MILITARIES AND MILITARIZATION
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Fall Semester 2015

What are the effects of a large, permanent military upon the political economy and society of the United States? What are the effects on other countries of their militaries? What are the effects on local societies of US military bases? What is the role of the various militaries in the history of colonial/neocolonial control, and in contemporary empire? How are military establishments and violence linked to ethno-national, class and other social movements -- and to the repression and domination of such movements? What does a military do to/for the people who staff it? What are the implications of militarization in such areas as gender, human rights, the environment, knowledge and learning, sports? What is the role of militias, “para-militaries”, mercenaries, guerrillas? What methods can social or popular movements use in their attempts to subvert, paralyze, eliminate or otherwise struggle against militaries, military bases, and weapons?

The course will be conducted as a workshop, as a seminar, drawing on each participant’s unique experiences and history. Class discussions are pivotal.

Central to our workshop, to the seminar, is your active participation -- as a presenter and discussant, as a speaker, as someone who expresses their own point of view, their own questions, their reactions to other students and to the professor. It also means your active work as a thinker who puts things together and makes sense of them. I judge and grade you on your participation in class, on your contributions to our discussions, on your working with your partners, as well as on the exams/papers you write.

Do things to the best of your ability: you are not expected to know all the answers. Nor are you expected to be “perfect”.

Course objectives/learning goals – what we all give to the course and obtain from it – are defined by BOTH you and the instructor. They’re not set by the professor alone. These goals/objectives interweave, build on each other, respond to and modify each other. They vary according to each persons’ interests, questions, burning issues.

Minimally, students will be expected to weigh and assess, in writing and orally, the various topics defined in the calendar of the syllabus and the issues raised by each set of readings. Those topics/themes of this syllabus appear below, on pages 3-4; they will be further developed and expanded by the guiding questions I set and send you for the reading assignments.

Your active participation, and on-going integration of course experiences and material by each participant (you and I) will also define a set of goals and expectations. They may change. And they’re unique to each of us in the course.

You have certain responsibilities. You will:

- write weekly reaction papers concerning what you read. They will be short, one page or so in length, and are to be handed in at the Tuesday meeting. They will be returned ASAP. They are required. Although they will not be graded, they shape my image of you, your abilities and growth. I will write comments on them. They’re important —- they tell me what you see as important, salient or problematic, or what I may need to clarify or explain. And they tell me what is salient for you, what you are thinking about and how you think.
This is your reaction to the week’s assignments. You could write on at least one of the following questions: What is the single most significant point learned from the readings?, What is the relation to prior reading assignments? What questions do these readings provoke in your thinking? What problems does it raise or resolve for you? You can use the reaction paper as a space for defining the questions you would ask the group, the comments you would make about the readings; use it as one of the bases for our discussions.

- lead off and provoke discussion of one of the topics suggested by the course and readings. Working with another student and with me, you will make a “presentation” and stimulate a conversation highlighting some of the important points of the topic, or the themes of a reading assignment, or the questions suggested by this assignment. This kind of discussion is central to our workshop, and you should approach it the way you would work on a major paper. These discussions are usually held at the Tuesday class meeting. We will discuss how to do this at length. And I will make suggestions as to how to do this. When you are responsible for this assignment, you must meet with me at least once before the discussion.

- discuss, ask questions, comment, argue – don’t be afraid to risk participating, don’t fear me or your peers. This is a workshop for all of us!

- write a final exam paper of some ten-twelve pages. It will be on topics that I will assign when I know the group better, due at the end of the semester.

I will distribute guiding questions concerning the assigned texts at least one week in advance of the reading/class discussion. I will also distribute suggestions for further reading for each topic. As I get a sense of your interests and experiences, I may vary the readings -- especially in the last third of the course.

Attendance Except for the first weeks, when I am still learning people’s names, I do not call the roll. You are adults and must make your own decisions about attending a particular class session. However, this is a course in which collective participation and sharing is important - and you have to come to class to make this happen.

Grades. I take everything into account: your participation and activity, what you say, what you write. I try to give people the benefit of the doubt; I try to see each individual person for her/himself; I try to be as flexible as possible and work with people’s strengths and weaknesses. I do not mark on curves; I do not calculate final grades in any mechanical fashion

I start with the assumption that each of you deserves an “A”, but you must prove it through your writing and speaking, and your collaboration with your partners and peers.

As a preliminary guideline – and only as a point of departure - the final essay/exam is worth some 40% of the final grade, your performance in the collaborative presentation/discussion is worth some 30%, and everything else – (participation in class, responsibility in submitting the reaction papers, etc.) come to some 30%.

Assignments, instructions, bibliographies, exam questions and some texts will be sent by e-mail, in PDF format. In order to read these, you must install the Adobe Acrobat Reader, downloadable from Adobe.

Remember that all your work must be your own. Don’t copy, don’t plagiarize; identify all sources and quotations. Consult the Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html)

My office hours are important. Use these hours. Don’t be afraid to talk to me! Please bring any questions or comments that you may have, to me. Feel free to e-mail me about anything.
Books that you will need to get:


The other readings are articles, selections from various books, optional books, or material on the internet.

I will distribute guiding questions concerning the assigned texts at least one week in advance of the reading/class discussion. As I get a sense of your interests and experiences, I may vary the readings -- especially in the last third of the course.

CALENDER
NOTE: NO CLASSES on 10/13 and 11/26

[9/3 preliminaries]

I. “cold war,” “semiwar”, “permanent war”; empire and the military; the “military-industrial complex”; the complexities of a militarized world; “crackpot rationality” and nuclear weapons; war is not natural; war is often a racket;


II. War, Genders, Realpolitik


NOTE: at some point, we will see and discuss the film Standing Army in class

10/13 NO CLASS MEETING

III A struggle against military bases and militarized coloniality: the case of Vieques


IV. Aspects of the so-called “American Way of War” (Empire and the military II):
contracting and “out-sourcing”; multiple wars, air power and death by remote control; “counter-insurgency” campaigns; clandestine operations, “special” operations; state terror, targeted killing; mercenaries, militias; militarized police; the background threat of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. Depending on the class’s interests, we will explore aspects of these topics in this space:


Other readings TBA

V U.S. society, the military, and militarization: a case study


11/26 NO CLASS MEETING

VI Alternatives?


Evangelista, Matthew. 1999. Unarmed forces: The transnational movement to end the Cold War. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press. (Selections: chapter 1, 2, 17)


Reading on the violence of the oppressed, TBA


Other possible readings TBA

Final exam paper due date: TBA