



***FOUNDATIONS OF  
MILITARY THEORY: PERSPECTIVE  
FOR THE WARFIGHTER***

**MT 5520 SYLLABUS  
AY 26**

**JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION PHASE I INTERMEDIATE LEVEL  
COURSE**

**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE**

**AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE  
MAXWELL AFB, AL**

## FOREWORD

This syllabus for the *Foundations of Military Theory: Perspective for the Warfighter* course for the Air Command and Staff College, Academic Year 2026 (July-September 2025), provides both an overview of the course narrative, objectives, and questions, as well as a detailed description of each lesson to assist students in their reading and preparation for lecture and seminar. Included herein is information about course methods of evaluation, schedule, and the fulfillment of joint professional military education core goals.

//SIGNED//

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	2
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	3
<b>COURSE OVERVIEW</b> .....	4
<b>COURSE DESCRIPTION</b> .....	4
<b>COURSE PHASES</b> .....	5
<b>COURSE MAP</b> .....	5
<b>COURSE OBJECTIVES</b> .....	5
<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b> .....	6
<b>REQUIRED BOOKS</b> .....	6
<b>SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS</b> .....	8
<i>Phase I: Theories of War</i> .....	8
<b>DAY 1 – STRATEGY AND MILITARY THEORY</b> .....	8
<b>DAY 2 – WAR: FEAR, HONOR, INTEREST</b> .....	9
<b>DAY 3 – WARS JUST AND UNJUST</b> .....	10
<b>DAY 4 – WAR AS SCIENCE</b> .....	11
<b>DAY 5 – WAR AS POLICY</b> .....	12
<i>Phase II: Theories of Domain</i> .....	13
<b>DAY 6 – WAR IN THE MARITIME DOMAIN</b> .....	13
<b>DAY 7 – WAR IN THE LAND DOMAIN</b> .....	15
<b>DAY 8 – WAR IN THE AIR DOMAIN</b> .....	16
<b>DAY 9 – WAR IN THE SPACE DOMAIN</b> .....	17
<b>DAY 10 – WAR IN THE CYBERSPACE DOMAIN</b> .....	18
<i>Phase III: Thematic Theories</i> .....	19
<b>DAY 11 – GRAY ZONE WARFARE AND THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT</b> .....	19
<b>DAY 12 – DETERRENCE</b> .....	20
<b>DAY 13 – MODERN RUSSIAN STRATEGY</b> .....	21
<b>DAY 14 – THE TAO OF WAR</b> .....	22
<b>DAY 15 – MODERN CHINESE STRATEGY</b> .....	24

# FOUNDATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY: PERSPECTIVE FOR THE WARFIGHTER COURSE OVERVIEW

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Having spent twenty years fighting asymmetric wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we now face an uncertain future. As the US military shifts its focus to strategic competition and peer competitors, new technologies threaten to upend warfare. While twenty years of combat experience will no doubt help the United States adapt to any challenges the future may bring, President Dwight D. Eisenhower cautioned, “Every war is going to astonish you in the way it occurred, and in the way it is carried out.”<sup>1</sup> If experience alone is not enough to guide us, where can we turn? Generations of military leaders have answered that question with the study of military theory and military history.

Waiting until a future war to consult military theory or historical case studies is too late. French General Ferdinand Foch observed that “No study is possible on the battlefield, one does simply what one can in order to apply what one knows.”<sup>2</sup> *Foundations of Military Theory: Perspective for the Warfighter* provides an opportunity to study the canonical works of military theory, examine key concepts in their historical contexts, and test them against your own experiences.

The course provides a space for you to step away from your tactical expertise and explore the nature and character of war at the operational and strategic levels. Is there an enduring nature of war? What drives the character of war to change? The theories we examine in this course explore these questions, as well as how human nature, ethics, policy, strategy, operational art, and disruptive technologies shape the purpose and conduct of wars from the ancient world to the present. Further, the course explores how the unique characteristics of the warfighting domains of maritime, land, air, space, and cyberspace influence warfare and military theory. While some concepts are domain-specific, others, such as indirect strategy, the gray zone, and irregular warfare, transcend the domains.

Joint Doctrine identifies the study of military theory, philosophy, and military history as a key responsibility for leaders of the profession of arms.<sup>3</sup> Yet, *Foundations of Military Theory: Perspective for the Warfighter* will provide no concrete answers on how to prepare for or think about future wars. Instead, as Carl von Clausewitz argues, the course and the military theories within it are “meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield.”<sup>4</sup> We urge you to approach the theories introduced in the course through a lens of critical analysis and to use them to reflect on the organization and employment of joint forces in support of national strategic objectives. We hope these ideas will serve you across the curriculum, especially as you move into courses that increasingly emphasize the application of military force to achieve political objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> The President's News Conference of 23 March 1955, *Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home*, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/eisenhowers/quotes#War>.

