POLS 466/566: ASYMMETRIC WARFARE IN TWO ERAS—VIETNAM AND THE COLD WAR VS. THE GULF WARS AND 9/11

Saint Louis University
Fall 2013
W: 6-8:30 PM
McGannon 121

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course examines the lessons from the Western intervention in Vietnam and other insurgencies during the Cold War with the view of assessing their relevance to the two Gulf Wars, Afghanistan, and other interventions in the Post-Cold War and 9/11 Era. While asymmetric warfare consists of a broad spectrum of conflict between unequals, the focus in this course will be on military interventions by global powers in smaller and weaker states. Such interventions necessarily involve clashes between two levels or perspectives of politics: the global political imperatives of the powerful intervening state, and the politics on the ground in the target state. We will explore the proposition that these local politics are frequently ignored by the intervening state, and that these local politics (for all the weakness of the target state vis a vis the intervening power) can be determinative of the intervention’s ultimate success or failure. Interveners can be welcomed as liberators and nation-builders or resented as imperialists and fall into ambushes that slip into quagmires.

Analytically, we will examine the imperatives of global politics: of the Cold War and the US foreign policy of containment versus the post-Cold War Humanitarianism and the subsequent War Against Terror following 9/11. We will set this against the contests in target societies for the general, but also very individual, struggles for national legitimacy within weak states, and the ways these definitional contests are both influenced by interventions, and, in turn, can shape their outcomes. The course will begin with an in-depth examination of this struggle in Vietnam, and then compare this particular struggle with seven other Cold War insurgencies to see what generalizations might be made. There will be a “village take-over” exercise to examine these politics in detail, and small group brainstorming to help the class develop a set of candidate lessons. At this point, there will be a comprehensive Midterm Examination.

The second half of the course will set up the new international context of the current era, and look at both the international politics and domestic political struggles of the target societies in Gulf War I, Somalia, Bosnia/Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Gulf War II. The class will decide whether any of these Cold War lessons hold up through in-class exercises assessing the calculus of intervention (international level) vs. the calculus of surrender/withdrawal (domestic level). This latter phase will culminate in the presentation of student papers to small groups, and a final class session for these groups to present their overall lessons of Vietnam for Asymmetric Warfare today.
For those students taking the course for graduate credit (POLS 566), there will be further investigations of the theories that under gird the subject of Asymmetric Warfare. There will be four, hour-long break-out sessions to consider them, duly noted in the Course Schedule, on: 1.) Revolution, 2.) Moral vs. Political Economy perspectives on village or local resistance, 3.) the Focused Comparison Case Study Method, and 4.) various Contemporary Critiques of the US Role in the International System.

Dr. Lomperis has written extensively on Vietnam and on the subject of legitimacy and intervention, and served two tours in Vietnam (one in the Army and the other as a Defense Attaché for the US Embassy) and has done service as a media analyst for both Gulf Wars. The University Press of Kansas published his memoir of these experiences in September, 2011 under the title, The Vietnam War From the Rear Echelon: An Intelligence Officer’s Memoir, 1972-1973. It is on Hard Copy Reserve for this course. He is currently working on a book on the theory and policy of military intervention.

TEXTS

I have selected the following books as required texts (in syllabus appearance):

Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (1983, rev. ed., 1991)—This is probably the most widely read account of the war today. It provides a better focus on the personalities, both Vietnamese and American, than on the history of the war.

Timothy Lomperis, From People’s War to People’s Rule (1996)—This is the central text for the course, and provides the basic theory that will be used.

Bob Woodward, The Commanders (1991)—This is a book that has become the standard account of the first Gulf War. It also catalogs the tremendous changes within the US military establishment in the 1980s.

James Dobbins, et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building (2003)—Analyzes the policy dilemmas facing interveners on the ground in target societies.

Joseph Nye, Paradox of American Power (2002)—This work examines the paradox of the necessity of multilateralism for the United States, despite its position as the sole remaining super power. He also presents and explains “soft power.”

John Keegan, The Iraq War (2004)—An account of the war itself, and of its antecedent political history, by a prominent British military historian.

Bob Woodward, Obama’s Wars (2010)—Brings the “second” Afghan War into focus. The “war” is mainly the struggles within the Obama Administration for a coherent war policy.

