

Race and War

Political Science
POLS 361

Spring 2024

Trinity College
Room #: LSC-137
10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 11:30 – 12: 30 p.m. in Downes Memorial Room 104 or by appointment

Introduction

War is, arguably, the core concept of International Relations. Major geopolitical conflicts form the core of the big concepts and questions of the discipline. International Relations traces its origins to questions of war and peace in the wake of World War I. Why wars are fought and the imminent possibility of conflict structure ideas about the international system. But war itself is rarely studied. How battles are fought, why soldiers participate in battle, how war undoes orders and remakes social realities, are questions that are often absent from IR. War's paradoxical centrality and neglect in International Relations is compounded by a near total sidelining of the salience of racism and white supremacy to the study of global politics. Despite this neglect, what W.E.B. Du Bois once called the "global color line" was, and remains, the one of the most salient dimensions of imperial, colonial, and racist international relations.

This course aims to correct these absences by studying race (or better, racism) in conjunction with war. This course is premised on the idea that war shapes race. That is, what we often take for granted as "race" is often, if not exclusively, unmade, made, and remade, through battle, war, and warlike relations. War reconfigures racial imaginaries. This course is also premised on the idea that racism shapes the conduct and practice of war. That war can be driven to extremes – torture, atrocity, nuclear annihilation, is a product of racism. Racism drives battle imaginaries. How and why these dynamics play out is for us to investigate together over the course of the Spring semester.

Structure of the Course

This course is structured as a book reading seminar, where collective close reading, inquiry, and discussion drive the class. We will read eight books over the course of the semester, and critically engage how these texts elucidate the relationship between war and race, and race and war. This is an open inquiry – one driven moreso by the questions we collectively bring to the class, to our texts, and to each other, then by any preordained answer we might have to those questions. The seminar space is a space to work through our ideas, collectively. We will focus mostly on the context of the U.S. empire and its history of war-making and race-making (with some exceptions along the way). We will begin by examining how indigenous genocide and chattel slavery are structurally foundational to the U.S. polity. Does it make sense to think about this relationship as one of war? From there we will jump to the 20th century where will examine the incorporation of colonial soldiers into imperial

militaries, practices of torture and interrogation, and the relationship between domestic forms of white supremacy, aspirational fascism, and imperial war.

Books to Procure

The required books are listed here. You may purchase these books through the Trinity College bookstore or take advantage of the Inter-Library Loan Service at the College's library. If you have trouble accessing any of the required texts for any reason, please reach out to me and I will help you procure a copy.

The Name of War by Jill Lepore (Vintage Press, 1999)

Tacky's Revolt by Vincent Brown (Belknap Press, 2022)

Soldiers of Empire by Tarak Barkawi (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War by Monica Kim (Princeton University Press, 2020)

Soldiering Through Empire by Simeon Man (University of California Press, 2018)

Bringing the War Home by Kathleen Belew (Harvard University Press, 2019)

Time in the Shadows by Laleh Khalili (Stanford University Press, 2012)

Reign of Terror by Spencer Ackerman (Penguin Books, 2022)

Essays (60% of total grade)

Students will write three 5-6 page essays focusing on conceptual issues raised during the class. Two weeks prior to the due date I will hand out a set of question prompts. Students are expected to choose one question and answer it using the material read in class. The first two assignments will consist of a critical book review that primarily engages with one book we read in class. The final essay will ask students to place two or more of the texts from our course in conversation.

Critical Book Review #1 due Monday, February 26 (15%)

Critical Book Review #2 due Wednesday, April 10 (20%)

Final Paper due Monday, May 6 (25%)

Late Paper Policy

An assignment will be marked down one third of a grade (i.e. a B+ becomes a B) if submitted prior to due date of the next assignment. An addition third of a grade deduction will be applied for each subsequent due dates missed.

For example, three assignments are due February 21, April 10, and May 8. A paper turned in on February 22 (or 24 or 28) will receive one third of a grade deduction. A paper turned in April 11 (or 15, or 28, etc.) will receive another deduction. A paper turned in May 6 or later will receive a full grade deduction.