<sup>2</sup> John E. Jessup, Jr. and Robert W. Coakley, *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1988), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, II-10-II-13 (Theory, Nature and Character of War).

<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 141.

## COURSE PHASES

The course is structured to explore military theory through three phases.

### Phase One: Theories of War

This phase centers around the question: “How should we understand the nature and character of war?” In pursuit of an answer to this question, students will become familiar with classical theories, consider what elements make a strong theory, and understand the practical application of theory. Students will then delve into concepts of strategy, operations, and tactics, along with a discussion of just and unjust war. Together, these elements and concepts set the foundation for the rest of the course. Ultimately, this phase establishes the foundational question of strategic effectiveness: How well does warfighting fulfill political objectives? (5 days)

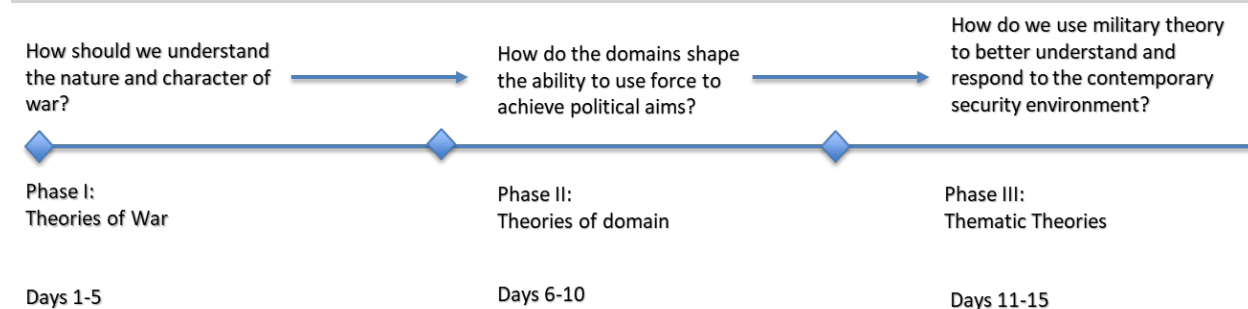
### Phase Two: Theories of Domain

Having acquired a strong foundation in classical war theory, students will shift their focus to exploring how individual domains shape the ability to use force to achieve political objectives. In this phase, students will access, digest, critically analyze, and discuss canonical and contemporary works for each of the five warfighting domains: maritime, land, air, space, and cyberspace. Students will examine how the characteristics of each domain are similar but, perhaps more importantly, how each domain is unique. (5 days)

### Phase Three: Thematic Theories

How do we use military theory to understand better and respond to the contemporary security environment? In this phase, students explore gray zone warfare, illuminating the full spectrum of conflict that fills the space between war and peace with considerable complexity. Additionally, students will engage with both classical and contemporary thought on deterrence and its applications across the spectrum. Using these concepts as a foundation, Phase Three concludes by examining key Russian and Chinese strategies and the theories that inform them. This phase revisits the question raised in Phase One, ultimately challenging students to reflect on and discuss what drives changes in warfare and what this means for future warfighting. (5 days)

## COURSE MAP



## COURSE OBJECTIVES

*Foundations of Military Theory: Perspective for the Warfighter* aims to cultivate habits of mind and patterns of inquiry to prepare officers to confront the uncertainties of the future. It invites students to grapple with contending ideas, question their assumptions about war and the profession of arms, and appreciate the relevance of classical military theory in the context of current and evolving national security challenges. Our course objectives are to:

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

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. MT-600(E): WRITING DIAGNOSTIC

Write a 1-2-page (double-spaced) detailed outline, which must contain a fully developed introduction paragraph including a thesis statement and at least one full body paragraph. This outline must answer the Phase I question: How should we understand the nature and character of war? The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate and provide early feedback on your written communication skills. This assignment is ungraded but must be completed to pass MT 5520. The outline is due at 0800 on 24/25 July 2025.

### 2. MT-601(E): MIDTERM ESSAY

Write a 3-page (double-spaced) argumentative essay answering the prompt that will be released at 1700 on 1 August 2025. This assignment is worth 30 percent of the final MT 5520 grade. The essay is due at 0800 on 11 August 2025.