Jeffrey Record/Andrew Terrill, “Iraq and Vietnam” (2004)—A pamphlet discussing the
differences, similarities, and insights drawn from a comparison of these two conflicts (ON E-RESERVE AS WELL). Very helpful for term paper.

Course Pack of Key Articles and papers—These will be assigned at various points in the syllabus, and are listed on p. 11 at the end of this syllabus.

ALL THE ARTICLES ARE ON E-RESERVE (Password: POLS466)

The “Recommended Readings” that occur at different spots in the Course Schedule are what I consider to be “classics” in the field, and are useful for a deeper investigation of the subject matter; and, more importantly, represent a gold mine of information and perspectives for the term paper. It is rare to have classic works published while a historical event is still ongoing, and I count very few in this category for the War on Terror.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (DEPARTMENTAL)

These are attached at the end of the syllabus for both undergraduate and graduate programs. For an advanced seminar, it is expected that students will demonstrate the final skills listed.

SPECIFIC TO THIS COURSE

In-class activities:

As noted in both the Course Description and the Schedule, most classes will consist of lecture/discussion on the readings, plus a village take-over exercise, as well as numerous small group discussions and reports, and one group project and report.

Modes of assessment:

Students will be assessed by a Midterm Examination, a major term paper, a final essay, a group report, and class participation/attendance as delineated in the section below on the Course Grade.

Skills/knowledge:

This course, in terms of the sub fields of political science, is half a comparative course and half an international relations course. It examines the structure of the international system in two different eras (the Cold War and War on Terror), which is the international relations component, and it assesses the significance of the politics on the ground in the target insurgent societies (Vietnam vs. Iraq/Afghanistan, and the other cases considered), which is the comparative component. The central pedagogical question is how to draw lessons from one international context and national case to another, which will familiarize students with the structured, focused comparison method of case studies in comparative politics. The slightly more heavy foot in the course, then, is in comparative politics.
With over half Asian content, and a major paper requirement, this course also counts as a capstone for the Asian Studies Certificate. For those using the course for this purpose, the application of the seminar paper will have to be on Afghanistan, rather than Iraq.

**COURSE GRADE**

As a seminar, students are expected to attend all class sessions, avail themselves of every opportunity to participate in class discussion, and be fully prepared to comment on assigned readings. The course grade will be derived from a **Midterm Examination** on the first part of the course (Vietnam and the Cold War), a **Term Paper** on a lesson from the Vietnam Era pertaining to Asymmetric Warfare today, a final **Lessons of Vietnam** essay, and **Class participation** in these proportions:

- Midterm Examination -- 30% or 40%*
- Term Paper -- 30% or 40%*
- Class participation/attendance -- 20% (includes 5% on group reports)
- Final Essay -- 10%

*I will count one of these assignments 40% and the other 30%, automatically assigning the 40% to the higher grade of these two assignments. Together, then, the **Midterm** and the **Term Paper** will count 70% of the course grade.

The **participation/attendance grade** will be based on **attendance** (perfect attendance alone will guarantee a bare B-), **comments** in class, with distinction earned by demonstrated **familiarity with the readings** and insightful observations concerning them. The latter category is essential for an A in participation. Participation will count double on class sessions devoted to small group discussions and in-class exercises. They are noted by asterixes in the **Course Schedule** below. The last class in the course is devoted to Group Statements on the Lessons of Vietnam. These group statements will count 5% of the course grade, and will be folded into each student's overall participation grade.

**Attendance Policy:** As an intensive seminar in which a full week’s work is contained in one single class, I can countenance up to two missed classes, excused in advance; though, obviously, no participation points can be earned for missed classes. **Should a student miss four classes, however valid the reasons, she/he will be dropped from the class!**

The **Term Paper** will be devoted to a single lesson of Vietnam of importance for Asymmetric Warfare in general. The paper will lay out precisely what this lesson or generalization is, why it is important, assess the criticism that has been levied against this lesson in the literature, why it still remains valid in your opinion, and what its relevance is for today. The paper should be 10-12 pages (15-20 pages for graduate students), and is due in class on November 20th. The **Final Essay** is a reflection of the student’s general response to the course in terms of either: a single or over-arching lesson from the course for asymmetric warfare, or the essentials of a sound approach for drawing lessons from events like Vietnam for asymmetric warfare. This should be 5 pages, and read like
an “op-ed” piece in the New York Times. It is due Wednesday, December 11th. Separate written hand-outs will be distributed for each of these assignments.