This policy applies to all work that is submitted after the end of the semester, as part of an incomplete or NGR.

Extensions

You may take **one** one-week extension on either of the critical book reviews. In order to receive the extension, you must email me (jkripp@trincoll.edu) ahead of the due date. No further extensions will be granted.

Discussion Questions (20% of total grade)

Students will be expected to submit eight sets of discussion questions over the course of the semester. Students can choose any classes starting January 29 to submit questions for. Questions must be typed and emailed to me (jkripp@trincoll.edu) **no later than 9:00 a.m.** the day of class. Each set of questions will be graded on a $\checkmark+$ (100%), $\checkmark/\checkmark+$ (90%), \checkmark (80%), $\checkmark/\checkmark-$ (70%), $\checkmark-$ (59%) scale. The discussion questions should follow the format distributed in class and uploaded to Moodle. Please do not duplicate days for discussion questions and leading class. *No late questions will be accepted.*

Leading Class Discussion (5% of total grade)

Each student will sign up to lead one class period. Twenty-four hours prior to class, the class leader will email a list of discussion questions to the entire class, which will serve as the basis for class discussion. Students will be assessed on the quality of their discussion questions and how well they led discussion.

Class Participation & Absences (15% of total grade)

Students will begin with a 90% participation grade in the classroom. This can go up to 15% for outstanding class contributions or it can down 15% for lack of substantive participation. Absences will be marked down by 5% for each absence. Please email me (jkripp@trincoll.edu) *prior* to class if you will not be able to attend. Please note that if you are an active participant, this gives you some flexibility.

Theory is, and will always be, about conversation and dialogue. This dialogue takes place between me and you as teachers and students, between each other as fellow learners, and within ourselves, and we unthink previously held assumptions, and reorient ourselves to the world. Participating in these conversations in a college reading seminar can be an incredibly unique experience of collective discussion. As Professor Isaac Kamola writes, “the classroom is an encounter that can prepare students to critically understand, and engage, the world in the pursuit of more just, equitable, and sustainable futures.” But this encounter is one that depends on each of you to put in the work prior to entering the classroom. This means reading each text prior to class and contributing substantively to class discussion. This is a collaborative space, one where we’ll ask questions of each other, and build on each other’s ideas. We don’t always have to agree, but we must recognize the value of each of our contributions to the classroom space.

Electronic Devices

There are no electronic devices allowed in the classroom space. That includes laptops and the active use of cellphones. This may seem like a harsh policy, especially for those of us who have lived through Zoom U. But for a reading seminar hiding behind your laptop is a distraction from engaging with each other and the text. The electronics policy is in place to make sure that we are focused on those things. You should bring a hardcopy of the text to every class, and I encourage you to bring a notebook as well. Exceptions will be made for students who need accommodations or to use electronics in the case of emergency (see below).

Academic Integrity

Students will be asked to engage in close readings that draw directly from primary texts. Even when reframing arguments in their own words, you should make sure you are properly citing the texts you are drawing from. When in doubt, cite! If you have any questions about proper citation, please consult me. Plagiarism and other issues of academic integrity will be taken seriously in this course and students should familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities in the following document that

outlines Trinity College policies: <https://www.trincoll.edu/dean-of-students/community-standards/student-integrity-contract/>.

ChatGPT

I have noticed an uptick in the use of ChatGPT across my courses. The use of ChatGPT for completing an any assignment in this course (unless otherwise explicitly directed toward the use of ChatGPT) is considered plagiarism and will be treated as such according to Trinity College's Code of Conduct. Just as important for the context of this course, the use of ChatGPT as a substitute for engagement with the text dulls your own critical thinking skills and prevents a serious engagement with the text and with your fellow colleagues in the course. If you are struggling with the material to the point where using AI to complete assignments seems tempting, please come see me and we can discuss the material, as well as different reading and writing strategies.

