University of Virginia

College of Arts and Sciences

HIUS 2559

**America and War: 1900 to the Present**

Spring 2016

Philip Zelikow

MW 9:00-9:50 (with discussion sections)

Clark 107

**General Course Description**

This is a survey of modern American military history, but much more than that. Since 1900, war has reshaped the way America is governed. It has shaped industry and innovation. It has spawned a vast intelligence establishment with military capabilities of its own. The experience of war and narratives about it have colored popular culture in every generation for more than a hundred years.

The course will concentrate on the major episodes and, for each, address four basic questions: Why did the United States go to war? How did the United States choose to wage this war? Why did the war turn out the way it did? What impact did the war have?

This course is also a kind of sequel to HIUS 2051, Gary Gallagher’s fine course on “U.S. Military History, 1600 to 1900.”

This is a lecture course with discussion sections. There will be a midterm and a final exam. Both of these will be take-home exams for which students will write papers drawing on the lectures and the readings.

**Required Readings**

As indicated in the syllabus, a number of readings are book excerpts or articles that will be available on the course website. This is especially true for the wars since 1975.

In addition, you should purchase the following books, all of which should also be on reserve in Clemons:

Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis

(New York: Longman, Revised Edition, 1999)

Samuel Hynes, The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War (New York: Penguin, 1997)

D. Clayton James with Anne Sharp Wells, Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in

Korea 1950-1953 (New York: Free Press, 1993) ***This book is out of print as a regular book. But it is available as an e-book through retailers like Amazon. You can also buy a used version of the book through Amazon or other sellers.***

David Kennedy, Over Here: The First World War and American Society (New York: Oxford

University Press, 25th Anniversary edition, 2004)

David Kennedy, The American People in World War II (New York: Oxford University Press,

1999)

David Kennedy, ed., The Modern American Military (New York: Oxford University Press,

2013)

Ronald Spector, After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam (New York: Free Press, 1993) ***This***

***book is currently out of print. But many copies of it are available through used book retailers like Amazon and through other sellers.***

**Class Schedule**

January 20

1. Summer 1916 -- Looking Back, Looking Ahead

**Part One: The Great War**

January 25

2. Why did the U.S. Join the Great War?

Kennedy, Over Here, Prologue and chapter 1, pp. 3-92

January 27

3. How did the U.S. Choose to Fight this War?

Kennedy, Over Here, chapters 2 and 3, pp. 93-190

February 1

4. Why did the U.S. and its Allies Win this War?

Kennedy, Over Here, chapter 4, pp. 191-230

February 3

5. What were the Consequences of this War?

Kennedy, Over Here, remainder, pp. 231-390

Hynes, The Soldiers’ Tale, Prologue and Chapters 1-3, pp. xi-107

**Part Two: Into the Maelstrom**

February 8

6. Summer 1940: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, chapter 1, pp. 1-39

February 10

7. Why did the U.S. Join World War II?

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, chapter 2, pp. 40-90

February 15

8. Strategic Choices and Turning Points

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, chapters 3 & 4, pp. 91-189, 244-283

**Part Three: Total War**

February 17

9. Engineering Victory

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, chapter 5, pp. 190-243

Rick Atkinson, The Guns at Last Light (2013), pp. 1-41, on the course website

February 22

10. Arrows on a Map

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, chapters 6 & 7, pp. 244-320

Stephen Ambrose, “D-Day Revisited,” in Ambrose, Americans at War (1997), pp. 95-109, on the

course website

February 24

11. Bombers

Richard Overy, The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War Over Europe, 1940-

1945 (2013), pp. 194-230, on the course website

February 29

12. Life and Death in Wartime

Hynes, The Soldiers’ Tale, chapters 4 & 6, pp. 108-176, 223-277

Kennedy, The American People in World War II, remainder, pp. 321-434

**Part Four: Return to Wartime**

March 2

13. Surprises

James, Refighting the Last War, chapter 6-8, pp. 131-195

March 14

14. Contemplating World War III

James, Refighting the Last War, chapters 9-11, then chapters 1-3, pp. 196-246, then pp. 11-78

March 16

15. The Nuclear Revolution and the Rise of the National Security State

Ernest May, “The U.S. Government: A Legacy of the Cold War,” Diplomatic History (1992), on

the course website

March 21

16. Readiness

Allison & Zelikow, Essence of Decision, chapters 2-4, pp. 77-254

March 23

17. On the Brink

Allison & Zelikow, Essence of Decision, chapter 6, pp. 327-377

**Part Five: The Vietnam War**

March 28

18. Choosing Limited War

Spector, After Tet, chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-45

March 30

19. Strategies for Limited War

Spector, After Tet, chapters 3-8, pp. 46-183

April 4

20. Collateral Damage

Hynes, The Soldiers’ Tale, chapter 5, pp. 177-222

Spector, After Tet, remainder, pp. 184-316

**Part Six: Peacetime Wars**

April 6

21. Cold War Crises and Conclusions

April 11

22. The Gulf War

April 13

23. Summer 2001: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

David Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace (2002), pp. 232-266, 420-435, on the course website

9/11 Commission, Report (2004), pp. 71-73, 86-143, 181-214, on the course website

**Part Seven: Twilight Wars**

April 18

24. What Wars to Fight?

Philip Zelikow, “U.S. Strategic Planning in 2001-02,” in Melvyn Leffler & Jeffrey Legro, eds.,

In Uncertain Times (2011), pp. 96-116, on the course website

Michael Morell with Bill Harlow, The Great War of Our Time (2015), pp. 77-107, on the course

website

April 20

25. The Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

George Packer, “The Lesson of Tal Afar,” The New Yorker, April 10, 2006, on the course

website

Phil Klay, “FRAGO,” and “Money as a Weapons System,” short stories from his collection,

Redeployment (2014), on the course website

April 25

26. The War against Violent Islamist Extremism

Arthur Holland Michel, “How Rogue Techies Armed the Predator, Almost Stopped 9/11, and

Accidentally Invented Remote War,” Wired, December 17, 2015, on the course website

Mark Mazzetti, The Way of the Knife (2013), pp. 299-322, on the course website

April 27

27. The Twilight Wars and American Society

James Fallows, “The Tragedy of the American Military,” The Atlantic, January/February 2015,

on the course website

Essays by Deborah Avant & Renee de Nevers, Andrew Bacevich, Karl Eikenberry, Michelle

Sandhoff & Mady Wechsler Segal, and Jonathan Shay, in Kennedy, ed., The Modern American Military, pp. 135-152, 193-240, 273-314

May 2

28. The Twilight Wars and the Future of “National Security”

Brian McAllister Linn, “The U.S. Armed Forces View of War,” in Kennedy, ed., The Modern

American Military, pp. 41-58

Philip Zelikow, “Defense Entropy,” The American Interest, Spring (March/April) 2014, pp. 39-

48, on the course website