My grading scale for all class work is as follows (I do not curve):

A= 93% and above
A-= 90%-92%
B+= 87%-89%  C+= 77%-79%  D+= 67%-69%
B = 83%-86%  C = 73%-76%  D = 63%-66%
B-= 80%-82%  C- = 70%-72%  D- = 60%-62%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Saint Louis University takes the issue of academic honesty seriously. Please read the following policy statement carefully:

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to the instructor and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University.

(See http://www.slu.edu/xj2657.xml)

DISABILITIES

Students who believe that, due to a disability or other special needs, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at the Student Success Center in BSC 331. Tel.: (314) 977-3484 or www.slu.edu/success or disability_services@slu.edu. I will naturally support student accommodation requests when an approval letter from Disability Services has been received, and when students discuss these accommodations with me after receipt of the approval letter. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries and subsequent procedures.

Other conditions

--Because of the time of this seminar, I feel compelled to make the rule that eating in class must be verboten. It simply is too much of a distraction visually, auditorily, and olfactorily. Drinking non-potent liquids is fine.
-- When you have substantial questions, make use of office hours. E-mail should just be for notifications (such as a class absence) and single sentence response queries.

-- All class work must be submitted in hard copy, not by e-mail!

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I. VIETNAM AND THE COLD WAR

Class # 1 (August 28th)  **Introduction and Global Strategies of the Cold War**

Scope and nature of the course and the international context of Containment Vs. People's war.

**Read:** Karnow, Chs. 1, 5 (pp. 184-196).
Lomperis, *PW*, Preface, Intro., Ch. 2 (40-48),
Ch. 3 (70-74), and App. I (326-328).

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Class # 2 (September 4th) **Legitimacy and the Crucible of Vietnamese Nationalism (and legitimacy) and the period of colonial rule under the French**

A fairly thorough presentation of legitimacy as a basic course focus. The setting of this concept in traditional Vietnam and its encounter with the French.

**Read:** Lomperis, *PW*, Chs. 3, 4 (85-97). *Read carefully*
Karnow, Chs. 2-5. *Skim for flavor*

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Class # 3 (September 11th) **Revolution vs. Nation-Building and Counter-Insurgency**

Stakes on the ground: Revolutions as the socioeconomic angst out of which insurgencies arise vs. Western theories of modernization and of counter-insurgency.

**Read:** Lomperis, *PW*, Ch. 1, Ch. 2 (30-40), and Ch. 3 (*re-read*)
Dobbins, Executive Summary, Chs. 1-3.

**Assign:** Outside agitators, village roles for Village Take-Over.

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**Graduate Break-out Session One: Revolution**

-- an examination of several theories of revolution as seed beds of Insurgencies. Focus on class reports on Chalmers Johnson's *Revolutionary Change* (sociologically based and process theory framework) and T. Robert Gurr's *Why Men Rebel?* (psychologically based on a frustration/aggression thesis).
Class # 4 (September 18th) Village World and the Viet Cong

Plus

Village Take-Over Exercise*

Discussion of two main approaches to village world: Moral Economy vs. Political Economy (or perestroika vs. rational choice) and a micro-look at the Viet Cong to be followed by a village take-over exercise of in-class appeals to villagers and their responses.

Read: Lomperis, PW, Ch. 4 (97-110), App I (323-326)

Recommended: William Andrews, The Village War
Douglas Pike, The Viet Cong
Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An

*Participation counts double

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Graduate Break-out Session Two: The Villages in detail
--discussion and class reports on Samuel Popkin's Rational Peasant,
and of two works by James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant,
and Weapons of the Weak. If time, consideration of Jeffrey Race.

Class # 5 (September 25th) A Tale of Two Strategies—Washington and Hanoi

The war as seen from both sides: Washington's Big Unit War vs. Marine CAP teams, nation-building, and Phoenix vs. Pacification. Hanoi’s “Armed Struggle” Tet triumph (?), errors (Easter Invasion), and getting it right (Ho Chi Minh Campaign).

