The Iraq War

History 410 – CRN 42342
Summer 2013 (7/22 – 8/14)

M T W R, 12:00-1:50 PM
Fenton Hall 105

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Course Overview

The Iraq War of 2003-2011 is a crucially important event in modern American, world, and Middle Eastern history. There is still much about it that is unknown or misunderstood, and given how recently it occurred, much of its historical significance has yet to become recognized. The main objectives of this course are to advance understanding of the Iraq War from both the U.S. and Iraqi perspectives. After taking this course, students should understand (a) the historical context in which the war occurred; (b) the debate over the decision to invade Iraq; (c) the effect the war had on the Iraqi people; (d) how sectarian divisions within Iraq fostered a change in the conflict during its later stages; and (e) how and why the war ended. A larger question for students to consider is how the war affected the historical landscape of the modern Middle East as well as American history.

Grading Criteria:

- Online written assignment #1, July 30 (20%)
- Online written assignment #2, August 7 (20%)
- Final exam, August 14 (25%)
- Short research paper (35%)

Attendance and completion of the assigned readings are expected. The written assignments and the final are intended to test not only factual knowledge related to the Iraq War, but analysis and interpretive thinking about the issues raised both in class and in the readings. Online written assignments will be given on Blackboard.

Class Structure:

Most class sessions will have two components: a lecture section, during which I will communicate key facts and frame the concepts, and then a discussion which will usually be centered on the assigned reading for that day. The discussion segment of each class is especially important, as it will be a dialogue about the material and how to conceptualize it. There is no formal grade for discussion, but the more you participate in this discussion, the better your overall performance in the class is likely to be.
About the Short Research Paper:

The finished research paper should be about 6-8 pages. Search for a topic related to the Iraq war that you would like to know more about. Although I will vet the topics ahead of time, they will be fairly open-ended. The purpose of the paper is not for you to rehash material covered in class or assigned readings. It’s for you to go out and discover something you didn’t know before (or to tell me something about the Iraq War that I did not know before).

Due on August 5: a brief written description of your paper topic, with a bibliography of the materials you intend to use.

The paper itself will be due August 21 (one week after the end of class). Please turn in a hard copy—for technical reasons I can’t accept email submissions.

Summary of Due Dates:

- **July 30**: first on-line assignment
- **August 5**: written description and bibliography for short paper assignment
- **August 7**: second on-line assignment
- **August 14**: in-class final exam (12:00 PM)
- **August 21**: final research paper due

About the Readings:

This course is reading-intensive. Readings consist of one assigned book and additional assigned readings.


Other readings will be provided through Blackboard under “Course Readings,” usually as .PDF files. The day for which a reading is assigned is the day you should be prepared to discuss it in class.

Course Assignments and Overview, Class by Class

**Class 1, July 22**: Introduction – course mechanics – historical background on Iraq and the Middle East prior to 1990.
- No assigned readings.

**Class 2, July 23**: Background – Saddam’s regime – the First Persian Gulf War – September 11. Readings:

Readings:
• President Bush, West Point address, June 1, 2002.

Class 4, July 25: The Bush Administration’s decision-making process – the “default setting.”
Readings:

Class 5, July 29: “Phase IV” and Planning – how the US planned (or didn’t plan) for the invasion.
Readings:

Class 6, July 30: Iraq Before and During the Invasion – Saddam’s reaction – brief overview of sectarian divisions.
Readings:
• “Saddam’s Delusions: The View from the Inside” Foreign Affairs vol. 85 (May/June 2006): 2-26
• Mark Kukis, Voices from Iraq, introduction and part I.
• First on-line assignment due.

Class 7, July 31: The Beginning of the Insurgency
Readings:
• Fred Kaplan, “Who Disbanded the Iraqi Army?”

Class 8, August 1: Fighting the Insurgency – the Road to Abu Ghraib
Readings:
• Ahmed Hasim, “Iraq’s Chaos” essay
• Shadid, Night Draws Near, chs. 9 and 11 (186-231)
• Kukis, Voices from Iraq, pt. II (47-77).
Class 9, August 5: Abu Ghraib and Torture
Readings:
- John Yoo, Torture Memo
- **Research paper topic due.**

Class 10, August 6: Iraqi Society Reacts to the War – film presentation, “The Dream of Sparrows”
Readings:
- Kukis, *Voices from Iraq*, Part III.

Class 11, August 7: The Sectarian Civil War
Readings:
- Brian Miller interview, UO Vets Oral History Project. Skim 1-33, read carefully 34-52.
- **Second online assignment due.**

Class 12, August 8: The “Surge” and the “Awakening”
Readings:
- Iraq Study Group Report, Executive Summary (xiii-xviii).
- David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (2009): ch. 3. *Note: this is a lengthy passage and very dense—plan accordingly!*

Class 13, August 12: Getting Out
Readings:

Class 14, August 13: Aftermath & Assessment – are we better off? Is Iraq better off?
Readings:
- Kukis, *Voices from Iraq*, Parts IV-V.

Class 15, August 14: FINAL EXAM

August 21: Research paper due. Bring to my office (McKenzie Hall, 340C); if I am not there, I’ll place an envelope on the door, or slide your paper under the door.