

BOWDOIN COLLEGE
Department of Government and Legal Studies
Government 3620

COUNTERINSURGENCIES

Professor Barbara Elias
Office: 203 Hubbard Hall
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Office Hours M 10:30am-noon, W 3:30-4:30
T TH 10:00 – 11:25 pm
Lecture Hall: Massachusetts Hall 105

Counterinsurgency warfare – the political and military struggle to destroy an insurgency – is complex, variable and arduous. As one U.S. Special Forces officer in Iraq noted, counterinsurgency is “not just thinking man’s warfare—it is the graduate level of war.” How do we make sense of the intricate, violent contest between insurgent and counterinsurgent? Why have the U.S. wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan been exceedingly drawn out, irregular and destructive? Connecting classic and critical military texts such as Clausewitz and U.S. Army/Marine Corps operational manuals, with case studies from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan (contrasting the U.S. and Soviet interventions), this course entwines political/military theory with battlefield history to deepen understandings of “thinking man’s warfare.”

Reading:

The required books for the class are as follows:

1. Dexter Filkins. *The Forever War*, Vintage, 2008.
2. David Galula. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Westport: Praeger, 2006.
3. Carl Schmitt. *Theory of the Partisan*, Telos, 2007.

Other assigned readings are available on Blackboard. Readings are **due on the day** they are assigned on this syllabus.

Assignments

These assignments provide ways for me to assess your understanding of key concepts presented in the readings and class discussions. There is positively no dishonesty or cheating tolerated. Contact me if emergencies arise that affect your work. Please review the honor code of the college: www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/

1. Participation (25%)
2. Critical Response Paper (15%) Anytime before March 8.
3. Research Proposal:
Thesis, Outline, Bibliography and Literature Review (10%) March 27.
4. Simulation Paper (7.5%) April 10.
5. Research Presentation (7.5%) April 26, May 1 or 3.
6. Final Research Paper (35%) May 19, 9am.

Participation – Student participation in this course is a requirement, not an option. 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 warfare. Students are allowed one absence (including illnesses) during the semester. Any additional absences will be counted against participation. A letter from the Dean's office indicating extraordinary circumstances may excuse additional absences. Please keep all laptops, tablets and phones on silent and stored in your bag.

Critical Response Paper – Students will prepare a 3-4 page paper anytime before spring break (March 8) analyzing a selection of readings and producing a cohesive analysis. Papers should move past summarization, and instead provide critical analysis by grouping, critiquing, or comparing multiple authors read thus far in the semester. Students may also want to think about how these readings might apply to your likely future research subject. Papers should be handed in at the start of class, at a date of choosing by the student. *Think and plan ahead*. Late papers (after spring break) will *not* be accepted.

Simulation Paper – We will conduct a simulation to allow students to practice applying the theories learned in the class to a “live” counterinsurgency operation. A 2-3 page paper assignment due April 10 will ask students to reflect on the simulation, lessons learned, and ways to relate these lessons to the readings.

Final Research Proposal and Paper – The primary written assignment for the class is a 20-page research paper, due May 19 at 9am. Note that a research proposal, including a proposed thesis, outline, bibliography and short literature review is due on March 27. The paper is an opportunity for students to follow their interests and develop critical research skills. What is a question about counterinsurgency you find particularly vexing? What is your argument? Be sure to ask and answer questions that require analysis and argument, instead of relying on description. An example of a promising analytical question might be: “What three factors most contributed to the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan?” As opposed to a likely less successful question prone to description such as: “What happened in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?” Based on the proposal, the professor will work with each student individually to help students craft a compelling research project. Students will choose their own topics based on their interests. The research and analysis must be original and substantial. *Think and plan ahead*.

Research Presentation – Students will each give a formal ten-minute presentation to the class on their research project on April 26, May 1 and May 3. Visual guides, props, handouts and other interactive tools are welcome. Classmates will have the opportunity to ask questions of the research project being presented.

Assignment Calendar

January 23: Introduction

January 25: Clausewitz

- Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*, Chapters 1, 2 & 26 (pp. 75 – 99, 479 – 483)

February 1: Rebellion

- Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition," 1991, in Gettleman et al., *Vietnam and America* (pp. 4 - 17)
- Ho Chi Minh, "The Path Which Led Me to Leninism," 1960, in Gettleman et al., *Vietnam and America* (pp. 20 - 22)
- Ho Chi Minh, "Vietnam Declaration of Independence," 1945, in Gettleman et al., *Vietnam and America* (pp. 26 - 28)
- Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 2, "What Causes Revolutions?" (pp. 10 – 25)
- Patrick Henry, "Liberty or Death," March 23, 1775

February 6: Insurgency Theory & Mao Zedong

- Mao Zedong, *On Guerilla Warfare*, 1937. Selections from Asia for Educators, Columbia University (pp. 1 – 10)
- John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, Stackpole Books, 1966. Chapter 2, (pp. 30 – 44)
- Thomas Renard and Stéphane Taillat, "Between Clausewitz and Mao: Dynamic Evolutions of the Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2008)," *Small Wars Journal*, 2008. (pp. 1 – 5)

February 8: Vietnam – France's War Against the Insurgents & U.S. Takeover

- Ngo Vinh Long, "The Franco-Vietnamese War 1945-1954: Origins of U.S. Involvement," 1991, in Gettleman et al., *Vietnam and America* (pp.32-40)
- Robert J. McMahon, *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 1995. Selections from Chapters 7 & 8, (pp. 210 – 223, 292 – 336)

February 13: Vietnam – U.S.

