

RHODES COLLEGE  
SPRING 2009  
**THE NATURE OF WAR**  
HIST 205-03

Prof. Tait Keller  
[kellert@rhodes.edu](mailto:kellert@rhodes.edu)  
Office: Clough Hall 317  
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2:30,  
Thursday 1-2:30, and by appointment

Class Days: TR 11:00-12:15

Classroom: Palmer 205

Those who do not know the conditions of mountains and  
forests, hazardous defiles, marshes and swamps,  
cannot conduct the march of an army.  
-- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

### **Course Description**

This course investigates how wars have shaped the natural environment and how the natural environment has shaped war in the modern era. Militaries are among the largest consumers of oil on the planet. The Soviet Union built close to 45,000 warheads and left behind radioactive waste that will remain potentially lethal for 24,000 years. Proceeds from precious natural resources fund warring militias in Africa. Toxic contaminants from Agent Orange remain in the Vietnamese soil at more than one hundred times the accepted level. Chemicals developed in World War I to annihilate people were later used to eradicate pests. Pigs and pathogens aided in the conquest of the New World.

But more than simply a look at the ravages of war on nature, this course considers the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. Wars fundamentally disrupt how societies use and allocate natural resources, such as land, energy sources, and water. The various topics we will consider include chemical and biological warfare, attempts to repair embattled landscapes, the military-industrial complex, disposing of nuclear waste, and the increasing number of conflicts over natural resources. Students will learn how to critically assess the ecological impact of war, as well as its societal and political repercussions

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

Grades in the course will be based on several components. The first is spirited participation in the discussions, as well as leading one of them. The second component will be two analytical essays. The third is a midterm exam, and the last component will be your choice: *either* a final exam *or* a research paper on any topic related to the ecological footprint of war that may interest you.

#### *I. Attendance and Participation*

The success of the course depends on your active participation, which also happens to make up a big part of your grade. For this reason, your absence will be considered as noteworthy as mine. Constructive and informed contributions to discussion are essential for satisfactory performance in this course. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and eager to participate in the discussion. So not participating is not an option, and unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade.

Learning how to talk enthusiastically and intelligently about significant subjects is actually one of the most important skills you can learn in college, and this course is a great place to work on that skill. This is a skill necessary for success in college, and for whatever you decide to do after graduation.

You will also be responsible for leading one of the Thursday discussions. I ask that you meet with me at some point during the week before the Friday discussion to go over your ideas and the questions you intend to ask. I will also designate someone to take notes during our discussions and then submit those notes to me.

## II. Analytical Essays

The two analytical essays will be based on the required readings and themes raised in class; no outside research is necessary. Questions and guidelines for each essay will be posted on moodle. The essays will be 5-6 pages in length (Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins), double spaced, and follow the guidelines of Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your paper be more than 6 pages; I look for cogency not length. A writing style guide will be available on Moodle to assist you when you proof-read your papers. Be sure to follow the style guide and make note of typical mistakes undergraduates often make in their papers. Your grade will suffer if you commit these mistakes. No, this is not an English course, but you cannot do good history without writing competently. The essays are due at the beginning of class on the following dates: **Tuesday, Feb. 24** and **Tuesday, April 14**.

## III. Midterm Examination

The in-class exam will test your mastery of the course material. You are responsible for all material covered in the lectures, discussions, and assigned readings. The exam will be a combination of identifications, map questions, and essay questions. The exam will be held on **Thursday, March 12**. A review sheet will be available on moodle.

## IV. Option: Final Exam or Research Paper

The final exam will be similar to the midterm in form. A review sheet will be available on moodle. The exam will be held on **Wednesday, May 6 at 8:30 AM**. If you choose the paper option you will write a concise, literate, well-organized 8-10 page research paper on any dimension of modern war and the environment. Additional guidelines for the paper will be posted on moodle. The paper will be due **Wednesday, May 6 at 12 noon**. I ask that you meet with me at some point before the end of March to inform me of your decision.