Read: Lomperis, PW, Ch. 5, and Appendix II.
    Lomperis, Memoir, Ch 1(pp. 10-14), Chs 2-4, Ch. 5(to p. 112), Chs
    6 (to p. 125), Ch 8, 10, Ch. 11 (201-205), and Ch 12.
    ON HARD RESERVE (class reports)
    or
    Karnow, Skim (!) the rest of the book (at least read the Ch. on Tet)

Recommended: David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest
Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie
Patrick Mcgarvey, Visions of Victory
Leslie Gelb, The Irony of Vietnam
Frances FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake
Harry Summers, On Strategy
Fox Butterfield, comp., The Pentagon Papers
Class # 6 (October 2nd) **Through a Prism: Comparative Cases**

Generalizing from the unique through the filter of other Western interventions in Marxist people's wars: China, Greece, Philippines, Malaya, Cambodia, Laos, and Peru. Small group discussions.

**Read:** Lomperis, PW, Ch. 6 (China), plus two cases of choice.

*Participation counts double*

Class # 7 (October 9th)

**Overall Lessons from the Cold War**

Class discussion on the lessons of Vietnam, and of its companions.

**Read:** Lomperis, PW, Ch. 11, Concl.

Andrew Mack art. (CP # 1: “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars”)

Lomperis art. (CP # 2: “The Perils of Seduction”).

*Participation counts double*

**Here I must introduce an important caveat to this run of the course. We will try to sandwich in Class # 7 into Class # 6 so that the Midterm can have your full attention on October 9th by being more efficient with our time in Class # 6. Some of Class # 7 may spill over to October 9th. I do not want to slight this, however, and we may even postpone the Midterm until March 16th. The larger class point to this squeeze play is to accommodate a separate class for Afghani II. If unsuccessful, we will have to combine both Afghan Wars into Class # 10 (October 30th).**


II. **“9/11” AND THE WAR AGAINST TERROR**

Class # 8 (October 16th) **Run-up to the Gulf War, the War Itself, and its Aftermath**

Military reforms of the 1980s and Panama’s “Just Cause.” The Blitzkrieg by an American Wehrmacht in the Gulf, and the subsequent failures of Containment and Deterrence--maybe.

**Read:** Keegan, Chs. 2-4. Read carefully.

Woodward, Commanders, Parts I and II. **SKIM FOR FLAVOR**
*****Fall Break October 21-22*****

Class # 9 (October 23rd) The 90s: Intervention and the National Interest—Somalia and Kosovo


Read: Nye, Chs. 1, 3, and 5.
Dobbins, Chs. 4, 7.
Murphy art (CP # 3: "The Political and Diplomatic Background...Somalia
Barry Posen art (CP # 4: "The War for Kosovo.")

Class # 10 (October 30th) "9/11" and the New Era in International Relations, and The Legitimacy of a Loya Jirga in Afghanistan

New definitions in international relations arising from "9/11" and the Strategy of Pre-emption. The smashing of the Taliban and scattering of al-Qaeda under the mantle of international legitimacy.

Read: President Bush art (CP # 5: "The National Security Strategy..."
Dobbins, Ch. 8.
Lomperis art (CP # 6: "The Virtues of Modest Imperialism over Arrogant Hegemony")

Recommended: Stephen Coll, Ghost Wars
Woodward, Bush at War, pp. 1-328.

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Graduate break-out session four—Critiques of the Role of the US In the international system: Olympians vs. the NeoCons. Students Each report on a book of choice.

Class # 11 (November 6th) Iraq: The Run-up, "Mission Accomplished," and the Hornet's Nest

The new era (from Containment to Pre-emption) and the struggle over terms of international legitimacy, the quagmire of victory, nation-building, the "surge," what are we slipping into?

Keegan, Chs. 5-9.
Lomperis arts (CP # 7: "To a Baghdad Victory Via Saigon")
(CP # 8: “Dispelling the Ghost”)

**Recommended:** Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II*
Bob Woodward, *The War Within*
George Bush, *Decision Points*

Class # 12 (November 13th) **Afghanistan II: The “Necessary War”**

A look at the resumption of the war in Afghanistan, this time as a struggle on the ground of counterinsurgency vs. Special Ops and in Washington between Hawks And Doves within the administration.

