

University of Pennsylvania  
Department of History  
History 160

*Strategy, Policy, and War*

Fall Semester 2008  
Professor Arthur Waldron

*Brutality, violence, and inhumanity have an immense prestige that schoolbooks hide from children, that grown men do not admit, but that everyone bows before.*

---Simone Weil [1909-1943] in 1939.

**Introduction:**

This is a course for anyone who wants to learn how to think about violence and war in a rigorous and informed way.

The inflicting of violence on other humans has, arguably, been mankind's chief activity since before the dawn of history. But as the quotation from the French philosopher and resistance fighter Simone Weil given above suggests, the world, and the academic world not least, have tended to avoid thinking about the harsh realities of violence. The phenomena of conflict, however, pose many interesting and difficult questions that are still unanswered.

The course is not technical, has no prerequisites, and is as suitable for freshmen as it is for advanced graduate students.

When most people think about war, their minds turn immediately to the means by which it is waged—to armaments, technology, manpower, economic resources, etc. (Those, incidentally, are the subject matter of History 159, *Technology, Policy, and War*, which is intended to complement this course and is given in alternation with it.)

If you want to understand markets, interest rates, money, and so forth you take introductory economics. Most people do, and as a result, nearly everyone has some ability to analyze what they hear in the news about the economy.

Sadly, that is not the case for war, even though war continues to be at least as important as economics for the human race. A great deal is known about war, but few courses deal with it. Scarcely any undergraduates (or graduate students, or faculty members, or journalists, or members of our government) have ever actually studied the topic with the sort of rigor most have applied to economics.

A decade ago when I was Professor of Strategy and Policy at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, a graduate school for American and foreign military officers and diplomats headed for the highest posts, I found that the most enthusiastic students were not from the military, but rather from our State Department. *They* and their colleagues, they felt, whose daily bread is diplomacy, were the ones with the greatest need to learn systematically about war.

“Everyone should have to take this course!” one told me, before heading to London as Deputy Chief of Mission. “The Secretary of State should have to take it! The President should take it!”

Penn offers very much the same course, and I hope many of you will take it.

### **What is Strategy?**

“**Strategy**” comes from the ancient Greek *στρατήγος* “*strategos—a general*” and it means “what generals do.” Generals do not design weapons or recruit armies. Rather, they decide what to do with them.

Strategy is thus the art of employing whatever means one may have in as efficient a manner possible to attain the objective sought. It is thus an intellectual realm, and as you will discover in this course, strategic truths tend to endure even immense technological changes. *How* we fight has changed almost totally since the days of ancient Greece with which we begin. But from the point of view of the strategist, the Peloponnesian war remains highly instructive.

### **Evaluation:**

The course is based as completely as possible on a Blackboard site. It consists of readings, recitations, lectures, on line discussion, a war game (which is optional, but for participation in which extra credit is given), an in-class midterm examination, and a take-home final. No previous knowledge is assumed.

<i>Your online discussion contributions will account for</i>	<i>30% of the grade</i>
<i>Your final examination will account for</i>	<i>30% of the grade</i>
<i>The mid-term examination will account for</i>	<i>20% of the grade</i>
<i>Your recitation participation will account for</i>	<i>20% of the grade</i>

Most students should take the course as History 160.

***But advanced undergraduates and graduate students are encouraged to take it at a higher level under a different course number.*** This course will have its own recitation and some additional requirements, but the same lectures. If you have already taken the course as 160 you may take the upper level version. Please see Professor Waldron to arrange for this.

## Topics Covered:

The course will begin by asking why people fight, by looking at the bloody, but seemingly spontaneous, violence of soccer hooligans in Britain. From that we turn to two fundamental texts of strategic analysis, *The Art of War* attributed to Sun Zi 孫子 (ca. 450 BCE) and Carl von Clausewitz's (1780-1831)'s great book, *On War* (1832). Then we begin analyzing historical examples of organized violence or war.

The Peloponnesian War, the struggle between Athens and Sparta that effectively extinguished Greece as a political power, is the great prototype, immortalized by Thucydides. The American Revolution is the classic war for political objectives. The Napoleonic wars show how difficult it is even for a brilliant commander, having near limitless resources, to win a complex conflict. We will examine just how Napoleon managed a conflict involving both land and sea power, and how his opponents discovered his weaknesses.

We will then turn to consideration of strategies of sea power, specifically those of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) and Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922). Both of these men are key thinkers but their approaches differ. Admiral Mahan envisions decisive sea battles while Sir Julian is a pioneer of what has come to be called "the indirect approach." Air power theory, considered in History 159, grows directly out of sea power theory.

Then back to case studies. The Russo-Japanese war is a splendid example of what the Chinese today call *suzhan sujue*, 速戰速決 speedy conflict and speedy resolution—what at the beginning of the Iraq war was called the "rapidly decisive operation" or "RDO"—a term less popular now than it was then.

We will conclude with World War I, particularly the Gallipoli campaign of 1915 which, if successful, would have ended World War I by Christmas of that year. Whether this is an example of a brilliant concept, poorly executed, or simply a very bad idea, is still hotly debated. World War I was the classic stalemate, in which tens of millions perished in fruitless attritional battle. We will ask whether, if different strategies had been adopted, the outcome might have been different.

## Requirements:

The purpose of this course is to teach you a new skill: namely, strategic analysis. Learning it is like learning a new game, or taking aboard concepts like supply and demand.

To acquire this skill you will have to learn new material. That means familiarizing yourself with the wars we study, and grasping the strategic issues they pose, or the truths that they illustrate.

You will learn a new vocabulary: “theory of victory,” “NET Assessment,” “center of gravity,” and other terms.

You will also see strategic principles illustrated in historical cases.

Lectures and discussions in recitation will assure that anyone who does the work will master the skill.

