weeks we will cover an entire book, meaning that you will be reading an entire book in one seven-day period. Plan ahead as necessary; DO NOT wait and try to read multiple books and articles in the days before a presentation, quiz, or essay. That is a recipe to do poorly and not at all necessary with a little bit of planning.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Honor Code Pledge for Assignments: The Virginia Tech honor code pledge for assignments is as follows:

“I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments at the university and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student's support of the honor code and an unambiguous acknowledgment that the student has, on the assignment in question, abided by the obligation that the Honor Code entails. In the absence of a written honor pledge, the Honor Code still applies to an assignment.

### **Computer Policy**

Laptops and tablets are allowed only for notetaking and consulting course material (e.g., readings, slides) during class. By using an electronic device, you agree to only use it for only these class related purposes. This means that you will not use it to check email, visit social media

sites, watch videos, communicate with friends, or any other purpose. Failure to abide by this policy may result in a grade reduction. These types of non-class activities can hinder the learning of your classmates.

During Zoom discussions and presentations please keep your camera on unless you are having serious technical difficulties. This facilitates discussion and allows presenters to gauge reactions from the audience. In addition, I understand the temptation to have multiple windows open when you're looking at a computer screen. It is important that you give your attention to the discussion or presentation. It is fine to have the readings available in front of you. During discussion though close email, social media, and do not have other websites open. This is first and foremost a courtesy to your colleagues but will also maximize the value for you.

### **Students with Disabilities**

I am strongly committed to working with students who have any disability recognized under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that they are able to fully participate in class activities. If you feel you require reasonable accommodations please follow the process outlined by the Services for Students with Disabilities office, at: <http://www.ssd.vt.edu/>.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Part 1: Overview

January 20 (W)	Class 1	Introduction (Online Synchronous)
January 22 (F)	Class 2	War (Online Synchronous)
January 25 (M)	Class 3	Strategy and Force, I
January 27 (W)	Class 4	Strategy and Force, II
January 29 (F)	Class 5	Civil-Military Relations
February 1 (M)	Class 6	Air-Ground Forces
February 3 (W)	Class 7	Discussion (Online Synchronous)
February 5 (F)	No Class	Spring Break Day

### Part 2: Land Warfare

February 8 (M)	Class 8	Land Warfare, I
February 10 (W)	Class 9	Land Warfare, II
February 12 (F)	Class 10	Land Warfare: World Wars (Online Synchronous) Grp 1
February 15 (M)	Class 11	Land Warfare: Gulf War (Online Synchronous) Grp 2
February 17 (W)	Class 12	Land Warfare: Afghanistan and Iraq
February 19 (F)	Class 13	Film: Stalingrad (Online Asynchronous)
February 22 (M)	Class 14	Conventional Deterrence
February 24 (W)	Class 15	Conven. Deter.: World War II (Online Synch.) Grp 3
February 26 (F)	No Class	No Class (Spring Break Day February 25)
March 1 (M)	Class 16	Conventional Deterrence: Postwar
March 3 (W)	No Class	Take Home Essay (Online Asynchronous)
March 5 (F)	Class 17	Discussion (Online Synchronous)

### Part 3: Sources of Combat Effectiveness

March 8 (M)	Class 18	Combat & Authoritarian Regimes
March 10 (W)	Class 19	Combat & Auth. Regimes: Vietnam (Online Synch.) Grp 4
March 12 (F)	Class 20	Combat & Auth. Regimes: Iran-Iraq (Online Synch.) Grp 5
March 15 (M)	Class 21	Military Cohesion
March 17 (W)	No Class	Spring Break Day
March 19 (F)	No Class	No Class
March 22 (M)	Class 22	Military Cohesion: World War II (Online Synch.) Grp 6
March 24 (W)	Class 23	Military Cohesion: Vietnam (Online Synch.) Grp 7
March 26 (F)	Class 24	Discussion (Online Synchronous)

