Invisible University for Ukraine

The politics of warfare: key concepts of modern military history

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**Course description.** This course introduces students to the intellectual and political history of modern warfare. It studies the principal concepts of military theory and practice by probing their political genealogy. The classes are arranged around political writings that conceptualized modern warfare and episodes from recent military history that illustrate the employment of these concepts. The course mainly focuses on intellectual history and extensively uses methods and materials from military theory, international relations, comparative political science, social theory, and gender studies. During the course, students will closely read sources ranging from the Geneva Conventions to Che Guevara speeches, learn about the modern military history of Ukraine and Europe from leading researchers, and master the critical analysis of texts, debates, and events.

**Contents.** Clausewitz once famously defined war as “a continuation of political intercourse by other means.” Clausewitz’s definition is relational, and the course proceeds from questioning the character of the alleged relation. What kind of politics continues in what exact warfare? Every doctrine defines legitimate preconditions of war and requirements of peace, prioritizes tactics and strategies involved in battle, and mobilizes various human and material resources. The course illuminates the political descent of seemingly neutral concepts like “mobilization,” “strategy,” and “laws of war” to provide students with a critical view of modern warfare and the politics that shape it. In four thematic blocks or modules, students will learn about the general notions of modern warfare, liberal doctrines of war and peace, fascist warfare, and leftist attempts at the transposition of war.

**Learning activities and teaching methods.** Every session will consist of three blocks. First, with the guidance of the course director and coordinator, students will critically reassess sources and contextualize them based on the secondary literature. The initial discussion will be followed by the case-study presentation by an invited lecturer that provides a concrete illustration of the concept’s employment in recent military history. The third concluding part of every session will be dedicated to untangling the relationship between theoretical writings and historical events. During the course, students will work individually, in groups during the mentoring sessions, and in class. An asynchronous mode is available for students whose conditions make it impossible to participate synchronically.
Learning outcomes. The course offers an intensive learning experience, placing questions relevant to Ukrainian students into a transnational comparative perspective. The program does not replace or duplicate the existing online education in Ukrainian universities but fills the lacunae that temporarily emerged due to the Russian military invasion. At the end of the course, students will have expanded their knowledge of critical concepts of political and military theory, international relations, political philosophy, and social theory. The course also develops the participants’ critical thinking and skills in academic discussion in English.

Guidelines for students

One important notice: this is the course about war conducted during the war. Although we did not design this course to be traumatic or triggering, some topics are inevitably traumatic and triggering. Please, think first about yourself and then about the course.

Resources:

1. Readings are available on Moodle (link) and Google Drive (link);
2. Video recordings are available on (link);
3. You can upload your reviews of the missed classes on Moodle (link);
4. There is also a course group on Telegram (link); please join for quick updates, consultations, and additional materials;
5. You can always address us with course-related or non-related questions, comments, or suggestions by writing to tetiana.zemliakova@eui.eu and kovalchu@ualberta.ca;
6. If some platforms don’t work properly, contact us for the materials. It’s better you write an additional email than miss parts of the material because of the lagging Moodle.

Organization. Sessions take place at 17:00 (CET) on Tuesdays from September 26 to December 12 via Zoom. Each session will be recorded and available online for the course participants afterward. This, however, does not exempt you from personal attendance. Sessions are held in English.

Preparation:

1. For every class, you are required to read at least one source and one contextual paper; there is no need to read all the literature listed, although a brief skim would generally be appropriate.
2. You must read for the first class as well.
3. You are free to choose and combine sources and contextual papers according to their interests and understanding.

If you missed the class but wish to count as a participant, you should provide a written review of the readings, class discussion, and the presentation by an invited lecturer after having watched the class’s recording. The reviews should raise new insights, move the discussion forward, and offer relevant examples. The review should be no more than 2
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pages long. You can submit your review via Moodle or email within two weeks after the class.

Assessment. Passing the course means participating actively in at least 8 classes out of 12. This course can be taken for grades or a pass/fail. There are three modes available:

1. Those who applied for the research stipends will receive grades by default.
2. Those who did not apply for the research stipends but still want to be graded must write a short research essay. Please, inform the course director if you choose this option.
3. All the others will receive a pass/fail.

Mentoring is an informal seminar you can attend in addition to the classes. Mentoring has two purposes: to assist students in mastering the course material and provide additional space for exchange and discussion. No additional preparation is required for the mentoring sessions. Attending mentoring sessions is optional yet strongly recommended: numerous IUFU students from previous cohorts assessed mentoring as the most valuable part of their learning experience. Furthermore, for attending mentoring sessions, you will receive a separate pass/fail or credits (10 mentoring sessions total; to receive a ‘pass,’ you must attend 7 sessions minimum).

Emergencies:

1. If there’s an air raid alert during the class, you should immediately turn off your laptop and proceed to the shelter;
4. If there’re infrastructure shellings or blackouts, we will find out something and finish the course anyways;
5. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require psychological or any other assistance.

Course agenda and readings

1. Strategy

Linking warfare and statecraft

Sources

Context
2. Army

From conflicts between monarchs to struggles between peoples

Sources

Context

3. Soldier

Brain and body warfare

Sources

Context

4. Just war

Justice, not peace

Sources

Context

5. Laws of War

Liberal legalism

Sources
• Francis Lieber, General Orders No. 100: Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field, 1863.
• Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

Context

6. Laws of Peace

Republican vs. Democratic

Sources
• Woodrow Wilson, “A World League for Peace,” Address of the President of the United States to the Senate; 22 January 1917.
• Woodrow Wilson, “For the League of Nations,” Des Moines, Iowa; 6 September 1919.

Context
7. Mobilization

Sources

Context

8. Technique

Earth, air, and the technical imagery

Sources

Context

9. Proletarian Army

Sources
• Leon Trotsky, *Military Knowledge and Marxism* [May 8, 1922]

**Context**


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### 10. Guerilla

The violence of the exploited

**Sources**


**Context**


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### 11. Total War

Battlefield and the radical democracy

**Sources**


**Context**


12. TBA