### 3. MT-602(E): FINAL ESSAY

Write a 6-page (double-spaced) research essay that applies the theorist(s) and idea(s) from the course to analyze the Russian-Ukrainian War using the provided case study reading.

**Case Study:** Samuel Ramani, *Putin's War on Ukraine: Russia's Campaign for Global Counter-Revolution* (London: Hurst & Company London, 2023), 94-267. (*Hint: We strongly encourage you to start reading 10 pages a day early in the course, and we have built in days of light reading to provide time to read the case study.*)

This assignment is worth 45 percent of the final MT 5520 grade. The essay is due at 0800 on 17 September 2025.

### 4. MT-603(C): 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. Contribution is worth 25 percent of the final MT 5520 grade.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

The course includes readings from books issued by ACSC, as well as electronic readings from various sources (indicated as “[EL]”). Students can access the syllabus, and other supplemental materials online through Canvas and Teams. Electronic readings are linked in the syllabus.

ACSC provides students with copies of the following course books, which must be returned

upon the conclusion of the course:

- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Corbett, Julian S. *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. 1911. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004.
- Douhet, Giulio. *The Command of the Air*. Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2019.
- Echevarria, II, Antulio J. *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Fridman, Ofer. *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian Art of Strategy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Kane, Thomas M. and Noah E. Falkovich, *Chinese Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: According to Plan?* New York: Routledge, 2024.
- Kilcullen, David. *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Klein, John J. *Understanding Space Strategy: The Art of War in Space*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Liddell Hart, B.H. *Strategy*. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Meridian, 1991.
- Monaghan, Andrew, ed. *Russian Grand Strategy in the era of global power competition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022.
- Payne, Kenneth. *I, Warbot: The Dawn of Artificially Intelligent Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Paret, Peter, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1986.
- Ramani, Samuel L. *Putin's War on Ukraine: Russia's Campaign for Global Counter-Revolution*. London: Hurst & Company, London, 2023.
- Sawyer, Ralph D, trans. *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.
- Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. With a new Preface. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Sherman, William C. *Air Warfare*. 1926. Reprint, Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2002.
- Strassler, Robert, ed. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Richard Crawley. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996.
- Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 5th ed. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

# FOUNDATIONS OF MILITARY THEORY: PERSPECTIVE FOR THE WARFIGHTER SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

## *Phase I: Theories of War*

### DAY 1 – STRATEGY AND MILITARY THEORY

DATE: July 21/22, 2025

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Review the course objectives, syllabus, methods of evaluation, and expectations for seminar.
2. Understand the purpose and application of military theory.
3. Introduce the foundational elements of strategy, operations, and tactics.

#### LESSON OVERVIEW

##### **MT-501 (S): Strategy and the Utility of Military Theory**

This day provides the conceptual foundations for the rest of MT. Students should leave the seminar with a solid understanding of what military theory is, the key elements a good military theory should address, and the practical applications of military theory.

*CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar*

##### **MT-502 (L): Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War.** Dr. Paul Johstono.

Dr. Johstono provides essential context for students to critically examine the Thucydides readings and how his arguments relate to humans' historical propensity for conflict.

*CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture*

#### REQUIRED READINGS (74)

1. Antulio J. Echevarria, *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1-12, 109-115.
2. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 127-150.
3. Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2011), 1-30. [\[EL\]](#)

#### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, v-xiv, I-1-I-8 (Introduction to Joint Warfighting), II-1-II-15.

## DAY 2 – WAR: FEAR, HONOR, INTEREST

DATE: July 24/25, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend the perspective of Thucydides on the relationship between human nature, government, and war.
2. Examine the arguments of Thucydides as related to humans' historical propensity for conflict.
3. Discuss historical trends related to war, the reasons humans fight, and the importance of human nature for understanding the contemporary security environment.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-503 (S): The Nature of War

In this seminar, students will examine how fear, honor, and interest shape relationships between individuals and states, both historically and in contemporary contexts. Students will also explore relationships between hegemonic and rising powers.

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

**MT-504 (L): Ethics and the Profession of Arms.** Lt Col Joseph Chapa, PhD. (Shared with LP)  
Lt Col Chappa's lecture will set the stage for students to explore the concepts of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* in their readings, particularly as they apply to warfighters and the application of violence.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (118)

1. Robert B. Strassler, ed., *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 3-16, 38-49, 80-85, 93-99, 111-118, 123-128, 171-183, 199-201, 350-357, 366-375, 404-410, 455-478.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. J. E. Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 58-114. [EL] [note – hardcopy book is available via the AU Library]

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, II-1-II-13.