We will evaluate you in five ways.

First, we expect you to come to lectures and recitations, and to participate.

Second, we expect you to take an active part in the discussion threads that will develop under the “discussion board” heading in Blackboard. The minimum is two per week, as explained on the site.

Third, you will take a standard, old-fashioned written examination in class in mid October. This will be designed to test how much you know.

Fourth, we will invite you to participate in a war game on a date to be announced. This is a simulation, in which all participate, and although one can never predict what will happen, such games are nearly always very exciting and interesting. We are usually assisted in this game by some experts and ex-military from Washington who make the trip for the day.

Finally, and most importantly, you will have a take-home open-book examination designed to see how well you have learned to think strategically. We will give you a choice of questions.

**Staff:**

***Instructor:***

Arthur Waldron [awaldron2@mac.com](mailto:awaldron2@mac.com)  
311C College Hall  
Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30

Professor Waldron holds the Lauder chair in International Relations in the Department of History. He was educated at Harvard, receiving A.B. in 1971 in History and Science from Harvard College and his Ph.D in Chinese history in 1981. He taught there, at Princeton, at Brown, and at the Naval War College before coming to Penn in 1997. He is also Vice President of the International Assessment and Strategy Center, an independent, non-profit 501 c 3 research organization in Washington, D.C. [www.strategycenter.net](http://www.strategycenter.net)

***Teaching Fellows:***

Nagatomi Hirayama      [nagatohi@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:nagatohi@sas.upenn.edu)  
 Jamyung Choi              jamyung@sas.upenn.edu

## CALENDAR

### **September:**

#### *Week I*

03 W            (1)    Introduction:

#### *Week II*

08 M            (2)    Approaches to Understanding Violence  
 10 W            (3)    Primordial Violence? *Among the Thugs*

*Reading and Recitation: Among the Thugs (entire)*

#### *Week III*

15 M            (4)    Strategic Demands of the Ancient Military Environment  
 17 W            (5)    Warfare According to Sun Zi

*Reading and Recitation: Sun Zi, Art of War tr. Mair (entire)*

#### *Week IV*

22 M            (6)    Nineteenth Century Warfare  
 24 W            (7)    Warfare According to Clausewitz

*Reading and Recitation: Clausewitz On War (Books I and II)*

#### *Week V*

29 M            (8)    The Peloponnesian War: The Prototypical Case

### **October:**

01 W            (9)    To the Peace of Nicias

#### *Week VI*

06 M            (10)    The Sicilian Expedition

08 W (11) Analysis

*Reading and Recitation:* Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (entire)

*Fall Break*

*Week VII*

15 W (12) The American Revolution

*Week VIII*

20 M (13) The Philadelphia Campaigns

22 W (14) 1777 Year of Decision

*Reading and Recitation:* John Pancake, *Year of the Hangman* (entire. Emphasize 129-212)

*Week IX*

27 M (15) Napoleon

29 W (16) Napoleon

***November:***

*Week X*

03 M (17) Napoleon

05 W (18) Napoleon

*Reading and Recitation:* David Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars: 1803-1815*

*Week XI*

10 M MID TERM EXAMINATION IN CLASS

12 W (19) Introduction to Sea Power Theory

*Week XII*

17 M (20) Alfred Thayer Mahan

19 W (21) Sir Julian Corbett

*Reading and Recitation:* Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (entire); Sir Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (entire)

22 Sat            **War Game**

The war game is a simulation in which all participate. It is optional, but some added credit will be gained by joining in. I hope will be joined in running the game by my doctoral student and colleague **Colonel Edward O’Dowd, Ph.D. U.S.A. (ret)**, usually known simply as “The Great One.”

*Week XIII*

- 24 M            (22)    The Russo-Japanese War  
26 W            (23)    The Russo-Japanese War: The Prototypical Case?

*Reading and Recitation:* Geoffrey Jukes, *The Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905* (entire)

*Thanksgiving Break*

***December:***

*Week XIV*

- 01 M            (24)    World War I and Stalemate  
05 W            (25)    Gallipoli: The Enigma

*Reading and Recitation:* Haythornthwaite, *Gallipoli: Frontal Assault on Turkey*<sup>[\*]</sup>

**Final Examination:** Take home, open book. You will be asked to type an essay of no more than eight pages on one of three broad questions.

This must be submitted, electronically, to your TA, before the last day of examination period, December 17.

**Readings:**

Books marked with an asterisk [\*] at the end of the entry are for sale at the Penn Book Center at the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut (this is the small privately-owned bookshops, *not* the big one. They do not carry Penn mugs or sweatshirts). Tel: 215 222-7600

Bill Buford, *Among the Thugs* (New York: Vintage Departures, 1993) ISBN 0-679-74535-1 [\*]

Sun Zi, *The Art of War*, tr. Victor Mair (New York: Columbia University Press) ISBN 1-4069-2055-X [\*]

Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* [1832] (indexed edition) tr. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) ISBN 0-691-01854-5 [\*]

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, tr. Rex Warner, with an Introduction and Notes by M. I. Finley (London: Penguin Books, 1972) ISBN 0-14-044039-9 [\*]

John S. Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977) ISBN 0-8173-0687-0 [\*]

David Gates, *The Napoleonic Wars: 1803-1815* (New York: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1997) ISBN 978-0-340-61447-1 [\*]

A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* [1890] (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1943) [\*]

Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* [1911] With an Introduction and Notes by Eric J. Grove (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1988) ISBN 0-87021-880-8 [\*]

Geoffrey Jukes, *The Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905* (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002) ISBN 1841764469 [\*]

Philip Haythornthwaite, *Gallipoli: Frontal Assault on Turkey* (Oxford: Osprey, 1991) ISBN: 1855321114 [\*]