### Part 4: Air Power and Compellence

March 29 (M)	Class 25	Air Power
March 31 (W)	Class 26	Air Power: World War II (Online Synchronous) Grp 8
April 2 (F)	Class 27	Air Power: Korea and Vietnam (Online Synch.) Grp 9
April 5 (M)	Class 28	Air Power: Gulf War (Online Synchronous) Grp 10

April 7 (W)	Class 29	Film: Twelve O'Clock High (Online Asynchronous)
April 9 (F)	Class 30	Air Power: Kosovo (Online Synchronous)
April 12 (M)	Class 31	Compellence
April 14 (W)	Class 32	Compellence: Iraq
April 16 (F)	Class 33	Discussion (Online Synchronous)

**Part 5: Commons and Great Power Competition**

April 19 (M)	Class 34	Command of the Commons
April 21 (W)	Class 35	U.S.-China, I
April 23 (F)	Class 36	U.S.-China, II
April 26 (M)	No Class	Spring Break Day
April 28 (W)	Class 37	U.S.-China, III
April 30 (F)	No Class	Take Home Essays
May 3 (M)	No Class	Work on Essays
May 5 (W)	Class 38	Discussion (Online Synchronous)

## COURSE READING SCHEDULE

### January 20 (W) Class 1. Introduction - ONLINE

- No Reading

### January 22 (F) Class 2. War – ONLINE

- \* Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret (trans.), pages 75-89
  - NOTE: Please use the Howard and Paret version on Canvas even if you have another translation.

### January 25 (M) 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

### January 27 (W) 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), <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/8864>

### January 29 (F) Class 5. Civil-Military Relations

- \* Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist No. 8: Consequences of Wars Between the States,” (November 1787)
- \* Eliot Cohen, “Appendix: The Theory of Civilian Control,” in *Supreme Command*, (2002) pages 241-264

### February 1 (M) Class 6. Air-Ground Forces

- No reading

*Remember to post reading reaction for Part I by 5:00PM*

### February 3 (W) Class 7. Discussion - ONLINE

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

*Quiz 1 available at 5:00PM on February 2 and must be completed by beginning of class*

### February 5 (F) No Class. Spring Break Day

### PART II: Land Warfare

### February 8 (M) Class 8. Continental Land Warfare, I

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 1-13, 28-51

### February 10 (W) Class 9. Continental Land Warfare, II

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 52-77

**February 12 (F) Class 10. Continental Land Warfare: World Wars - ONLINE**

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 78-131
- Group 1 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

**February 15 (M) Class 11. Continental Land Warfare: Gulf War – ONLINE**

- Biddle, *Military Power*, pages 132-149, 181-190
- Group 2 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

**February 17 (W) Class 12. Continental Land Warfare: Afghanistan and Iraq**

- 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>

*Film questionnaire for Stalingrad available on Canvas at the beginning of class*

**February 19 (F) Class 13. Film: *Stalingrad* – ONLINE Asynchronous**

- \* Skim Jonathan M. House and David M. Glantz, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), chapter 9
- Do not come to classroom; watch film on your own time

**February 22 (M) Class 14. Conventional Deterrence**

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 13-66

*Film questionnaire for Stalingrad due via Canvas by the beginning of class*

**February 24 (W) Class 15. Conventional Deterrence: World War II – ONLINE**

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 67-133
- Group 3 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

**February 26 (F) No Class. Spring break day the day before; open if needed.**

- Catch up or get a head start on readings

**March 1 (M) Class 16. Conventional Deterrence: Postwar**

- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pages 134-188

*Remember to post a reading reaction for Part II by 5:00PM*

**March 3 (W) No Class. Take Home Essay**

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom

*Essay prompts available on Canvas at 10:10AM*

**March 5 (F) Class 17. Discussion – ONLINE**

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom; join discussion via Zoom

*Quiz 2 available at 5:00PM on March 4 and must be completed by beginning of class*