**Read:** Phillips art. (CP # 9: “Finding Vietnam in Afghanistan”)
Blackwill vs. Miller arts. (CP #10: “Afghanistan: Cut Losses or Double Down”)
Woodward, *Obama's Wars*. How much of this will depend on how well we do in March. At a minimum, you need to get the gist of the debate between Biden and the military, and what seem to be Obama’s central objectives.
Lomperis paper (CP#11: “The First Surge”)

Class # 13 (November 20th) **Presentation and Discussion of Student Papers in Small Groups**

*****TERM PAPERS DUE IN CLASS, NOV. 20th*****

**Assignment for next class:** Prepare Group Reports for final class

**Participation counts double**

Class # 14 (December 4th) **Group Statements (five % of grade) PLUS Plenary Discussion**

Brief, but formal, statements by each group on overall lessons, and final plenary discussion on same.

**Read For Final Essay:** Record/Terrill Pamphlet, “Iraq and Vietnam” ON E-RESERVE
Lomperis, *PW*, Ch. 11, Conclusion. *Re-read*
Dobbins, Ch. 9, 10.

**Participation in class beyond statements counts double**

*****FINAL ESSAY, DECEMBER 11TH *****
COURSE PACK CONTENTS


#3: Ray Murphy, “The Political and Diplomatic Background...Somalia,” Journal of Conflict Studies ('02).


#8: Tim Lomperis, “Dispelling the Ghost: Iraq as the Vietnam War We Cannot Afford to Lose,” Journal of Conflict Studies ('06).


Political Science Learning Outcomes, adopted February 2013

Graduates will understand how knowledge is created and shared across forms and contexts. Graduates will be able to:
- demonstrate contextual understanding and sufficient factual and historical background to assess political science theories and concepts.
- recognize and apply major concepts and approaches in the study of American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political thought.
- discuss and defend their ideas orally, with increasing confidence as they proceed through the major.
- present arguments and evidence clearly in written form, with increasing sophistication as they move through the major.
- read carefully and comprehend theoretical texts.

Graduates will demonstrate a strong work ethic.

Graduates will understand inquiry as sustained engagement with increasingly complex questions. Graduates will be able to:
- critique and assess scholarly writing.
- construct and write clear, well-reasoned, and persuasive theoretical arguments.
- correctly identify underlying assumptions and conceptual categories.
- critically evaluate and incorporate information and its sources.
- adjudicate between competing theories or arguments, giving credit to perspectives other than their own.
- evaluate evidence to test theories and to make persuasive arguments.
- assess the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches.
- frame meaningful questions and devise strategies to answer them.
- develop, plan, and defend a research project, and write up the results in the appropriate style.

Graduates will understand themselves in solidarity with and for others locally, nationally, and globally. Graduates will be able to:
- demonstrate increased interest in political phenomena, leading to greater engagement with the community and the world.
- discern the ethical consequences of decisions, actions, and inaction.
- demonstrate awareness of the complex identities of themselves and others.

In 100 and 200 level courses, students are expected to make progress on all of these outcomes. In 300 and 400 level theory courses, they are expected to demonstrate a degree of proficiency.
1. Political Science program objectives

   a. Students will understand the basic concepts of scholarship in the MA track they complete: American Politics, International Affairs, Political Theory, or Gender and Politics.
   
   b. Students will learn to think critically and systematically about social and political phenomena.
   
   c. Students will learn to evaluate and conduct empirical social science research.
   
   d. Students will be prepared to be competent, socially-responsible citizens in a diverse society and a globally-interconnected world.
   
   e. Students will appreciate the diversity of values that inform the actions and preferences of various political communities.

2. Political Science student learning outcomes

   a. Students will demonstrate knowledge of how political systems operate within the context of their chosen MA track.
   
   b. Students will be able to evaluate, critique, and synthesize competing theoretical explanations and produce a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature in their chosen field of study.
   
   c. Students will be able to produce original research and seminar projects that investigate political processes in a methodologically-sound and persuasive manner and contribute to ongoing scholarly debates.
   
   d. Students will be able to present the results of their research in public forums.
   
   e. Students will be able to analyze the values that inform political institutions, behavior, and policies.
   
   f. Students will demonstrate honest and ethical research practices.