Student Accessibility

You **do not** have to disclose your disability status to request accommodations from me. I **do** want to know about what kinds of accommodations will make our classroom a productive learning environment for you, but I also want you to know that disclosure is a choice.

Disclosure isn't limited to disability status: it may come up with respect to past trauma, gender identity, sexuality, etc. I have a legal obligation to disclose sexual misconduct and civil rights violations to the university, so be aware of these legal obligations. Risk is inherent in any space, but to manage that risk in as respectful way as possible, please observe the following ground rules concerning your and other's disclosures:

- Disclosure is a complex and personal decision, and it should be voluntary.
- Disclosures are only to our classroom. Please don't discuss that information with people outside of our class without express permission.

This is a classroom committed to access: I have tried to anticipate as many kinds of situations as possible, but if any changes would facilitate your greater participation, don't hesitate to contact me. Access works best as a community effort. If you are a student with a disability and use accommodations, please contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, Level A, LITC (860) 297-4206, SARC@trincoll.edu so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Campus Resources

The Writing Center (<https://www.trincoll.edu/writing-center/writing-center/>) provides tutoring services and several helpful resources on writing. You may schedule an appointment online or visit the Writing Center located at 115 Vernon (the English Dept. Building) Room 109.

The Quantitative Center (<https://www.trincoll.edu/quantitative-center/>) provides tutoring and support services to ensure quantitative literacy. You may schedule an appointment online or visit the Quantitative Center located in the Mathematics, Engineering & Computer Science Center (MECC) Room 172.

The Counseling and Wellness Center (<https://www.trincoll.edu/counseling-wellness-center/>) is located at 135 Allen Place and offers a variety of health and wellness services. You may call (860) 297-2415 to speak with a member of the staff or schedule an appointment.

The Raether Library and Information Technology Center (<https://www.trincoll.edu/lits/>) Help Desk can be reached via e-mail at helpdesk@trincoll.edu or by phone at (860) 297-2007.

Weekly Reading Schedule

Monday, January 22

- Introductions

Wednesday, January 24

- *The Name of War* pp. 1-70

Monday, January 29

- *The Name of War* pp. 71-172

Wednesday, January 31

- *The Name of War* pp. 173-240

Monday, February 5

- *Tacky's Revolt* pp. 1-84

Wednesday, February 7

- *Tacky's Revolt* pp. 85-163

Monday, February 12

- *Tacky's Revolt* pp. 164-250

Wednesday, February 14

- *Soldiers of Empire* pp. 1-122

Monday, February 19

- *Soldiers of Empire* pp. 123- 228

Wednesday, February 21

- *Soldiers of Empire* pp. 229-281

Monday, February 26

- *Interrogation Rooms* pp. 1-122
- **Critical Book Review #1 due**

Wednesday, February 28 – Bicentennial Day, No Classes

Monday, March 4

- *Interrogation Rooms* pp. 123-210

Wednesday, March 6

- *Interrogation Rooms* pp. 211-304

March 9 – March 17 Spring Break, No Classes

Monday, March 18

- *Soldering Through Empire* pp. 1-76

Wednesday, March 20

- *Soldering Through Empire* pp. 77-134

Monday, March 25

- *Soldiering Through Empire* pp. 135-193

Wednesday, March 27

- *Bringing the War Home* pp. 1-102

Monday, April 1

- *Bringing the War Home* pp. 103-186

Wednesday, April 3

- *Bringing the War Home* pp. 187-240

Monday, April 8

- *Time in the Shadows* pp. 1-64

Wednesday, April 10

- *Time in the Shadows* pp. 65-138
- **Critical Book Review #2 due**

Monday, April 15

- *Time in the Shadows* pp. 139-238

Wednesday, April 17

- *Reign of Terror* pp. 1-120

Monday, April 22

- *Reign of Terror* pp. 121-220

Wednesday, April 24

- *Reign of Terror* pp. 221-340

Monday, April 29

- Course Conclusions & Final Paper Discussions

Monday, May 6

- **Final Paper Due**