



HOMEFRONTS AS WARFRONTS: THE CIVILIAN EXPERIENCE IN WAR

COURSE FORMAT

Anticipate approximately 5 hours of work per week for 9 weeks. The format for the first 8 weeks is to read, view, and listen to the assignments and then participate in a group discussion. The group discussion should be a constructive back-and-forth exchange of ideas and views, increasing understanding of the topic through a sharing of ideas and posing of questions. Grading is entirely subjective. At the conclusion of week 8, the knowledge gained and familiarity with the course content will help you write a 1,200 – 1,500 word assessment paper during week 9.

COURSE GOAL

To provide the student with a broad historical overview and deeper understanding of how war affects civilian populations. The first half of the course will focus on the civilian experience in the U.S. Civil War, World War I, World War II, and Vietnam. The last half will examine the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Firsthand accounts by civilians and U.S. military personnel will be integrated into readings and class material, including documentary film excerpts.

National-level policymakers and war planners have often underestimated the human costs and consequences of war. This has been particularly true at the outset of conflicts assumed to be easily “won” or short in duration. Some wars have included the eventual intentional targeting of civilian populations as a matter of wartime strategy -- bombings of London, Tokyo, and Dresden among other locations during World War II.

U.S. warfronts have been distant and far removed from the U.S. homefront. One exception: the U.S. Civil War, which resulted in an estimated 750,000 total deaths. World War I -- the so-called “war to end all wars” -- and World War II were global in nature and affected numerous civilian populations across continents. U.S. involvement in Vietnam provides an interesting case study as television images brought the cost of war home in a visceral “nightly news” way (the My Lai massacre one example). In these cases, American warfronts remained the homefronts to millions -- ‘our’ wars fought in ‘their’ neighborhoods and villages.

The U.S. military’s post-9/11 conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have their own unique characteristics concerning these wars’ effects on Iraqi and Afghan civilian populations. Counterinsurgency doctrine

espouses winning “hearts and minds” and building local capacity and partnerships. Some questions the student will examine include: How effective has this strategy been? Have Iraqis and Afghans viewed U.S. efforts as welcome or interference or some combination? What are the pros and cons and risks of “collaborating” with the U.S. in wartime?

COURSE OVERVIEW

Homefronts as Warfronts: The Civilian Experience in War and its eight lessons provide the student with a deeper understanding of the human costs and consequences of conflict. Course material prioritizes firsthand accounts regarding the U.S. Civil War, World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Lesson 1, U.S. Civil War, provides an overview of the war that divided the U.S. homefront and will include diverse accounts (slaves, slaveholders, Northern and Southern soldiers, politicians, etc.).

Lesson 2, World War I, compares the experience of civilian populations caught in the middle of trench warfare.

Lesson 3, World War II, focuses on the Dutch experience in World War II and the German Occupation of the Netherlands.

Lesson 4, Vietnam, examines the Vietnamese perspective on what they called the “Resistance War Against America” or the “American War.”

Lesson 5, Iraq, highlights the Marine experience in Anbar Province with a focus on how Iraqi civilians responded to Marine operations in Fallujah.

Lesson 6, Iraqi Voices, Iraqi firsthand accounts regarding the U.S. military presence.

Lesson 7, Afghanistan, highlights the Marine experience in Helmand Province with a focus on how Afghan civilians responded to Marine operations in the province.

Lesson 8, Afghan Voices, Afghan firsthand accounts regarding the U.S. military presence.

ASSESSMENTS

Learners will be evaluated through two types of assessment activities:

60 percent for discussion contribution.

40 percent for the essay final assessment.

A mastery score of 80 percent for the entire course is required to pass.

FACULTY BIO

Mr. Kael Weston represented the U.S. government for over a decade as a State Department official. Across seven consecutive years in Iraq and Afghanistan (2003-2010), he worked closely with frontline U.S. military units, local Iraqi and Afghan leaders, and coalition partners in Fallujah, Baghdad/Sadr City, and Khost and Helmand provinces. While serving previously at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York City, he was the U.S. representative on the UN Security Council’s Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee. Weston is author of the book, *The Mirror Test: America at War in Iraq and*

Afghanistan (Knopf/Penguin Random House, 2016), a *New York Times* Editors' Choice, a *Military Times*' Best Book of the Year, and recipient of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's *General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award*. Currently the writer-in-residence in the Honors College at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, he has also written for *Foreign Affairs*, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* and has been frequently interviewed on NPR about U.S. foreign policy. Weston is a graduate of the University of Utah (BA), University of Cambridge (MPhil), and did additional PhD coursework at the London School of Economics and was a Fulbright Scholar in the Netherlands.

As the Marine Corps University (MCU) Kim T. Adamson Chair of Insurgency and Terrorism, Mr. Weston lectures across the schools, including the Marine Corps War College – MCWAR, the Command and Staff College – CSC, the School of Advanced Warfighting – SAW, and the Expeditionary Warfare School – EWS.

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