## DAY 3 – WARS JUST AND UNJUST

DATE: July 28/29, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend the perspective of Walzer on the relationship between human nature, government, and what makes war just or unjust.
2. Understand the Confucian approach to Just War and how it differs from the Western approach.
3. Examine historical trends related to ideas of ethical behavior and war to gain insight into the contemporary security environment.
4. Analyze the justness of Ukraine's and Russia's involvement in the war in Ukraine.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-505 (S): Wars Just and Unjust

This day provides students with an opportunity to think critically about the justness of war and the ethical conduct of it, specifically, the means used and the nature of the subsequent peace. It also builds on the ethics days covered in the Leadership and the Profession of Arms course.

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

#### MT-506 (L): Systems Theory/Thinking, Dr. Jeffrey Reilly

Dr. Reilly introduces systems theory and thinking, with a focus on practical applications for the warfighter, including understanding the interconnectedness and complexity of military operations, enabling them to think more effectively and solve problems at the operational level.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (54)

1. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 5th ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 21-48.
2. Tongdong Bai, *Against Political Equality: The Confucian Case* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 214-239. [\[EL\]](#)

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 5th ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 74-124.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, A-1 (Appendix A).

## DAY 4 – WAR AS SCIENCE

DATE: July 31/August 1, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Comprehend Jomini’s fundamental principles of warfare, including offensive, objective, strategy, lines of operation, mass, maneuver, decisive points, and strategic combinations.
2. Discuss Jomini’s scientific approach to war and its deep and abiding influence on Western militaries, especially in the United States.
3. Apply Jomini’s principles of warfare and the modern Principles of Joint Operations to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War.
4. Understand systems theory/thinking and its application in military contexts.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-507 (S): Making War on the Map

In this seminar, students engage with Jomini’s prescriptive and scientific approach, comparing and contrasting it with the ideas of a systems theory approach to warfare. Together, these ideas are examined through the lens of the Russia-Ukraine War using a map practicum that explores lines of operation, decisive, strategic, and objective points, terrain, initiative, making war on the map, maneuver, firepower, terrain, and psychological dislocation.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar with 1-hour map practicum on the Russia-Ukraine War

### REQUIRED READINGS (120)

1. Antoine Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill, (1862; Project Gutenberg, December 18, 2020), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13549>, 13-14, 66-104, 114-135, 175-177. [EL]
2. Joint Publication 3-0, “Appendix A: Principles of Joint Operations,” in *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022, A-1-A-5. [EL]
3. Stephanie Huebner, “Learning to think for understanding: introducing systems thinking into professional military education.” (US Army School for Advanced Military Studies, 2020), 27-35. [EL]

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Peter Paret, “Napoleon and the Revolution in War,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 123-142.
2. John Shy, “Jomini,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 143-185.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, II-8-II-10 (Levels of Warfare).
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022, III-1-III-54.
3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Incorporating Change 1, 01 July 2024), 1 December 2022, IV-19-IV-46 (Elements of Operational Design).

## DAY 5 – WAR AS POLICY

DATE: August 5/7, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Examine Clausewitz's views on the trinity and its implications for the relationship between policy and war.
2. Comprehend Clausewitz's concepts of absolute vs real war, friction, strategy, moral factors, economy of force, the culminating point of the attack and victory, center of gravity, and the relationship between the offense and defense.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

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

In this seminar, students engage with the foundational thoughts of Clausewitz and note the sharp contrast to Jomini's understanding of military theory. Additionally, they will explore enduring Clausewitzian themes and their implications: the proper relationship between war and policy, the inherent advantage of the defense, and the consistency of the nature of war and the inconsistency of its character. Finally, students will discuss the idea that strategy bridges the means of war and the purpose of war, connecting the two fundamentally different ideas.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar

### REQUIRED READINGS (108)

1. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75-99, 113-116, 119-121, 177-189, 204-209, 213, 220, 357-366, 524-525, 527-528, 566-573, 582-602, 605-616.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Peter Paret, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 186-216.
2. Hajo Holborn, "The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 281-295.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, II-8-II-10 (Levels of Warfare).
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022, III-1-III-54.
3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Incorporating Change 1, 01 July 2024), 1 December 2022, IV-19-IV-46 (Elements of Operational Design), V-1-V-8.

## *Phase II: Theories of Domain*

### **DAY 6 – WAR IN THE MARITIME DOMAIN**

**DATE: August 11/12, 2025**

#### **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

1. Understand the utility and risks of theorizing by warfighting domain.
2. Understand the maritime environment as a warfighting domain.
3. Comprehend the naval theories of Mahan and Corbett, and compare their views on naval strategy, command of the sea, and sea denial.
4. Comprehend the importance of sea power and the maritime domain for both historical and contemporary security environments.

#### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

##### **MT-509 (S): Naval Theorists**

Domain-centric military theory has both benefits and limits. Students begin wrestling with this tension by breaking down how Mahan and Corbett understand war, the relationship between military means and political ends, the role of commerce in shaping naval considerations, and the unique characteristics of war at sea before exploring their maritime and naval strategies.

*CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar with application comparing Mahan and Corbett*

##### **MT-510 (L): Military Innovation and the First World War.** Dr. Sebastian Lukasik

Dr. Lukasik provides the students with a detailed examination of how fighting took place in WWI and the innovations that resulted. His comprehensive examination of the battlefield in WWI provides students with critical context as they seek to understand the theory behind war in the land domain.

*CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture*

#### **REQUIRED READINGS (95/101)**

1. Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2019 [2005]), 30-40. [\[EL\]](#)
2. John Gooch, “Maritime Command: Mahan and Corbett,” in *Seapower and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Boger W. Barnett (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 27-45. [\[EL\]](#)
3. Group 1: Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Naval strategy compared and contrasted with the principles and practice of military operations on land: lectures delivered at the U.S. Naval War College, R.I., between the years 1887 and 1911*, ed. Kenneth Gregory Johnson (Maxwell AFB: ACSC, 2025), 1-65. [\[EL\]](#)
4. Group 2: Julian S. Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 13-16, 49-56, 87-104, 128-135, 157-173, 211-215, 235-245.

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)**

1. Michael B. Petersen, “Russia’s global maritime strategy,” in *Russian Grand Strategy in the era of global power competition*, ed. Andrew Monaghan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 49-70.

2. Philip A. Crowl, “Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 444-480.

#### **RELATED DOCTRINE**

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, II-8-II-10 (Levels of Warfare).
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-32, *Joint Maritime Operations*, 4 December 2023, I-1-I-17.
3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-36, *Joint Air Mobility and Sealift Operations*, 4 January 2021, V-1-V-21.

## DAY 7 – WAR IN THE LAND DOMAIN

DATE: August 14/15, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the land environment as a warfighting domain.
2. Comprehend the technological and doctrinal developments that emerged prior to and during the First World War, their contribution to static warfare, and efforts to innovate and adapt to overcome deadlock.
3. Discuss the relative contributions of the tank and modern system tactics to the return of mobility on the Western Front in 1918, as well as to the dominance of maneuver warfare during the Second World War.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-511 (S): Maneuver Warfare

In this seminar, students contemplate the importance of the land domain and its distinctive characteristics. Most military theory focuses on war in the land domain because territorial conquest is key—this is where people live, and the ground is a primary source of resources and wealth. Territorial conquest requires both physical and psychological dislocation. The development of new technology has had a significant impact on war in the land domain, and students will explore this in depth during this seminar.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar

### REQUIRED READINGS (99)

1. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Meridan, 1991), 319-337.
2. J.F.C. Fuller, *Armored Warfare: an annotated edition of Lectures on F.S.R. III (Operations between mechanized forces)* (1943; repr., Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 2-13, 44-54, 94-104, 134-144 [\[EL\]](#)
3. Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of the Operational Art*, trans. Bruce W. Menning (Ft. Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 43-76. [\[EL\]](#)

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon (1952; repr., Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 39-46.
2. Gunther E. Rothenberg, “Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 296-325.
3. Michael Howard, “Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 510-526.
4. Michael Geyer, “German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 527-597.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-31, *Joint Land Operations* (Incorporating Change 2, 31 March 2023), 3 October 2019, I-1-I-13 (Introduction).

## DAY 8 – WAR IN THE AIR DOMAIN

DATE: August 18/19, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the air environment as a warfighting domain.
2. Understand the development of the air arm during the First World War, which underpinned the emerging theories governing the uses of airpower during the interwar period.
3. Comprehend emerging concepts of air superiority, strategic bombing, interdiction, and close air support in the writings of Sherman and Douhet.
4. Examine similarities and differences in the theories of Sherman, Douhet, and Warden regarding the employment of airpower in the contemporary security environment.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-512 (S): The Foundations of Airpower Theory

This seminar drives students to understand the unique characteristics of the air domain, its various applications, and how airpower can be employed independently or in a joint environment. Through a discussion involving the works of Sherman, Douhet, and Warden, students explore the foundations of airpower thought and its evolution, noting both the similarities and differences to achieve a deeper understanding of the air domain and airpower theory.

