

The Iraq War
History 407/507 – Spring 2014
Tuesday 2-4:50
CRN 35291
MCK 475

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Office hours: Mondays, 10:00-11:30; and Thursdays, 1:00-2:30, or by appointment.

Generalities

This course has two basic aims. The first is to examine several of the major interpretative issues surrounding the history of the Iraq War. The second is to produce a substantial research paper (think in terms of between twenty and twenty-five pages of text).

Class days will be divided into two parts. In the one part we will discuss the week's readings and topics. The other part (the "research workshop") will be devoted to your research projects: choosing and framing a research topic; locating materials and developing a research strategy; organizing materials and writing the paper. Some days we may flip-flop the order.

Class attendance, preparation, and all assignments are obligatory (and should be **typed and printed**). Final grades will be based primarily on the research paper (70% of total grade: 60% for final version, 10% for rough draft). However, failure to complete assigned reading or written assignments can lower your final grade. (Other assignments: 30% of total, or 5% per written assignment other than the rough draft and final version of your research paper).

Learning objectives

This course should lead to a better understanding of ...

1. How to frame a research paper topic that can effectively guide your research.
2. How to conduct research employing the relevant primary and secondary source materials.
3. How to assess potential research materials in an efficient manner.
3. How to properly annotate (footnote) a research paper and format a bibliography.
4. How to assess your colleagues' papers.
5. Several key issues regarding the war in Iraq (this year: the two Secretaries of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld and Robert; Obama's Iraq policy in the context of his predecessor's policies; and the situation in Iraq since the U.S. withdrawal in relation to the war).

Books for purchase

None - see Blackboard for readings

Assignments

April 8: Brainstorm topics – brief description of four potential topics

April 15: research paper proposal

April 22: book review: most important book on your topic

April 29: 30-minute drill – book review of book you have spent 30 minutes reading

May 13: paper outline

May 27: **rough draft due**

June 3: rough draft reviews

June 10: **Final draft of paper due in my office: 2 pm.**

Class Schedule

April 1: Thinking about the Iraq War “in context”

Discussion topics:

- 1) Issues in doing contemporary history (or the history of events not yet ended)
- 2) How I’m framing this course.
- 3) Sources and topics: brainstorming topics for papers

Research workshop: Where to find materials. How to find materials.

April 8: Donald Rumsfeld's management of the Iraq War

Reading: Mark Danner on Donald Rumsfeld (articles from New York Review of Books) - you might also find it useful to look back over the pieces from HIST 410 on Rumsfeld's tenure: the interviews with Frederick Kagan and James Fallows (especially Kagan's) and the excerpt from Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II.

Discussion topics:

- 1) What is the basis of Danner's critique of Rumsfeld?
- 2) What kind of evidence does he adduce in his critique?
- 3) Is Danner's treatment of Rumsfeld convincing? Is it fair?

Research workshop: what makes a good research paper topic? Framing questions and choosing topics.

Assignment Due: Brainstorm four paper topics: bring in a (typed) list of four topics. Each topic should have a clear “topic” (that is, what the paper would be about) as well as a “problem” or “question” that would guide the research. One topic should be on a discreet event, one on a specific person or institution (e.g., the CPA), one on a general issue or topic (e.g., the role of Turkey in Iraq, 2003-2010).

April 15: Donald Rumsfeld's management of the Iraq War (continued)

Reading: Donald Rumsfeld, Known and Unknown: A Memoir (2011) xiii-xvi, 3-8, 471-541, 645-80, 692-726 (Author's note and opening to "Lessons in Terror"; Part XI; ch. 44; and Part XIV except ch. 47); and selected documents (see BB for a link to the website).

If interested, you might read a review of Rumsfeld's memoir: e.g., Max Boot.

Discussion topics:

- 1) What is the nature of Rumsfeld's justification of his policies?
- 2) What kinds of evidence does he provide to support his arguments?
- 3) Is the evidence appropriate (that is, does it do what he wants it to do?)
- 4) Is he convincing?

Research workshop: judging materials, reading for facts, reading for arguments

Assignment due: research paper proposal.

Your proposals should include two parts:

- 1) a description of your topic and a discussion of the question or problem you hope to answer or illuminate (about a page);
- 2) a preliminary bibliography of source materials (divide it into two: a section for primary sources and a section for secondary sources. Alphabetize by author or editor within each section. Use proper bibliographical form (see Blackboard site for link to proper bibliographical forms). Do it right the first time and you will be able to use this later for your final paper).

April 22: Rumsfeld's successor: Robert Gates

Reading: Robert M. Gates, Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War (2014), 25-79, 223-238 (ch. 2 and second half of ch. 6)

Discussion topics:

- 1) What changed from Rumsfeld to Gates?
- 2) How might we account for Gates' success compared to Rumsfeld?
- 3) Do their respective memoirs offer any insight into their relative degrees of success in managing the war in Iraq?

Research workshop: Reading footnotes and endnotes. Look back over Rumsfeld's endnotes: good, bad, indifferent? And then: what to cite, when to cite, how to cite. Come to class with at least one example of when one *must* cite and one example of when one *should* cite (can you find examples in one of our readings?). When can you *not* cite?

Assignment due: Book review.

Choose what you judge (at this point) to be the single most important secondary work on your paper topic, **regardless of length**. Read it and write a two-to-three page review. Your review should include a description of the book's topic, a review of its argument, and an assessment of the strength of the argument and its use of sources.

April 29: The transition from Bush to Obama: Gates' perspective

Reading: Gates, Duty, 287-334, 468-74, 546-55, 566-94 (chs. 9 and 15 and parts of chs. 13 and 14)

Discussion topics:

- 1) The nature of the transition from Bush to Obama?
- 2) What was different about Obama's policies and leadership style?
- 3) Based on Gates, how might we assess Obama's Iraq policy?

Research workshop: Outlining papers, thinking about where you are going and what you need to get there

Assignment due: thirty-minute drill. Choose another (secondary book) on your topic. Spend thirty minutes with that book. In one-to-two pages, tell me what you learned: subject of the book, argument of the book, its strengths and weaknesses.

May 6: Obama and Iraq (cont.)

Reading: TBA

Research Workshop: Introductions: function and types of introductions

Assignment due: Outline of research paper. The outline should include a statement of the problem (or how you are framing the question), as well as a list of topics needed to address that problem or question. Place these in the order you expect to discuss them in the paper. You do not need to worry about the conclusion at this point.

N.B.: as paradoxical as it might seem, it is easier to come up with an outline if you have started to write: even a little bit of writing will help to clarify where you are going.

May 13: Iraq since the U.S. withdrawal

Reading: TBA

Research workshop: conclusions: functions and types of

Assignment due: outlines

May 20: Iraq since the U.S. withdrawal

Reading: TBA

May 27: **Rough drafts due:** Exchange of rough drafts, organizing reading schedules, rules and guidelines for commentary

Come to class with **four** copies of your rough drafts. Bring whatever you have, no matter what the condition of your paper. It does not need to be complete but readers will find it helpful if you indicate what is missing.

We will exchange papers in class and talk about what we'll be doing in two weeks.

Assignment due: Rough drafts due

June 3: Discussion of rough drafts

Assignment due: Rough draft reviews

Bring **two** copies of **each** review, one for me and one for the author.

June 10: (Thursday, finals week): **Final drafts due**

One copy of your final draft, due in my office at 2:00.

Anyone not turning in a paper by this time will receive an “I” for the course and his paper will go to the bottom of my “to-do” pile.