

Fall 2024 CSS 391 Senior Colloquium: Big Powers and Small Wars
Professor Bob Cassidy

This colloquium meets on Wednesdays and Fridays from 2:50 to 4:10 pm in PAC 301. Office hours are by appointment in PAC 211. Zoom link is <https://wesleyan.zoom.us/j/979792168>. Email is rcassidy@wesleyan.edu.

Whereas previous tutorials addressed the emergence of the state, the processes of state building, and various systems of governance, this colloquium explores the roles of states and the instruments of power in the pursuit of security. Corollary themes include the evolving international constraints on the use of force in the pursuit of policy, decolonization and modernization as sources of violence, and the vulnerability of different regime types to the vicissitudes of prolonged wars. War is a costly and irrevocably tragic form of social interaction and since World War II, big powers have fared poorly in small wars. This colloquium introduces traditional and alternative theories to explain why ostensibly weaker belligerents achieve their political goals when confronting adversaries with superior numbers and materiel. We examine the international politics, theory, and logic of asymmetric wars to understand how the strong lose and why the weak win. This course explores the political, social, and economic dimensions of these wars over the span of a century that saw changes to the global order and increases in constraints on how big states prosecute long small wars. This colloquium intersects international relations, history, theory, social science, and conflict studies.

Foundation Readings: These books are available at Wesleyan R.J. Julia Books.

Ivan Arreguin-Toft. *How the Weak Win Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 10 0-521-54869-1)

Robert B. Asprey. *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1994. (ISBN: 0-688-12815-7)

Stephen Biddle. *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerrillas, Warlords, and Militias*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. (ISBN: 978-0-691-20751-3)

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976. (ISBN: 0-691-01854-5)

Larisa Deriglazova. *Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict Since 1945*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. (ISBN-10: 1-4214-1412-0)

Anthony James Joes. *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000. (ISBN: 0-8131-2181-7)

Foundation Readings (Continued):

Gil Merom. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. (ISBN: 0-52 1-00877-8)

Mao Tse-Tung. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith, 1st paperback ed. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000. (ISBN 0-252-06892-0)

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. (ISBN 978-0-19-501476-1)

The main readings are the foundation books above but there are supplementary articles and chapters on Moodle that help illuminate context and background. The colloquium begins by exploring the traditional theory of war and theories on wars of asymmetry. It then proceeds to analyze and discuss seven historical cases of wars where weaker states or groups fight wars for survival against big powers with superiority in numbers, firepower, and materiel. The descriptions of the topics and list of the required readings are the aggregate for both days each week, in top-to-bottom order for Wednesday and Friday. It is essential that you complete the readings before each session.

Grading approach:

Analytical essays	50 percent
Final presentation	25 percent
Seminar Participation	25 percent

Essays: Students will write two six-page essays that critically analyze the logic of strategic interaction, how well the belligerents performed in the war, how the war ended, or the war's implications. Students deliver a 20-minute small-group presentation for their final exams during the last two weeks of the semester. For this final, the groups present a critical analysis of two or more wars by applying variables from the theory to explain the interaction or outcome of those conflicts.

Participation: The quality of this colloquium relies on factual, informed, and civil discourse. Doing the readings and actively participating are essential to inform and animate the in-class dialogue. This grade will reflect your contributions. Actively contributing to the daily seminar discussions is key for every student to add and gain value from the colloquium.

Students with Disabilities: It is Wesleyan University policy to provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services. If you require accommodations for this colloquium, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible so that we can make the required arrangements. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services are at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>.

Week 1 (4/6 SEP) – Introduction to Colloquium and Strategy

Required Reading:

Richard K. Betts. “Is Strategy an Illusion.” *International Security* (Fall 2000): 5-50.

Hew Strachan. “The Lost Meaning of Strategy.” *Survival* (Autumn 2005): 33-54.

B.H. Liddell Hart. “The Objective in War.” *Naval War College Review* (December 1952): 1-30.

Matthew J. Schmidt. “War as Political Work: Using Social Science for Strategic Success.” *Military Review*. (July-August 2014): 50-57.

Robert M. Cassidy. “Why Big Powers Fight Small Wars Badly.” *Military Review* (September-October 2002): 41-53.