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

#### MT-513 (L): Space as a Warfighting Domain. Dr. Wendy Whitman Cobb, SAASS

Dr. Whitman Cobb offers a unique perspective on the characteristics of the space domain that directly impact what is possible in and through space, while providing critical context for the development of strategies beyond just the space domain.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (138)

1. William C. Sherman, *Air Warfare* (1926; repr., Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2002), 3-33, 117-121, 148-163, 190-208.
2. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2019), 14-30.
3. John A. Warden, III, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), 1-24, 39-64. [\[EL\]](#)

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. David MacIsaac, “Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 624-647.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-30, *Joint Air Operations* (Validated 17 Sep 2021), 25 July 2019, I-1-I-4.
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-36, *Joint Air Mobility and Sealift Operations*, 4 January 2021, IV-1-IV-35.

## DAY 9 – WAR IN THE SPACE DOMAIN

DATE: August 21/22, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand space as a warfighting domain.
2. Comprehend how terrestrial military theory applies to war in space.
3. Understand how a state's power influences its space strategy.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-514 (S): War in the Space Domain

In this seminar, students identify and grapple with the unique physical requirements of space, as well as its similarities to other domains. Additionally, as technology is a critical factor in the utility of the space domain (in ways similar to the air domain), students contemplate the challenges and implications of such technological dependence. Lastly, students confront the reality that space, as a warfighting domain, is unique, as it is the only domain in which warfare is entirely theoretical, with no historical precedents to use as case studies.

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

#### MT-515 (L): Cyber as a Warfighting Domain. Dr. Joshua Sipper

Dr. Sipper's lecture provides context for cyber as a warfighting domain, focusing on its unique attributes and the persistent, low-level conflict that is prevalent in this domain.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (84/83/85)

1. John J. Klein, *Understanding Space Strategy: The Art of War in Space* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1-64. In addition, the instructor will assign groups of ~4 students to read space strategies for emerging, medium, and great powers.
  - Group 1: Chapter 5 Space strategy for great powers (96-115).
  - Group 2: Chapter 6 Space strategy for medium powers (124-142).
  - Group 3: Chapter 7 Space strategy for emerging powers (150-170).

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Dean Cheng, "Space 201: Thinking About the Space Domain," *The Heritage Foundation* (October 4, 2017), <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength-topical-essays/2018-essays/space-201-thinking-about-the-space-domain>.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-14, *Joint Space Operations*, 23 August 2023, I-1-I-9.

## DAY 10 – WAR IN THE CYBERSPACE DOMAIN

DATE: August 25/26, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand cyberspace as a warfighting domain.
2. Comprehend the variation and complexity of the cyberspace domain.
3. Explore whether the introduction of AI into warfare changes the nature and character of war.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-516 (S): AI and the Nature and Character of War

The cyber domain has special characteristics that distinguish it from the other domains. In this seminar, students build on Dr. Sipper’s lecture to further identify and understand what makes the cyber domain unique. Additionally, students will discuss AI in warfare and debate whether it changes the character and/or nature of war. Finally, students tackle the implications of AI and the cyber domain in the contemporary and future security environments.

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar

#### MT-517 (L): The Spectrum of Conflict. Lt Col Brandon Buelow, PhD

Lt Col Buelow challenges students to think critically about the peace-war dichotomy and instead proposes a view that there is a vast and complex space between them. Further, he presents the idea of competition/conflict occurring along a spectrum of varying activities and intensities, illuminating a space between peace and conventional war that is churning with competition and conflict.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (115)

1. Kenneth Payne, *I, Warbot: The Dawn of Artificially Intelligent Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 81-130, 137-179.
2. Michael P. Fischerkeller, Emily O. Goldman, and Richard J. Harknett, *Cyber Persistence Theory: Redefining National Security in Cyberspace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 23-36, 119-126. [\[EL\]](#)

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Kenneth Payne, *I, Warbot: The Dawn of Artificially Intelligent Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 1-80.
2. Committee on Developing a Cybersecurity Primer, *At the Nexus of Cybersecurity and Public Policy: Some Basic Concepts and Issues*, ed. David Clark, Thomas Berson, and Herbert S. Lin (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2014), 29-52. [\[EL\]](#)
3. JP 3-12 *Joint Cyberspace Operations* (December 19, 2022), I-1-II-16. [\[EL\]](#)
4. Thomas M. Kane and Noah E. Falkovich, *Chinese Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: According to Plan?* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 101-126.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-12, *Joint Cyberspace Operations*, 19 December 2022, I-1-I-17, II-1-II-16.