The final grade for the class will be established as follows:

Attendance and Participation	25%
Analytical Essays	30%
Midterm exam	15%
Final Exam/Research Paper	30%

Grading Scale:

A	Outstanding
B	Above Average/Very Good
C	Average/Good
D	Below Average/Poor
F	Fail

**\*NOTE:** All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **Wednesday, May 6** will result in a final course grade of F.

## Required Texts

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Donovan Webster, *Aftermath*

Edmund Russell, *War and Nature*

Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars*

All of these titles are on sale at the bookstore and on reserve in the library. You can also find all these books used (read: much cheaper) at online bookstores, including addall.com, alibris.com, amazon.com, and half.com. You are welcome to read these books in any edition, condition, or language.

Many of the wars of this [20th] century were about oil,  
but the wars of the next century will be about water.

--Ismail Serageldin  
Former World Bank Vice President

## Course Policies – read these all carefully

Special Needs and Accommodations: I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I am aware of any such accommodation you might need. All accommodation requests are the responsibility of the student. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) to alert them of any needs you may have.

Food, Drink, Tobacco: Drink is permitted in my classroom, but food and tobacco products of all kinds are prohibited.

Moodle: All students in the class are automatically registered for this course on Moodle. When you log on to Moodle and access the site for this course, you will find all course materials, including this syllabus, readings, and guidelines for assignments.

Email: All email correspondence will be sent to your Rhodes email account. It is your responsibility to check this account regularly. Emails are not text messages. When writing me, I expect your emails to be professional.

Cell phones: Turn them off! If I see you using your phone in class, I will confiscate it.

Laptops: The use of laptop computers or other screen-based devices is not permitted during lectures or discussions. If you have a medical reason for needing to use a laptop or other screen-based device, please let me know.

Sleeping in class is not permitted. Those who fall asleep will be subject to a rude awakening.

Grades: I do not give “I” (incomplete) grades. Late papers, except in documented cases of bereavement or catastrophic illness, will suffer a substantial reduction in grade. Therefore, please plan ahead and do your work on time. I will be delighted to discuss your papers with you. Be advised however that grades, once assigned, are not subject to change. I also will not communicate grades over email or the telephone. The most important part of the grading process is not the grade, but the comments you will find on your papers when you pick them up.

Honor Code: I believe in the College’s standards of academic honesty, and I do my best to enforce them vigorously and to the letter. Be aware of those standards, and observe them. Plagiarism and cheating are easy to detect; so are papers pulled off the internet. If I suspect that you have cheated or plagiarized another’s work, I will discuss this matter with you. If I am not satisfied, I will report your case to the Honor Council for due process. I always recommend failure for the course when I submit a file. The bottom line is this: do your own work. You are spending your time and money to be here and learn. Don’t waste either by plagiarizing or cheating.

We [démineurs] still find live cannon balls from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. There are lakes filled with toxic grenades from World War I. Every so often, a farmer in a tractor rolls over an anti-tank mine from World War II and poof, that's it. These things are everywhere.

--Christian Gabardos  
Département du Déminage

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**  
(subject to change)

