FOUNDATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY: THE EVOLUTION OF WAR AND MILITARY THOUGHT

SYLLABUS
AY 23

JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION PHASE I INTERMEDIATE LEVEL COURSE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
21st Century Leaders for 21st Century Challenges

5 August 2022
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
MAXWELL AFB, AL

FOREWORD

This syllabus for Foundations of Military Theory for the Air Command and Staff College, August-September 2022, provides an overview of the course narrative and objectives. Included herein is information about course methods of evaluation, the course schedule of lectures, readings, and deliverables, and the fulfillment of joint professional military education core goals.

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FOUNDATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY
COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Foundations of Military Theory fosters understanding of classical thought on the nature and character of war. The course introduces canonical works of military theory, drawing explicit links between historical concepts of war and strategy, the conduct of the profession of arms, and the tenets of contemporary doctrine. Highlighting the effects of emergent ideas and technologies on the practice of warfare, the course analyzes continuity and change in armed conflict over the past three centuries. Foundations of Military Theory is designed to elicit critical thinking about the organization and employment of joint forces in support of national strategic objectives and frame subsequent engagements in the ACSC program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Foundations of Military Theory aims to cultivate students’ habits of mind and patterns of inquiry for thinking about warfare. It invites students to grapple with contending ideas, question their own assumptions about war and the profession of arms, and appreciate the relevance of classical military theory amid current and evolving national security challenges. More specifically, it asks that students:

1. Understand both the nature and character of war, as well as continuity and change in warfare across the competition continuum.
2. Understand military theory and its relationship to concepts of human nature, science, operational art, strategy, and policy.
3. Understand the evolution of foundational military theories and their relevance to contemporary and emerging warfare.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. MT-600 (E): MIDTERM ESSAY
Choose one of the historical cases provided on Canvas. Write a 3-4 page essay that depicts and evaluates the case from the perspective of at least one of the theorists covered in the course. This assignment is worth 30% of the final MT 5510 grade. The essay is due by 1700 L on 29 August 2022, which is the gray day following Day 6 of the course.

2. MT-601 (E): FINAL ESSAY
Human nature, strategy, science, art, and politics are useful concepts for understanding military theory. Write a 5-6 page essay that explains which theorist or theorists will be most useful for your future study of wars and why. This assignment is worth 50% of the final MT 5510 grade. The essay is due on Day 10, 15 September 2022, which is the final day of the course.

3. MT-602 (P): CLASS EXERCISES, PREPARATION, AND CONTRIBUTION
Each student is expected to attend lectures and seminars, read the assigned texts, participate in class exercises, and contribute to seminar discussions. Participation is worth 20% of the final MT 5510 grade.
REQUIRED BOOKS

The course includes readings from books issued by ACSC and readings from electronic files posted on Canvas (indicated as “[EL]”). Students can access the syllabus, lecture videos, electronic readings, and other supplemental materials online through Canvas. ACSC provides students with copies of the following course books, which must be returned at the conclusion of the course:


Please refer questions to Dr. John Minney, Course Director (john.minney.1@au.af.edu) or Wg Cdr Robin Kemp, Deputy Course Director (robin.kemp.uk@au.af.edu).
FOUNDATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

DAY 1 – COURSE INTRODUCTION AND THUCYDIDES

DATE: 8 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the relationship between military theory, joint doctrine, and the profession of arms.
2. Understand historical trends related to war and their relationship to the contemporary security environment.
3. Understand the contemporary relevance of the Peloponnesian War.

MT-500 (L): Course Introduction. Dr. John Minney
CONTACT HOURS: 30-minute lecture.

MT-501 (L): Title The Peloponnesian War. Dr. Paul Johstono.
CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture.

MT-502 (S): The Nature of War


CONTACT HOURS: 1.5-hour seminar.
DAY 2 – HUMAN NATURE AND JUST WAR

DATE: 11 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES

2. Discuss the arguments of Hobbes and Rousseau as they relate to humans' historical propensity for conflict.
3. Understand the principles of Just War and how they relate to Rousseau and Hobbes' arguments about the nature of man and the state.

MT-503 (L): Man, the State, and (Just?) War. Lt Col Michael Kreuzer, Ph.D.
CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture.

MT-504 (S): Human Nature and Just War
2. Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, 21-47.
CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.