Larisa Deriglazova. *Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict Since 1945*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. (Chapter 1)

Week Two (11/13 SEP) – Traditional Theories

Required Reading:

Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Edited and Trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. (Books 1, 2, and 8)

Thomas Waldman. “Politics and War: Clausewitz’s Paradoxical Equation.” *Parameters* (Autumn 2010): 1-13.

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

J. Boone Bartholomees. “Theory of Victory.” *Parameters* (Summer 2008): 25-36.

Week Three (18/20 SEP) – Theories of Asymmetry

Required Reading:

Mao Tse-Tung. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. trans. by Samuel B. Griffith, 1st paperback ed. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Stephen Biddle. *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerrillas, Warlords, and Militias*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. (Chapters 1-4, 9-10)

Andrew Mack. "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetry." *World Politics* (January 1975): 175-200.

Ivan Arreguin-Toft. *How the Weak Win Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (Chapters 1, 2, and 8)

Gil Merom. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. (Chapters 1-4)

Week Four (25/27 SEP) – Philippine War, 1899-1902

Anthony James Joes. *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000. (Chapter 3)

Robert B. Asprey. *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co., 1994. (Foreword and Chapter 11)

Supplementary Reading:

Brian McAllister Linn. *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000.

Week Five (2/4 OCT) – South African War, 1899-1902

Required Reading:

Robert B. Asprey. *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co., 1994. (Chapter 12)

Ivan Arreguin-Toft. *How the Weak Win Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (Chapter 4)

Supplementary Reading:

Thomas Pakenham. *The Boer War*. Reprint Edition. London, UK: Time Warner Books, 1991.

Week Six (9/11 OCT) – Algerian War, 1954-1962

Required Reading:

Robert B. Asprey. *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co., 1994. (Chapters 54-55)

Gil Merom. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. (Chapters 5-9)

Supplementary Reading:

Alistair Horne. *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*.

Week Seven (16/18 OCT) – Vietnam War, 1950-1975

Required Reading:

George C. Herring. “America and Vietnam: The Unending War.” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1991): 104 -119.

Anthony James Joes. *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000. (Chapter 3)

Ivan Arreguin-Toft. *How the Weak Win Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (Chapter 6)

Gil Merom. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003. (Chapter 15)

Supplementary Reading:

Neil Sheehan. *A Bright Shining Lie*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989.

Week Eight (23/25 OCT) – Soviet-Afghan War, 1979-1989

Required Reading:

Robert B. Asprey. *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co., 1994. (Chapter 92)

Anthony James Joes. *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000. (Chapter 9)

Ivan Arreguin-Toft. *How the Weak Win Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (Chapter 7)

Supplementary Reading:

Robert M. Cassidy. *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003.

Week Nine (30 OCT/1 NOV) – U.S.-Afghan War, 2001-2021

Required Reading:

Thomas Barfield. “The Afghan Morass.” *Current History* (January 1996): 38-43.

C. Christine Fair. *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2016. (Chapters 5 and 9)

Joseph J. Collins. *Understanding War in Afghanistan*. Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 2011. (Chapters 4-5)

Ahmed Rashid. *Descent into Chaos*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2008. (Chapters 13 and 17)

Barnett Rubin. “Afghanistan under the Taliban.” *Current History*. (February 1999): 79-91.

Supplementary Reading:

Stephen Tanner. *Afghanistan: A Military History*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002. (Chapters 11-12, Afterword)

Edmund J. Degen and Mark J. Reardon. *Modern War in an Ancient Land*. Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2020. (Vols. I - II)

Week Ten (6/8 NOV) – U.S.-Iraq War, 2003-2011

Required Reading:

Robert Draper. *To Start a War: How the Bush Administration Took America into Iraq*. New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2020. (Author’s Note, Chapters 1-5 and 16-20)

Larisa Deriglazova. *Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict Since 1945*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. (Chapter 4)

Joseph J. Collins. *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath*. Occasional Paper 5. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2008.

Thomas E. Ricks. *Fiasco: The American Military Venture in Iraq*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2006. (Part II and Part III)

Supplementary Reading:

Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak, Eds. *The US Army in the Iraq War*. Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2019. (Vols. I - II)

Week Eleven (13/15 NOV) – Group Project Tutorials and Preparation

Groups and Schedule: TBD

Week 12 (20/22 NOV) – Small Group Final Presentations

Topics and Schedule: TBD

Week 13 (4/6 DEC) – Small Group Final Presentations

Topics and Schedule: TBD