

Eastern Illinois University
Course Proposal
EIU 4106G, War Stories

1. Catalog Description

- a. EIU 4106G
- b. War Stories
- c. 3-0-3
- d. Summer
- e. Short Title: War Stories
- f. A study of selected war literature in light of the history of armaments and warfare. An inquiry into the roots of war and the ways armed combat has shaped politics, culture, and ethics will provide the context for close study and appreciation of works by Homer, Shakespeare, Remarque, Hemingway, and others.
- g. Writing intensive
- h. Majors in English are excluded.

2. Student Learning Objectives

In accordance with the goals of general education, students will

- Trace the evolution of warfare from ancient times to the present, noting some of the ways in which the institution of armed combat has shaped history, politics, culture, and ethics. (critical thinking, speaking)
- Analyze numerous texts in various fields, together with several films, in light of their participation in these very broad cultural and historical developments. (critical thinking, speaking, writing)
- Reflect on the instinctual, cultural, and ideological bases of key value terms (e.g., *courage*, *honor*, *patriotism*), noting how their meaning has changed to reflect changes in society and in warfare. (critical thinking, speaking, writing, citizenship)
- Reflect on the nature of violence and aggression (critical thinking, speaking, writing)
- Observe the changing nature of the social contract that has obliged men, and more recently women, to place themselves in harm's way on behalf of tribe, city, country, or nation. (critical thinking, speaking, writing, citizenship)
- Understand what factors have caused the increasing lethality of war during and after the Industrial Revolution, the increasing revulsion against it, and its possible obsolescence. (critical thinking, speaking, writing, citizenship)
- Consider the very extensive impact of combat on gender roles and definitions. (critical thinking, speaking, writing, citizenship)
- Reinforce all of the above goals through mandatory class participation, oral reports, essay exams, required participation on an electronic bulletin board, and formal papers. (speaking, writing)

3. Course Outline

- Week 1** Introduction
Robert L. O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*
- Discussion Topics:** The modernity of warfare; Paleolithic pacifism and the agricultural revolution; predation versus intraspecific aggression.
- Week 2** O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*
- Discussion Topics:** Early fighting systems: the phalanx and the legion; corresponding ideologies and institutions; more and less predatory weapons and tactics; knightly combat and aristocratic warfare; honor and the etiquette of combat; suicidal archaism as a recurrent motif in military history; the longbow at Agincourt; the advent of firearms and the "harvest of blood" in early modern Europe.
- Week 3** O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*
Movie: *Dr. Strangelove*
- Discussion Topics:** Expectation vs. reality in World War I; the bankruptcy of tactics and ideology in trench warfare; aristocratic vs. mass participation warfare; the descent into "predatory excess" in World War II; nuclear weapons and the modern military predicament; Enlightenment arms control as a historical template; satirical perceptions of the military and the declining valuation of the soldier.
- Week 4** War poems: Lovelace, "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars"; Milton, "On the late Massacre in Piedmont"; Emerson, "Concord Hymn"; Whitman, "Song of Myself"; Tennyson, *Ulysses*, "The Charge of the Light Brigade"; Hardy, "The Man He Killed"; Brooke, "The Soldier," "Peace"; McKay, "If We Must Die"; Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Greater Love"; Sandburg, "Grass"; Yeats, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death"; Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," "Losses"; Eberhart, "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment"; Ewart, "Incident, The Second World War"; Simpson, "Carentan O Carentan," "The Battle"; Lowell, "For the Union Dead."
- Discussion Topics:** Celebrations of war vs. condemnations of it; courage as ideal, as ideological trap; the soldier's motivations; disillusionment with war in modern times; camaraderie vs. erotic love.
- Week 5** Homer, *The Iliad* (selections)
- Discussion Topics:** Intraspecific war vs. predation in Homer; the nature and psychology of the hero in Homer; the rewards of heroism; the "etiquette of combat"; ritualization of combat and the urge to impose intraspecific values; similarity of Homer's characters to modern sports heroes.
- Week 6** Homer, *The Iliad* (continued)
- Discussion Topics:** Achilles vs. Hector: total war vs. limited war; rage vs. rationality; passion vs. patriotism; why wars persist and escalate.
- Week 7** Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Discussion Topics: Shakespeare and the memory of Agincourt; why invading France seems fair to Shakespeare's audience; French knighthood's obliviousness to tactical issues—and Shakespeare's; atrocities vs. "the inclination to fight by rules"; the arranged marriage and women as booty.