### *Phase III: Thematic Theories*

## **DAY 11 – GRAY ZONE WARFARE AND THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT**

**DATE: August 28/29, 2025**

### **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

1. Comprehend the range of violence covered by the term “irregular warfare,” including insurgency, civil war, and terrorism, and the similarities and differences between these conflicts and a more traditional understanding of conventional war.
2. Understand the basic tenets of guerrilla warfare and indirect strategy.
3. Understand how the gray zone and the spectrum of conflict apply to the contemporary security environment.

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

#### **MT-518 (S): Guerrilla Warfare and Indirect Strategy**

This seminar challenges students to examine the complex space between peace and conventional war. Building on the definitions and concepts from the lecture, students explore how irregular warfare (among other types along the spectrum of conflict) relates to conventional warfare, as well as the potential impacts it has on the contemporary security environment.

*CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar*

#### **MT-519 (L): Advanced Nuclear Deterrence Concepts.** Dr. Mel Deaile

Dr. Deaile introduces students to key terms and concepts related to nuclear deterrence theory, providing them with insight into the three main approaches to nuclear deterrence and the foundations of each.

*CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture*

### **REQUIRED READINGS (81)**

1. Joint Publication 1, Volume 1, *Joint Warfighting*, August 27, 2023, II-6-II-8. [\[EL\]](#)
2. James J. Wirtz. “Life in the ‘Gray Zone’: Observations for Contemporary Strategists.” *Defense & Security Analysis* 33, no. 2 (2017): 106–114. [\[EL\]](#)
3. Mao Tse-tung, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (1961; repr., U.S. Marine Corps, FMFRP 12-18, 1989), 41-50, 88-114. [\[EL\]](#)
4. André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy: With Particular Reference to Problems of Defense, Politics, Economics, and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 107-130. [\[EL\]](#)

### **RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)**

1. Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People’s War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, ed. Russel Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 79-116, 163-184. [\[EL\]](#)

### **RELATED DOCTRINE**

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, III-8-III-15, III-18-III-21.
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, 18 June 2022, I-2-I-5, V-1-V-8.

## DAY 12 – DETERRENCE

DATE: September 4/5, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the primary principles of conventional and nuclear deterrence, and how the two are connected.
2. Examine Schelling’s arguments about the manipulation of risk.
3. Comprehend how gray zone warfare complicates deterrence and escalation risks.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-520 (S): Deterrence and Compellence

In this seminar, students explore the conceptions of deterrence and compellence. From the foundational perspective of Schelling to the more contemporary works of Hersman and Mazarr, students gain a deeper understanding of deterrence, the different types including nuclear and conventional deterrence), and the complexities involved in “doing” deterrence, specifically in today’s contemporary security environment.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar

### REQUIRED READINGS (79)

1. Michael J. Mazarr, “Understanding Deterrence,” (RAND Corporation, 2018), 1-11 [\[EL\]](#)
2. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, with a new Preface (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 92-125.
3. Michael J. Mazarr and Ivana Ke, “Integrated Deterrence as a Defense Planning Concept,” (RAND Corporation, 2024), 1-4, 13-24. [\[EL\]](#)
4. Rebecca Hersman, “Wormhole Escalation in the New Nuclear Age,” *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (2020), 91-109. [\[EL\]](#)

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Jahara W. Matisek. “Shades of Gray Deterrence: Issues of Fighting in the Gray Zone.” *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 3 (2017), 1–26. [\[EL\]](#)
2. Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97), 54-86. [\[EL\]](#)
3. Caitlin Talmadge, “Multipolar Deterrence in the Emerging Nuclear Era,” in *The Fragile Balance of Terror: Deterrence in the New Nuclear Age*, ed. Vipin Narang and Scott D. Sagan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), 13-38. [\[EL\]](#)
4. Richard Wolfson and Ferenc Dalnoki-Veress, *Nuclear Choices for the Twenty-First Century: A Citizen’s Guide* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021), 339-362. [\[EL\]](#)

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, Vol 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023, I-3-I-5 (Strategic Uses of Military Force), III-15-III-17 (Deterrence).

