Aims and objectives:

- To introduce concepts and theories in the study of war and revolution.
- To illustrate through historical cases how these insights apply.
- To cultivate historical understanding and analytical skills.

Course Description:

War and revolution are two of the most extreme forms of social interaction. Violence and wholesale disruption test the bonds of social life to the limit. What drives people down that path? And how do they conduct themselves in these extraordinary circumstances? The paper explores these questions theoretically, then examines two extended historical cases: The United States of America from the revolutionary and civil wars through the two world wars to the Cold War and war on terror; and Iran from the rise and fall of the Pahlavi monarchy to the dilemmas of the revolutionary republic and its military activities in Iraq and Syria.

Teaching & Assessment:

This course is taught in nine two-hour lectures (18 hours) in Michaelmas and Lent, and assessed by a 3-hour exam. Required readings are starred amidst recommended readings. Those eager to expand their knowledge can find further readings at the end of the syllabus.

Lecture (1) – Understanding War and Revolution
This lecture contrasts the dominant theoretical approaches to the causes and outcomes of revolution, before moving on to examine the paradoxical nature of war and whether technology transforms its social essence.

Revolution: Causes and Outcomes

War: Social Nature and Technological Transformations
https://www.clausewitzstudies.org/bibl/Bassford-ClausewitzInAmericaToday.pdf
Essay Questions:
(1) Critically discuss causality in revolution?
(2) Can technology change the nature of war?

Lectures (2-5) – AMERICA
These lectures deal with the origins and development of the American War of Independence in the eighteenth century, before turning to the Civil War, a century later. They survey changes in American war doctrine through Vietnam, the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs in the 1990s, the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns, and the shift to drone warfare. Finally, these lectures examine the lurking militarism in American state and society.

Revolutionary War or War of Independence?
*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH3]

Revolution or Civil War?
*—Anderson, Donald (ed.). 2008. When War Becomes Personal: Soldier’s Accounts from the Civil War to Iraq. Iowa City (IA): University of Iowa Press. [CH3]

World Wars: Hot and Cold
*—Herzog, Tobey. 2008. Writing Vietnam, Writing Life: Caputo, Heinemann, O’Brien, Butler. Iowa City (IA): Iowa University Press. [CH1, 3-4; Appendices A, C-D]
*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH19]

War on Terror?
*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH 28, 34]
—Kaplan, Fred. 2013. The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War. New York: Simon & Schuster. [CH8, 16-17, 20, 22]

Essay Questions:
(1) How revolutionary was the American War of Independence?
(2) Why was the Civil War necessary?
(3) Discuss the logic guiding the evolution of the American war doctrine?
(4) To what extent is America succeeding in reducing the violence of war?

Lectures (6-9) — IRAN
These lectures examine the role of the military in establishing and preserving the Pahlavi dynasty. They then explore the preconditions and consequences of Khomeini’s Islamist revolution, and how the revolutionary guards were essential to consolidating power, fighting the long war against Iraq, and exporting revolution to Arab countries. They finally consider challenges to the regime, from America to the Green Movement.

Revolution from Above between World Wars


Revolution from Above during the Cold War


Revolutionary Republicanism


**The Republic at War**


Essay Questions:
(1) Explain the weakness of Pahlavi regime?
(2) How peaceful was the Iranian revolution?
(3) Discuss civil-military relations in Islamist Iran?
(4) How are the Revolutionary Guards changing Iranian politics?