<i>Introductions</i>	R Jan 15	Welcome!
<i>Surveying the Terrain</i>	T Jan 20	Enemies and Allies <input type="checkbox"/> Richard P. Tucker, "The Impact of Warfare on the Natural World: A Historical Survey" in <i>Natural Enemy, Natural Ally</i> <input type="checkbox"/> John Keegan, <i>A History of Warfare</i> , conclusion
	R Jan 22	Discussion: Society, War, and the Environment <input type="checkbox"/> John McNeill, " <a href="#">The Woods and Warfare in World History</a> ," <i>Environmental History</i> 9.3 (2004) <input type="checkbox"/> William McNeill, <i>The Pursuit of Power</i> , ch. 7
<i>Conflict, Nature, and Human Nature</i>	T Jan 27	Discussion: Those Dark Hearts <input type="checkbox"/> Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>
	R Jan 29	<b>Class cancelled with my apologies – watch <i>Apocalypse Now Redux</i></b>
<i>Fighting over Familiar Territory</i>	T Feb 3	The Organic Nature of the Civil War
	R Feb 5	Discussion: A World Properly Put Together <input type="checkbox"/> Lisa M. Brady, " <a href="#">The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War</a> ," <i>Environmental History</i> 10.3 (2005) <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Temple Kirby, " <a href="#">The American Civil War: An Environmental View</a> "
<i>The Great War</i>	T Feb 10	Oh! What a Lovely War <input type="checkbox"/> John DiFolco, "Terrain, Landscapes of the Great War," <i>History of Photography</i> 28.3 (2004): 261-264 <input type="checkbox"/> Henri Barbusse, "The Vision," in <i>Under Fire</i>
	R Feb 12	Discussion: The Mighty Land <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Lekan, <i>Imagining the Nation in Nature</i> , ch. 2 <input type="checkbox"/> George Mosse, <i>Fallen Soldiers</i> , ch. 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Tait Keller, "The Mountains Roar: The Alps during the Great War," <i>Environmental History</i> forthcoming
<i>Foundations for the Future</i>	T Feb 17	Film Night: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>
	R Feb 19	Discussion: Industrial Legacies <input type="checkbox"/> Webster, <i>Aftermath</i> , ch. 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Russell, <i>War and Nature</i> , ch. 2-4
 <b>First Paper Due: Tuesday, Feb. 24 11 AM</b>  		
<i>Repairing the Land</i>	T Feb 24	Conservation and Reconstruction
	R Feb 26	<b>Class cancelled with my apologies – watch <i>The Thin Red Line</i></b>

- The Second World War* T Mar 3 The World at War Again  
 William M. Tsutsui, "[Landscapes in the Dark Valley: Toward and Environmental History of Wartime Japan](#)," *Environmental History* 8.2 (2003)
- R Mar 5 Discussion: The Wastes of War  
 Russell, ch. 6-8  
 Webster, *Aftermath*, ch. 2
- Splitting the Atom* T Mar 10 Film: *White Light/Black Rain*  
R Mar 12 **Midterm exam**

### March 16-20 Spring Break!

- Cold War Hot Waste* T Mar 24 The Nuclear Age  
 Jacob Hamblin, "Environmental Diplomacy in the Cold War: the Disposal of Radioactive Waste at Sea during the 1960s," *International History Review* 24.2 (2002): 348-375.
- R Mar 25 Discussion: Fears of Fallout  
 Webster, *Aftermath*, ch. 3  
 Russell, *War and Nature*, ch. 10-11
- Collectivize Nature* T Mar 31 The Military-Industrial Complex  
 [Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech, 1961](#)
- R Apr 2 Discussion: Arid Lands  
 Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature*, ch. 4  
 Webster, *Aftermath*, ch. 4
- Chemical Landscapes* T Apr 7 Film: *Vietnam: After the Fire*  
 Philip Jones Griffiths, "Agent Orange in Vietnam," *Critical Asian Studies* 37.1 (2005): 141-160
- R Apr 9 **Easter Break**

**Second Paper Due:  
Tuesday, April 14  
11 AM**

- Burning Deserts* T Apr 14 Film: *Lessons of Darkness*  
R Apr 16 Discussion: For Want of Oil  
 Webster, *Aftermath*, ch. 5  
 Klare, *Resource Wars*, ch. 1-3
- Necessities and Luxuries* T Apr 21 Water and Diamonds  
R Apr 23 Discussion: Precious Reserves  
 Klare, *Resource Wars*, ch. 4-9
- Imagined Futures* T Apr 28 Film: *Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives*  
R Apr 30 An Environmental Path to Peace?

**Final Exam**  
**Wednesday**  
**May 6**  
**8:30 AM**

**Research paper due:**  
**Wednesday**  
**May 6**  
**12 Noon**