DAY 3 – WAR AS SCIENCE AND PREDICTABILITY

DATE: 15 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend the elements of continuity and change in the Wars of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars.
2. Understand Jomini’s fundamental principles of warfare, including offensive, objective, strategy, lines of operation, mass, maneuver, decisive points, and strategic combinations.
3. Discuss Jomini’s scientific approach to war, its extensive influence on Western militaries, and its expression in the U.S. military’s principles of joint operations.

MT-505 (L): Jomini and the Science of War. Dr. Jordan Hayworth.
CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture.

MT-506 (S): War as Science
1. Jomini, The Art of War, 1-19, 44-75. [EL]
CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.
DAY 4 – WAR AS ART AND COMPLEXITY

DATE: 18 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend Clausewitz’s arguments about the conduct of war, and in particular his distinctions of tactics versus strategy, theory versus doctrine, and preparation for war versus war proper.

2. Comprehend Clausewitz’s arguments concerning the roles of art, science, and genius in war.

3. Comprehend Clausewitz’s concepts of strategy, the engagement, moral factors, economy of force, maneuver, and the culminating point of victory.

MT-507 (L): The Making of On War. Dr. Vanya Bellinger.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture.

MT-508 (S): War as Art and Complexity

1. Clausewitz, On War, Book II: 127-155; Book I: 75-114, 119-121; Book III: 177-189, 204-209, 213, 220.


CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.
DAY 5 – WAR AS STRATEGY AND POLICY

DATE: 22 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend Clausewitz’s arguments about the relationship between politics and war, effective civil-military relations, and the relationship between political objectives and military objectives in war.

2. Comprehend Clausewitz’s views on the trinity, friction, centers of gravity (COG), absolute war vs. real war, the relationship between offense and defense, the principle of continuity, limited war, and decisive victory.

3. Recognize Clausewitz's influence on Corbett's thoughts on naval warfare and consider ways in which Corbett’s ideas about maritime strategy diverged from Clausewitz and other theorists.

4. Discuss how the development of the People’s Liberation Army Navy reflects competing ideas about war and strategy proposed by theorists to include Jomini, Mahan, Clausewitz, and Corbett.

MT-509 (L): “Professional Jominian” vs. “Natural Clausewitzian.” Dr. Terry Beckenbaugh.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

MT-510 (S): War as Strategy


CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.
DAY 6 – INDIRECT STRATEGY

DATE: 25 August 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the “indirect approach” to war and military strategy.
2. Recognize Sun Tzu’s ideas about strategy, deception, surprise, and intelligence.
3. Comprehend Liddell Hart’s arguments about strategy and success in war.
4. Recognize the indirect approach in the contemporary Chinese approach to war.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

MT-512 (S): The Indirect Approach
CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.

DELIVERABLES
Submit MT-600E: Midterm Essay on Canvas any time before 1700 hours 29 August 2022.

DAY 7 – OPERATIONAL ART AND MANEUVER

DATE: 1 September 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the technological and doctrinal developments that emerged prior to the First World War, their contribution to static warfare, and efforts to innovate and adapt to overcome the deadlock.
2. Comprehend Isserson’s theory of Deep Battle and the operational art.
3. Comprehend Slessor’s ideas on aircraft and maneuver on the battlefield.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

MT-514 (S): Maneuver Warfare
CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar.
DAY 8 – DETERRENCE

DATE: 8 September 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the arguments of Brodie, Schelling, and Kahn, which represent the three classical approaches to nuclear deterrence.
2. Discuss Brodie’s ideas concerning nuclear deterrence.
3. Discuss deterrence in the current environment of strategic competition.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

MT-516 (S): Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

DAY 9 – IRREGULAR WAR

DATE: 12 September 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the theories of irregular warfare as outlined by Mao Zedong and David Galula.
2. Comprehend the range of violence covered by the term “irregular warfare,” including insurgency, civil war, and terrorism, and the similarities and differences between these types of conflict and a more traditional understanding of conventional war.
3. Understand how contemporary insurgents learn and adapt during irregular operations.

MT-517 (L): Theory and Practice of Irregular Warfare. Dr. Bill Dean.
CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

MT-518 (S): Irregular Warfare

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar
DAY 10 – APPLICATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY

DATE: 15 September 2022

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Apply foundational military theory to the contemporary security environment.

MT-519 (L): Applications of Military Theory: Dr. Robert Mahoney, Dr. Samantha Taylor, CDR Keith Henderson.
CONTACT HOURS: 1.5-hour panel

MT-520 (S): Applications of Military Theory (No Readings)
CONTACT HOURS: 1.5-hour seminar

DELIVERABLES
Submit MT-601E: Final Essay electronically any time before 1700 on 15 September 2022, the last day of class.