## DAY 13 – MODERN RUSSIAN STRATEGY

DATE: September 8/9, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the foundations of modern Russian military theory in the writings of Genrikh Antonovich Leer and Evgeny Ivanovich Martynov.
2. Examine contemporary Russian grand strategy and the Russian security perspective.
3. Apply Russian military theory to contemporary Russian military operations.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-521 (S): Modern Russian Strategy

In this seminar, students explore the origins of Russian military theory and contemporary strategy. Additionally, students are introduced to the concept of grand strategy and how it connects to military theory and military strategy.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar

### REQUIRED READINGS (92)

1. Andrew Monaghan, “Introduction: Russian Grand Strategy and global power competition,” in *Russian Grand Strategy in the era of global power competition*, ed. Andrew Monaghan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 1-17.
2. Charles Bartles, “Sixth-generation war and Russia’s global theatres of military activity,” in *Russian Grand Strategy in the era of global power competition*, ed. Andrew Monaghan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 71-91.
3. Genrikh Antonovich Leer, “The Experience of Historical-Critical Research into the Laws of Military Art (Positive Strategy),” in *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian Art of Strategy*, ed. and trans. Ofer Fridman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 23-39, 69-73.
4. Evgeny Ivanovich Martynov, “The Responsibilities of Politics in Its Relations with Strategy,” in *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian Art of Strategy*, ed. and trans. Ofer Fridman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 75-106.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. TBD pending developments in the Russian-Ukrainian War.

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. None.

## DAY 14 – THE TAO OF WAR

DATE: September 11/12, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the historical and cultural context of *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*.
2. Examine how the Chinese military classics approach strategy, the use of military force, the purpose of war, and the relationship between the military and society.
3. Apply the classical Chinese approach to warfare to the contemporary security environment and debate the similarities and differences between the Chinese military classics and the contemporary Chinese approach to conflict.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-522 (S): The Tao of War

While Sun Tzu is perhaps the only text widely known in the West today, students should understand that Sun Tzu was part of a rich intellectual tradition of military theory rooted in Chinese intellectual traditions, culture, and vast experience with warfare and extreme violence. These additional texts continue to influence China's approach to war today, and understanding the seven military classics helps warfighters and planners better understand the People's Republic of China (PRC) and People's Liberation Army (PLA).

CONTACT HOURS: 2-hour seminar with briefs comparing the Seven Military Classics

#### MT-523 (L): Modern China. Dr. Sarah Castro, United States Air Force Academy.

Dr. Castro offers critical insight into the structure and behavior of the PRC, challenging students to consider the various implications for the current and future PRC strategy.

CONTACT HOURS: 1-hour lecture

### REQUIRED READINGS (102/90/101/95)

1. Thomas M. Kane and Noah E. Falkovich, *Chinese Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: According to Plan?* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 14-24, 31-38.
2. Ralph D. Sawyer, trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

The instructor will assign groups of 3-4 students to read the seven classics.

- Group 1: "T'ai Kung's Six Secret Teachings," 23-105.
- Group 2: "The Methods of the Ssu-ma," 111-143; "Sun-tzu's Art of War," 149-186.
- Group 3: "Wu-tzu," 191-224; "Wei Liao-tzu," 229-276.
- Group 4: "Three Strategies of Huang Shih-kung," 281-306; "Questions and Replies Between T'ang T'ai-tsung and Li Wei-kung," 311-360.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Edward O'Dowd and Arthur Waldron, "Sun Tzu for Strategists," *Comparative Strategy* 10 (1991), 25-36. [EL]
2. Peter Lorge, *Sun Tzu in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 177-196. [EL] [note – the entire book is available via the AU Library]

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence* (Incorporating Change 1,

- 05 July 2024), 26 May 2022, I-1-I-10.
2. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Incorporating Change 1, 01 July 2024), 1 December 2022, IV-30-IV-36 (Operational Design of the OE, LOO, LOE).

## DAY 15 – MODERN CHINESE STRATEGY

DATE: September 15/16, 2025

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the foundations of modern Chinese military theory.
2. Examine China's shift in military strategy from blunting American power to building its own power.
3. Discuss how China's intellectual foundations and security perspective influence its approach to strategy.

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### MT-524 (S): Modern Chinese Strategy

Over the last three decades, China's strategy has evolved in response to its perception of US power and US attitudes toward China. This seminar explores that change, the reasons for it, and examines the actions that China has taken both before and after its strategic shift. Students engage with these topics to gain a deeper understanding of China's strategic outlook toward the US (and more broadly) and consider what it may mean for the future.

CONTACT HOURS: 3-hour seminar

### REQUIRED READINGS (84)

1. Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 68-101, 183-207. [EL]
2. David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 167-176, 200-214.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS (OPTIONAL)

1. Edmund J. Burke, et al, *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (Washington, D.C.: RAND, 2020). [EL]

### RELATED DOCTRINE

1. None.