Week 8 Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*
Movie: *Patton*

Discussion Topics: Shakespeare and the memory of Rome; martial courage as ethical cornerstone; Coriolanus's "Oedipus Complex"; Eros vs. Thanatos; aggression as thwarted love; egocentrism and irrationality as preconditions of courage and heroism; why heroes are so problematic.

Week 9 Review and Midterm Examination

Week 10 Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*

Discussion Topics: The coming of age story; the coward's redemption as a recurrent motif in war literature; Crane's critique of courage; irony and sentimentalism: rejecting heroic narrative only to embrace it again.

Week 11 Shaara, *The Killer Angels*
Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*, *Second Inaugural Address*

Discussion Topics: The Civil War as the first modern war; limited aims vs. apocalyptic means; revolutionary advances in small arms; the obsolescence of Napoleonic tactics; psychology vs. strategy at Gettysburg; the rationale for Pickett's charge; Lee's strategy vs. Longstreet's; Confederate strategy after Gettysburg; why the lessons of the battle were not assimilated in World War I. Lincoln's and Grant's obliviousness to tactical reality.

Week 12 Assessment Activities – TASKS Test

Week 13 Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
Movie: *Gallipoli*

Discussion Topics: 1898: the cultural moment; racism, imperialism, and Social Darwinism; Wells as technological forecaster: some hits and misses; his vision of modern war and the death of heroism.

Week 14 Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Discussion Topics: The cataclysm of 1914; the futility of trench warfare; the mechanization and de-ritualization of combat; the role of military bureaucracy; the death of heroism and the appearance of the

antihero; the alienation of the soldier; ideology and atavism vs. reality on the modern battlefield.

Week 15 Hemingway, "Soldier's Home"; "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"; "In Another Country." O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story"; "The Things they Carried."
Movie: *Schindler's List*

Discussion Topics: Hemingway's aesthetics: antiheroes and anti-writing; the struggle to reaffirm masculinity; race, gender, and the code of heroism; O'Brien and postmodernism: rejecting rhetoric—and embracing it; deromanticizing courage; "low intensity conflicts" and a new kind of meaninglessness; noncombatants in World War II: war become slaughter; the disappearance of combat.

4. Evaluation.

a. Assignments will be as follows, with the schedule and weightings of specific assignments subject to reasonable adjustments:

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| • Bulletin board postings—ten required: Weeks 2-13 | 10% |
| • First paper, 4-5 pp. (1,250 words): Week 5. | 15% |
| • Mid-term exam: Week 9 | 10% |
| • Second paper, 4-5 pp. (1,250 words): Week 12 | 20% |
| • Revision of first or second paper: Week 15 | 15-20%* |
| • Report: arranged | 15% |
| • Final exam: finals week. | 20% |
| • Attendance and Participation | 10% |

* Optional – new grade replaces old.

b. Students will have a standing invitation to show drafts of their papers to the instructor for advice and evaluation in advance of the due date, and will be allowed to revise one of two assigned papers for a higher grade. The mid-term and the final will consist of approximately a 50-50 mix of objective and essay questions, and the report will require an accompanying 2-page statement or handout. Thus approximately 58 % of the student's grade will be based on written assignments, as follows: 1st Paper: 15%; 2nd Paper: 20%; Mid-term (.5 X 10): 5%; Final: (.5 X 20%): 10%; Report (.5 X 15%): 7.5%.

5. Rationale

- Senior seminar
- Prerequisite: 75 hours completed
- This course does not duplicate any current offerings.
- The course will not be required in any majors or programs other than general education senior seminar.

6. Implementation

- a. The course will be assigned initially to Dr. John Kilgore.
- b. Primary texts:
 - Robert O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*
 - Stanley Lombardo, trans., *The Iliad*
 - William Shakespeare, *Henry V; Coriolanus*
 - Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*
 - Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*
 - H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
 - Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*
 - Ernest Hemingway, *Short Stories*
 - Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*Movies: *Dr. Strangelove, Patton, Gallipoli, Schindler's List.*
- c. Additional Costs: none
- d. Term first offered: Summer, 2001.

7. Community College Transfer: Not applicable.

8. Date Approved by College Curriculum committee: 4/26/2000

9. Date Approved by Senior Seminar Advisory Committee: 5/3/2000

10. Date Approved by CAA: 10/19/2000

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