

BOWDOIN COLLEGE  
Department of Government and Legal Studies

**Weapons of the Weak**  
Government 1031

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Office Hours: Wed 2:15 – 4:15pm  
T/Th 10:05 – 11:30am  
Massachusetts Hall 105

Despite enjoying a preponderance of resources, the rich and mighty don't always win in life, or in war. Why? How do peasants and insurgents impose their will on more powerful organizations? How do wealthy armies at times lose wars to impoverished rebels? Whereas money and material can be measured, divided and counted in a spreadsheet, less quantifiable factors of conflict such as ideas, identity, legitimacy, willpower and fortitude are too-often discounted as secondary factors. But perhaps more often than we think, these may be formidable weapons for the weak to challenge and reform the designs of the mighty.

**Required Books**

1. Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, (Second Edition, Potomac Books, 2005)
2. Brian H. Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, (Yale University Press, 2016)
3. Marwan Hisham and Molly Crabapple, *Brothers of the Gun: A Memoir of the Syrian War*, (Penguin Random House, 2018)
4. Phil Klay, *Redeployment*, (Penguin Books, 2014)

All other readings will be available on e-reserve through Blackboard, or distributed to students via paper copy or e-mail. Since the topics addressed in this class are in conversation with current and evolving topics, assigned readings and topics may evolve to address new developments. **Readings are due on the date specified.** Students should arrive prepared for class by completing the reading and taking notes ahead of the date listed.

As this is a first year seminar, we will focus on reading, discussion and writing. There may be limited portions of class dedicated to lecture on insurgency, but the majority of our time together will be spent discussing the readings, exploring the writing process, developing key skills related to writing and providing you space to adjust to life as a professional student at the collegiate level.

## Graded Assignments

1. 15% Participation & Professionalism  
Based on attendance, level of preparation, quality of commentary, respect for peers, and etiquette with phones/laptops. Student participation in this course is a requirement. Each student will prepare *two discussion questions for every class meeting* based on the readings or the news. The professor will ask for volunteers, or call on students at random to present a question to the class. The goal is to have every voice in the room be heard and considered in our collective project to explore complex modern insurgency.
2. 5% Reaction Paper (1-2 pages, double spaced) **September 10**  
Choose a phrase from “How to Tell a True War Story.” Explain why that expression is striking to you. What does it mean? What does it say about war? How is it structured? What role does it play in O’Brien’s argument?
3. 10% Critical Response Paper (3 pages, double spaced) **September 26**  
This assignment asks you to complete a number of tasks. First, concisely summarize arguments made by several authors. Second, identify evidence, data, and assumptions within arguments. Third, offer your own argument by critically comparing and contrasting debates or integrating theories proposed by various authors. Fourth, use proper citations.
4. 15% Midterm Paper (4 pages, double spaced) & Cover Letter (1 page, single spaced) **October 22**  
Synthesize and compare authors and broad concepts developed in class. The development of this paper will assist you in making sophisticated arguments in your final paper. A cover letter reflecting on the writing process for you, and addressing your perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper must be attached.
5. 7.5% War Simulation– Group Participation **October 29 & 31**  
Using primary source documents, the class will be divided into groups and simulate a critical moment in an insurgency war. Performance will be graded. You will be judged on preparation, the soundness of proposed strategic logic, dedication to the exercise and incorporation of readings and concepts from the class.
6. 7.5% War Simulation Report (2 pages, double spaced) **October 31**  
A question will be distributed asking you to use your experience in the simulation to understand concepts in insurgency warfare.
7. 10% Policy Memo (1 page, single spaced) **December 5**  
The President needs your assessment and recommendations. This assignment teaches you how to synthesize materials, apply academic

theory to real-world scenarios, and to practice structuring a policy memo, as opposed to an academic paper.

8. 5% Critical Response Paper Updated & Resubmitted (4 pages, double spaced)  
**December 10**

Update the first draft of either your critical response paper or midterm with 1) style edits and 2) new relevant evidence/authors covered since first submission.

9. 25% Final Paper (5-6 pages, double spaced) **December 17, noon.**

A cumulative paper assignment that brings together the analytical and writing skills exercised throughout the semester in the context of the subjects covered.

### **Academic Honesty and Late Policy**

Positively no academic dishonesty will be tolerated. In this class we will review what plagiarism is and why you need to take care to avoid it in your work. If you are having trouble, have questions or if emergencies arise that affect your work please contact the professor or your dean to come up with a plan. Please review the honor code of the college:

[www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/](http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/)

Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, you will not be granted an extension for assignments, so please manage your time wisely. There is a standard late policy for the course, which is as follows: the professor will deduct 1/2 a letter grade from the assignment for each 24 hour period the assignment is late. For example, if you hand in a paper 23 hours late and the paper is a B+, it will be recorded as a B. If that same paper is handed in 47 hours late, the grade will be a B-, and so on.

### **Laptops and Technology**

To ensure the classroom remains conducive to learning, no phones are allowed. Please turn the sound off and store your phone in your bag. Unless specific permission is granted to you by the professor, no laptops or tablets are allowed for notetaking in class. For the majority of students, taking notes by hand is a better way to absorb the material and make the most out of our limited time together. If you are the rare exception to this rule, please contact the professor at the start of the semester in order to make arrangements.