- George C. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 2002. Selections from Chapter 5, "On the Tiger's Back," (pp. 171 – 201)
- Dick Guthrie, "A Day in Binh Dinh Province" *The New York Times*, October 10, 2017.
- Robert J. McMahon, *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 1995. Selections from Chapter 7, (pp. 251 – 257, 275 - 281)
- John A. Nagl, "Counterinsurgency in Vietnam," in Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, Osprey, 2008. Chapter 7, (pp. 131 – 148)

February 15: Galula & The Center of Gravity

- David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Forward-Chapter 2 (pp. vii – 28)
- (Selections from) Major Phillip Kevin Giles and Captain Thomas Patrick Galvin, “Center of Gravity: Determination, Analysis and Application,” January 31, 1996, Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College.

February 20: Galula

- David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Chapters 3-6 (pp. 29-74)
- U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, (FM 3-24), December 2006, *Counterinsurgency*, Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1 until “Aspects of Counterinsurgency” on p. 1-19 (pp vii – 19)
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February 22: Galula & FM 3-24

- David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Chapters 7-Remarks, (pp. 75-99)
- U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, (FM 3-24), December 2006, *Counterinsurgency*, Remainder of Chapter 1, Starting with “Aspects of Counterinsurgency” (pp 19 – 29)
- Daniel J. Smith, Kelley Jeter, and Odin Westgaard, “Three Approaches to Center of Gravity Analysis: The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Volume 78, Issue 3, 2015.

February 27: Schmitt

- Carl Schmitt. *Theory of the Partisan*, (pp. ix – 32)

March 1: Schmitt

- Carl Schmitt. *Theory of the Partisan*, (pp. 40-67)
- General Vo Nguyen Giap, “The Political and Military Line of Our Party,” 1964. Published in Gettleman et al., *Vietnam and America* (pp. 193-201)

March 6: Schmitt

- Carl Schmitt. *Theory of the Partisan*, (pp. 68-95)

March 8: Al-Qaeda

- Ayman al-Zawahiri, “Loyalty and Enmity,” 2002. Published in Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al-Qaeda Reader*, (pp. 63 – 75, 101 – 115)

[Spring Break – Have Fun]

March 27: Afghanistan **[Research Proposal Due]**

- Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War*, 2008. Prologue, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 3 – 67)

March 29: Afghanistan

- Daniel Marston “Lessons in 21st Century Counterinsurgency: Afghanistan 2001-07” in Marston and Malkasian, eds. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, Osprey, 2008. Chapter 12 (pp. 220 – 240)
- Thomas H. Johnson, and M. Chris Mason. 2007. “Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan” *Orbis*, 51 (1) (pp. 71-89)

April 3: Iraq

- Edward Wong, “Overview: The Iraq War” *The New York Times*, 2008.
- Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco*. 2006. Chapter 11, “Getting Tough” (pp. 214- 269)

April 5: Counterinsurgency Simulation

April 10: Afghanistan & Iraq - *No Readings* **[Simulation Paper Due]**

April 12: Iraq

- Dexter Filkins, “The Forever War,” Chapters 4 – 6 (pp. 69 - 113)

April 17: Iraq

- Dexter Filkins, “The Forever War,” Chapters 7 – 10 (pp. 114 – 188)
- Carter Malkasian, “Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003 – January 2007,” in Marston and Malkasian, eds. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, Osprey, 2008. Chapter 13 (pp. 241 – 259)

April 19: Iraq

- Dexter Filkins, “The Forever War,” Chapters 11 – 14 (pp. 189 – 253)
- Conrad Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq” in *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, (pp. 124 – 146)
- Robert K. Brigham, “The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Iraq,” in *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, (pp. 286 – 307)

April 24: The Future of COIN for the U.S.

- Dexter Filkins, “The Forever War,” Chapters 15 – 17 (pp. 254 – 295)
- “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia,” Arlington, Virginia, August 21, 2017.

[Finish Filkins, “The Forever War,” Chapters 18 – 21 (pp. 296 – 342) at your own pace before May 8]

April 26: Student Presentations

May 1: Student Presentations

May 3: Student Presentations

May 8: Concluding Thoughts