

Course 2999: Militarism and Sustainability: Concepts of Nature, State, and Society

Instructor: Paul Olson

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Office: Room 12-270, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies OISEIUT
Phone: (416) 978-0604
Email: polson@oise.utoronto.ca
Appointments: Phone, email or arranged before or after class
Meetings: Thursday; 5:30-8:30
Room: OISE/UT Rm. 11-204

Course Overview

Militarism is and has been an ongoing part of civilization and state formation throughout much of recorded history. The devastating effects of war on the environment, individual human and group life, and the disruption of any sense of normal lawful or civil society are well documented. It is difficult to find any political group who advocates or see war as a preferred means of conflict or social resolution. Yet war, militarism, and the quest for dispute resolution and ordination of one group over another is a central part of human history. In many accounts of history and what G. H. Mead called human group life war and militarism is all but a code word for what we label as history.

This course tries to use an ecological approach to how we should regard war and explores the many facets of social and educational interaction including state formation, economic and trade relations, shifts to environment and ecology, changes in how people conceptualize themselves; the ways in which media, state, and creations of social and civil institutions are changed by militarism. The course begins by exploring and arguing that to understand how militarism affects nature we need to see how nature itself works and how people relate to nature. The course begins by examining alternate ways to look at both conflict and nature and how our concepts are shaped by the analytical lenses and ways we manipulate information. The course tries to use examples from physical sciences, social sciences and humanities to explore war and sustainability and nature itself.

The course commences by arguing that in order to understand nature, militarism and ourselves we need to understand the ecological connections within and between nature and how these impact on the ways we develop. In this respect the course reviews our forms of logic, including Aristotelian or what is sometimes called 'Western logic' and argues that these perceptual lenses may be limited in understanding nature and militarism and interactions since they inadequately fail to account for the fractal nature of much of nature, how dimensionality, particularly time plays out. The course begins by questioning complete adequacy of traditional methodologies and argues that we must add an understanding of alternate views such which look to ecological and integrated approaches *across* academic disciplines not just seek for expertise and evidence within scholarly disciplines. In this respect the course begins by examining recent contributions such as fractal and chaos theories to our understandings of ecology and tries to rethink processes like state formation, propaganda, law and their impacts on us. The course in this respect argues that we must understand the dynamic nature of

'relationships of relationships' and how these conspire to produce structural and social relationships.

The course also posits and investigates a radical approach to ecology and militarism and also environmentalism arguing against a number of commonly assumed positions. In particular the course explores the possibility and evidence on a number of claims such as the proposition that the world is running out of energy; the tendency to discuss geographical areas as if present state formation were historically the same; and how and when the images and concepts of nature, the state and the world change. In this respect the course argues that the present crisis of ongoing militarism, and the problems of ecology and not ones diminished resources but are ones of the way vested interests, myth and media are created and manipulated. The course examines the possibility that our current ecological and social conflict may be in large part a problem of education and our ability to generate a political will and social institutions which can both understand and respond to who we are and the social and material forces that have shaped us. The course will also review a brief idea of where energy comes from and what, across time has actually ended both worlds and people.

Expectation of Students

Readings and Video Viewings

The ability to participate in class discussions depends on completing all materials before class. Readings will be given out in advance. Some materials will be available on UTs Blackboard system which is available at: <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/online/Toolbox/Blackboard.html>

Participation

A vital part of effective class learning is your participation in class. Participation will include discussion but also group work around projects and papers.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

In the University of Toronto Code of Behavior on Academic Matters, it is an offense for a student to "knowingly represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test in the connection with and other form of academic work". One can not plagiarize. For references see the documents 'How not to plagiarize' and 'Standard Document Formats' at www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagep.html and www.utoronto.ca/writing/documents.html respectively.

Course Assignments, Grading Evaluations and Deadlines

The course has four components and evaluations and percentages as follows:

1. Each student is expected to produce a major work (10 to 25 Pages) a piece of work on the relations related to ecology, militarism and society or a topic of interest to the student and approved by the instructor. The paper will constitute 60% of the course grade. The paper is due at the end of term.
2. Class participation will constitute 10% of the course evaluation.
3. The class shall form into groups to study some issue and problem in ecology and or militarism or other issues discussed in the class. The topics shall be of the groups choice. The group is expected to do library, net and other research and present to the class materials, analysis and material and arguments around the topic. The group is to come up with media or other ways to make the material engaging and focus the issues. Evaluation will have two components: a) a collective component of 15% on how effective the groups presentation was for clarity, saliency and curricular effect in presenting arguments around their chosen topic.

b) individual members will be evaluated on their component and its quality which will also constitute 15% of the class grade.

The collective component is designed to teach how to work with others to present and organize around social and environmental issues. Grading will be on absolute (verses norm referenced basis).

Reading List

1. *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. Benoit Mandelbrot. New York, NY: Freeman and Company, 1977.
2. *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. Noam Chomsky. New York: Holt and Company, 2006.
3. [String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power](#)
File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat
by CJ Pehrson Washington: US Gov.: US Army office of Strategic Planning. 2006.
geopolitical and military aspects of **China's "String of Pearls"** only by understanding **China's grand strategy** in the context of the global security. On web at: www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB721.pdf -
4. *World on Fire: How exporting free market democracy creates ethnic hatred and global instability*. Amy Chua: 2003.
5. *Guns of August*. Barbara W. Tuchman: 1964.
6. *Heliophysics: Understanding the Sun*. UTUBE and NASA.
7. *Heliophysics: Evolving Solar Activity and the Climate Changes of the Sun and Earth*. J. Schriver and G. Siscoe (Eds.): 2010.
8. *The Prince and Discourses*. Niccolo Machiavelli. New York: Modern Library, 1950 and available on line .
9. *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu. Internet Library and available on line at UT permanent link collection.
10. World Wind: NASA download.
11. Google Earth: available as Google download with various add ons.
12. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Alfred W. Crosby: 1972.
13. *Gerald Bull: Space Gun. Parts 1 and 2*. CBC and UTUBE video (2010) by Gerald Vincent.
14. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. Jack Weatherford: 2004.
15. *Kublai Kahn's Lost Fleet*. UTUBE: 2011.
16. *Paper Garden*. Molly Peacock:2010.
17. *Gesar of Ling*. Materials to be covered in class.
18. *50 Facts about nuclear weapons*. Brookings Institute Web Cast, 1998.
19. *List of Military Nuclear Accidents*. Wikipedia Web Site.
20. *The Cold Wars Missing Atomic Bombs*. Spiegel on Line: Nov. 14, 2008.