If you do not have paper copies of assigned materials readily available for any particular class, you may bring your laptop or tablet to class for use to reference, cite or discuss assigned texts, but laptops or tablets should then be stored immediately once the class is done discussing the particulars of that text.

## Assignment Calendar

September 5: Introduction

(Read together) Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story"

September 10: WWII, Economies and Resources – **Reaction Paper Due**

- R.A.C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History*, Chapter 9 (pp. 131 – 150) "Economies at War"

September 12: Strategic Bombing – Empirical vs. Normative Questions

- R.A.C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History*, Chapters 10 – 11 (pp. 151 – 176) "Strategic Bombing," and "Morale"
- Kurt Vonnegut, "Wailing Shall Be in All Streets" from *Armageddon in Retrospect and Other New and Unpublished Writings on War and Peace*, 2008, (pp. 33 – 45)
- Malachy Browne, Christoph Koettl, Anjali Singhvi, Natalie Reneu, Barbara Marcolini, Yousur al Hlou and Drew Jordan, "Douma Chemical Attack One Building, One Bomb: How Assad Gassed His Own People," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2018. Explore and watch the video on:  
[www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/world/middleeast/syria-chemical-attack-douma.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/world/middleeast/syria-chemical-attack-douma.html)

September 17: Strategic Bombing – Effectiveness Against the Taliban?

- Jason Lyall, "Airpower and Coercion in Counterinsurgency Wars: Evidence from Afghanistan," October 29, 2013 (pp. 1 – 37)

September 19: Insurgency, an Introduction [Critical Response Paper Distributed]

- O'Neill – Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1 – 38)

September 24: Bowdoin Library Introduction – Research, Resources and Citations

- O'Neill – Chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 45 – 89)

September 26: Insurgency – **Critical Response Paper Due**

*No Readings Due*

October 1: Insurgency

- O'Neill – Chapters 5 & 6 (pp. 93 – 138)

October 3: Insurgency

- O'Neill – Chapter 7 (pp. 139 – 154)

October 8: Everyday Forms of Resistance

- James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, Chapter 2, "Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance" (pp. 28 – 47)

October 10: Counterinsurgency [Midterm Paper Prompt Distributed]

- O'Neill – Chapters 8 & Conclusion (pp. 155 – 203)

October 15: *Fall Break* – No Class

*No Readings Due*

October 17: No Class – Professor at an Academic Conference

October 22: David and Goliath – **Midterm Paper & Cover Letter Due**

- Neil Sheehan, “David and Goliath in Vietnam,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 2017

October 24: Iraq War Briefing and Simulation Assignments

- Edward Wong, “Overview: The Iraq War,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 2008
- “Iraq War Timeline” POV Discussion Guide, *Nowhere to Hide: A Film by Zaratdasht Ahmed*, PBS.org (pp. 16 – 20)
- Sanaa Khan and David Forscey, “Country Brief: Iraq and Syria,” May 24, 2016

October 29: **Iraq War Simulation – Part I**

*Individual Readings Distributed*

October 31: **Iraq War Simulation – Part II – (Simulation Part I Report Due)**

*No Readings Due*

November 5: The Syrian Uprising

- Fishman – “Preface,” “Notes of Sources, Spelling & Names,” “Key Characters” and “Prologue” (pp. ix – xi, xv – 3)
- Scott Lucas, “A Beginner’s Guide to the Syrian Civil War,” *Political Insight*, Volume 7, Issue 1, April 2016 (pp. 12 – 15)
- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 1 – 5 (pp. 3 – 56)

November 7: The Awakening Stage (2000 – 2003)

- Fishman – Chapter 1 (pp. 4 – 30)
- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 6 – 8 (pp. 57 – 86)

November 12: The Eye-Opening Stage (2003 – 2006)

- Fishman – Chapter 2 (pp. 31 – 84)
- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 9 – 13 (pp. 87 – 138)

November 14: The Stage of Standing Upright (2007 – 2010)

- Fishman – Chapter 3 (pp. 85 – 139)
- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 14 – 17 (pp. 139 – 183)

November 19: Bowdoin Art Museum

- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 18 – 22 (pp. 184 – 242)

November 21: The Stage of Recuperation (2010 – 2013)

- Fishman – Chapter 4 (pp. 140 – 181)
- Hisham and Crabapple – Chapters 23 – 28 & Epilogue (pp. 243 – 297)

November 26: The Stage of Declaring the State (2013 – 2016)

- Fishman – Chapter 5 (pp. 182 – 214)
- Rukmini Callimachi, “The Case of the Purloined Poultry: How ISIS Prosecuted Petty Crime,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 2018

November 28: *Thanksgiving* – No Class

- Klay (pp. 1 – 71)

December 3: The Stage of Absolute Confrontation (2016 – 2018) & The Stage of Final Victory (2018 – 2020) [Policy Memo Assignment Distributed]

- Fishman – Chapters 6 & 7 (pp. 215 – 259)
- Klay (pp. 73 – 128)

December 5: U.S. in Iraq – **Policy Memo Due**

- Klay (pp. 129 – 167)

December 10: U.S. in Iraq – **Revised Midterm or Critical Response Paper Due**

- Klay (pp. 169 – 236)

**Final Paper Due Tuesday December 17, noon**