

# SC584-01 – SOCIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF WAR

**Ritchie Lowry - Fall 2007**  
**Wednesdays - Noon to 2:30 p.m. – 415 McGuinn**

## **Format & Content of Seminar**

☛ This seminar will explore the historical change in, nature and current character of war and the use of power in contemporary society. Of particular interest will be the proper and improper uses of war and force from both utilitarian and ethical perspectives. Specific topics and issues are listed below. We will also consider ways of addressing the problems of war and power in contemporary society, particularly through the social, economic and political empowerment of the average citizen and nonmilitary alternatives to war.

☛ We will begin the semester's first several weeks reading and responding to the shared readings below. In addition, material will be provided in course about the changing nature of warfare and related topics. You should also be generating your own reading and reference list for a term project. During the first week, everyone should select a topic for research and analysis during the semester. Rather than asking seminar participants to write a 30-page term paper by the end of the course, you will be asked to write three shorter, sequential papers during the semester. About a third of the way through the course, the first 10-page, double-spaced paper will be due which discusses the significance and nature of the selected topic. This will be followed by a second paper that analyzes the selected topic. At the end of the semester, a final paper will draw conclusions from each of the first two papers. We will be sharing each of these papers in class with one another in order to get the widest possible input. Since this is a small class that depends upon the widest possible involvement of all, please let me know if you have to miss a meeting for health or other reasons.

## **Shared Readings (in order of reading)**

Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, paperback, Random/Anchor  
Louis Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, paperback, Random House  
Pratap Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc.: A Profitable Occupation*, paperback, Seven Stories Press

(SC584-01, *Sociological Roots of War* - Lowry - 2007)

### **Office Hours**

Mondays & Fridays, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.,  
Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or by appointment  
in 422 McGuinn;  
☎ X23346

### **Examples of Possible Topics for Papers**

Alternatives to War  
Case Studies  
Citizen Action  
Civilian Defense  
Domestic Programs and Civil Rights in a Period of War  
Globalization and War  
Modernization Versus Traditionalism & Fundamentalism  
Nation Building  
Nonviolent Action  
Origins of War  
Nature of and Responses to Terrorism  
Reform of the Military  
The Evolution of Just War Theory  
The Role of Corporations  
The Role of NGOs  
The Role of the United Nations and Other International Organizations (World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc.)

The daily op-ed articles in newspapers such as *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times* will provide you with examples of the kinds of issues and problems that concern journalists, political analysts, and others in the wake of 9/11. Also take a look at the postings on my office door.

**Important Dates (all Wednesdays, except as noted)**

**September 5th** - First Meeting; Introduction to course; start reading Hedges  
**September 12th** – Submit titles & description and discuss Term Projects  
**September 19th** – Discuss Hedges; start reading Richardson  
**October 3rd** - First Paper Due; discuss Richardson; start reading Chatterjee  
**October 10th** – Discuss First Paper  
**October 17th** - Discuss Chatterjee  
**November 7th** - Second Paper(s) Due  
**November 14th** – Discuss Second Paper  
**November 21st** – No Class; Thanksgiving  
**December 5th** - Last Class  
**Tuesday, December 11th**– Last Paper(s) Due

**Other References of Interest (in addition to Shared Readings)**

Bacevich, Andrew (ed.); *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since WWII* (Columbia University Press, 2007)  
Hillman, James; *A Terrible Love of War* (Penguin Books, 2004)  
Janis, Irving L.; *Groupthink* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982)  
Lifton, Robert Jay; *Home From The War* (Beacon Press, 1973)  
Mills, C. Wright; *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 1956)  
Murphy, Cullen; *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America* (Houghton Mifflin 2007)  
Schell, Jonathan; *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People* (Metropolitan Books, 2003)  
Vagts, Alfred; *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (The Free Press, 1967)  
Wright, Quincy; *A Study of War* (University of Chicago Press, 1942)

**Ways to Contact Me with Questions, Comments, Etc.**

✉ The best e-mail address to use is **GOODMONEY1@aol.com** with copies to **lowry@bc.edu**

✉ Also, visit my **GOOD MONEY Home Pages for Socially & Environmentally Concerned Investors, Consumers and Businesspeople** on the World Wide Web @ **<http://www.goodmoney.com>**

I also have a **Personal Home Page** through the B.C. server @ **HYPERLINK "http://www2.bc.edu/~lowry" <http://www2.bc.edu/~lowry>**

## **Topics & Issues To Be Considered**

### **Social and Cultural Features of War**

Changing Nature of Warfare (Quincy Wright)

Causes of War

Why and How War Is Fought

Goals, Purposes, Means, Social Organization, Technology

The Problem of Controls

Objective and Subjective

Age of Total/Absolute and Unconventional Warfare and Terrorism

Character and Acceptance of Warfare (Clausewitz and Hedges)

Nature of War as Human Activity and a Political Act

Human Support for Warfare

Force vs. Authority (Nisbet and others)

The Problem of Legitimacy

Limits of Force

Alternatives to Force (Schell and others)

### **Macrosociological Roots of War**

Role of the Modern State

The Military-Industrial Complex (Mills and others)

Imperial Presidency and the Higher Immorality

Role of Major Institutions (Media, Church, Universities, Thinktanks)

### **War in a Capitalist Economy**

Privatization/Corporatization and War

Commodification of Warfare

### **Microsociological Roots of War**

Organizational Causes of War

Expansive Bureaucracies (Barnet and others)

Decision-Making

Groupthink (Janis)

When Ends Become Means (Vagts and Shoup)