*Essays due electronically via Canvas by the beginning of class*

**PART III: Sources of Combat Effectiveness**

**March 8 (M) Class 18. Combat and Authoritarian Regimes**

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 1-40

**March 10 (W) Class 19. Combat and Authoritarian Regimes: Vietnam War - ONLINE**

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 41-138
- Group 4 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom; join presentation via Zoom

**March 12 (F) Class 20. Combat and Authoritarian Regimes: Iran-Iraq War - ONLINE**

- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, pages 139-232
- Group 5 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom; join presentation via Zoom

**March 15 (M) Class 21. Military Cohesion**

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 1-43

**March 17 (W) No Class – Spring Break Day**

**March 19 (F) No Class – Open if Needed**

- Catch up or get a head start on readings

**March 22 (M) Class 22. Military Cohesion: World War II - ONLINE**

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 44-140
- Group 6 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom; join presentation via Zoom

**March 24 (W) Class 23. Military Cohesion: Vietnam War - ONLINE**

- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, pages 164-215
- Group 7 Presentation
- Do not come to classroom; join presentation via Zoom

*Remember to post a reading reaction for Part III by 5:00PM*

**March 26 (F) Class 24. Discussion – ONLINE**

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

*Quiz 3 available at 5:00PM on March 25 and must be completed by beginning of class.*

#### **PART IV: Air Power and Compellence**

##### **March 29 (M) Class 25. Air Power**

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 12-86

##### **March 31 (W) Class 26. Air Power: World War II - ONLINE**

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 87-136, 254-313
- Group 8 presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

##### **April 2 (F) Class 27. Air Power: Korea and Vietnam – ONLINE**

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 137-210
- Group 9 presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

##### **April 5 (M) Class 28. Air Power: Gulf War – ONLINE**

- Pape, *Bombing to Win*, pages 211-253
- Daryl G. Press, “The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War and the Future of Warfare,” *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pages 5-44  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3092121>
- Group 10 presentation
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

*Film questionnaire for Twelve O’clock High available on Canvas at the beginning of class*

##### **April 7 (W) Class 29. Film: Twelve O’clock High – ONLINE Asynchronous**

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

##### **April 9 (F) Class 30. Film: Air Power: Kosovo – ONLINE**

- Andrew L. Stigler, “A Clear Victory for Air Power: NATO’s Empty Threat to Invade Kosovo,” *International Security* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter 2002/03), pages 124-157  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3092116>
- Do not come to classroom: join presentation via Zoom

##### **April 12 (M) Class 31. Compellence**

- Pfundstein-Chamberlain, *Cheap Threats*, pages 19-94

*Film questionnaire for Twelve O’clock High due via Canvas by the beginning of class*

**April 14 (W) Class 32. Compellence: Iraq**

- Pfundstein-Chamberlain, *Cheap Threats*, pages 148-212

*Remember to post a reading reaction for Part IV by 5:00PM*

**April 16 (F) Class 33. Discussion - ONLINE**

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

*Quiz 4 available at 5:00PM on April 15 and must be completed by beginning of class.*

**PART V: Commons and Great Power Competition**

**April 19 (M) Class 34. 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>

**April 21 (W) Class 35. U.S.-China, I**

- Friedberg, *Beyond Air-Sea Battle*, pages 11-72

**April 23 (F) Class 36. U.S.-China, II**

- Friedberg, *Beyond Air-Sea Battle*, pages 73-152

**April 26. (M) No Class – Spring Break Day**

**April 28. (W) Class 37. U.S.-China, III**

- Caitlin Talmadge, “Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing The Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Spring 2017), 50-92, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/article/657918>

*Remember to post a reading reaction for Part V by 5:00PM*

**April 30. (F) No Class. Take Home Essays**

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom

*Essay prompts available on Canvas at 10:10AM*

**May 3. (M) No Class. Work on Essays.**

- No reading
- Do not come to classroom

**May 5. (W) Class 38. Discussion – ONLINE**

- No reading

- Do not come to classroom: join discussion via Zoom

*Quiz 5 available at 5:00PM on May 4 and must be completed by beginning of class*

*Essays due electronically via Canvas by the beginning of class*