Course Overview:

The American Soldier: A Social and Cultural History is an undergraduate course that uses the idea of the American soldier as a lens to view different periods of U.S. history from a broad social and cultural history perspective. The course defines the concept of the soldier expansively, from the patriotic citizen-soldier of the American Revolution to the volunteer professional soldiers of the post-Cold War era in Iraq and Afghanistan. The American soldier is in many ways a mirror image of the United States, a demonstration of the old adage that a country gets the army it deserves. But of course, the issue is more complicated than that. The country has shaped the soldier and the soldier—in some cases—has also shaped the country. By studying the American soldier we will also learn about America by viewing it from this new perspective.

The class focuses on the experiences, attitudes, and motivations of the enlisted soldiers and officers themselves, rather than on the military as an institution or on the conflicts in which the United States has engaged. The course examines how American society influenced its soldiers and how the soldiers influenced American society in turn. In line with making the intellectual and historical themes of the course accessible and salient to students, the course is divided into chronological thematic units (e.g., early America, antebellum America, the Civil War and its aftermath, early American empire, the World Wars, Cold War and Vietnam, the post-Cold War, and post-9-11 America), each of which will lay the historical and conceptual groundwork for the next. The course will also examine a variety of topics not covered in many “traditional” military histories, including issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Examples will include segregation and the experience of minorities in the military; racialized warfare, particularly in the context of the Pacific Theater in WWII; the experience of women in the military; and homosexuality in the military, among others.

While this course offering is grounded in the discipline of history, the strength of the material presented will be its broad appeal and interdisciplinary nature. Aside from its obvious utility to students interested in United States history and culture, the course will likewise appeal to students interested in race relations, gender and sexuality, law and society, international relations, public policy, and civil-military relations. I encourage the students to think beyond the course’s home discipline, using tools and methodologies from other fields of study, in order to fully explore the historical narratives read and analyzed in class. For example, students will be exposed to and have the opportunity to draw on gender theory and scholarship on conceptions of race to critically evaluate past (and current) debates on the role of women and minority Americans within the armed forces.

Course Objectives:

- To consider the American soldier as well as broader American social, cultural, and military history in new ways, including the role of military service and policies in forming national, racial, and gendered identities.
- To evaluate and analyze key primary and secondary sources and arguments. Though the course’s subject matter is rooted in the discipline of history, the analytical thinking skills the course teaches are essential to an informed and active civic and intellectual life in the early twenty-first century.
- To hone skills in research using primary and secondary sources as well as crafting persuasive historical arguments in oral and written arguments.
To pose and respond to meaningful questions in class discussions. Opening up conversations on issues that will allow students to gain a greater ability to articulate and determine the values and shapes of our own ideas about citizenship; roles of the individual and the state; relations between individuals of different races, genders, and sexualities; and our collective self-identities.

Assignments and Evaluation:

- **Class Participation (25% of final grade):** You are expected to attend all class sessions, to do the assigned reading for each session, and to participate actively in class. I will take attendance at each class meeting and evaluate your participation, assigning daily participation grades. If you have an unexcused absence from class, you will receive a zero on that day’s participation grade.

- **Take-Home Final Exam (25% of final grade):** Due Friday, May 4, by 5pm. This will be handed out on April 24, the last day of class.

- **Research Paper (50% of final grade):** You will write a research paper exploring one case study of the social and cultural experiences of American soldiers. Example topics include: the experiences of conscripted soldiers in the Civil War, the World Wars, or Vietnam; the experience of battle and killing; women in the military (from the Women’s Army Corps in World War II to women in the service academies, to contemporary debates about women in combat); minority military service (segregated service until 1954, integration of the military, race relations during the Vietnam Era); and debates over gays in the military, among many others. (I will assist you in selecting a topic that is both interesting and manageable). You will turn in, separately, a paper proposal; a bibliography and outline; a rough draft; and a final draft for the paper. Each of these items will be graded separately.
  1. **Paper Proposal (10%):** Due Feb 7 by 5pm. The paper proposal should describe the proposed case study on which you plan to write your final paper (250-500 words). You should thoroughly describe the concept for your paper, go into a little detail on the kind of argument that you plan to make, and include a few notes on the sources you think you will use. I will provide feedback on your topic and make comments on suggested refinements and sources.
  2. **Paper Bibliography and Outline (10%):** Due March 1 by 5pm. The bibliography should contain at least six sources and include both primary (personal narratives such as memoirs, diaries, published first-person accounts in magazines and newspapers) and secondary works (scholarly books or articles, etc.). The outline should be as fleshed out as possible and 500 words minimum. The more thought-out and organized your outline, the more I can help you refine your ideas. The outline must include a draft thesis (argument) for the paper.
  3. **Paper Rough Draft (required but ungraded):** Due April 6 by 5pm. The rough draft should be as polished as possible and at least 1200-1500 words. I will provide feedback on the rough draft that you can use to improve your final draft.
  4. **Paper Final Draft (30%):** Due April 25 by 5pm. The final draft should be 2500-3500 words.

Grading:

- **Plagiarism and Cheating:** You are expected to adhere to the Duke University Community Standard at all times. You will receive a zero on any exam or paper assignment in which cheating or plagiarism has occurred. Violators will also be referred to the Associate Dean for Judicial Affairs within the Dean of Students Office.

- **Grading Scale:**
  
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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59 or below</td>
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Required Readings and Films:

- No textbooks will be used in the course; all assigned readings will be carefully selected primary and secondary sources, made available on the course Blackboard website.
- We will evaluate and discuss a number of visual and cultural representations of soldiers in addition to reading written sources. Accordingly, students are asked to watch four films to prepare for class discussions: *Glory*, *Band of Brothers* – first two episodes (“Currahee” and “Day of Days”); *Full Metal Jacket*; and *Generation Kill* – first two episodes (“Get Some” and “The Cradle of Civilization”).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Film Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 12 (Thurs)</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>No readings</td>
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  - Nancy Gibbs, “Person of the Year: The American Soldier.”  
  - Romesh Ratnasar, et al., “Portrait of a Platoon.”  
  - “Who They Are.” |
<p>| Feb 9 (Thurs) | Film Discussion: African American Soldiers | Glory                                                                                   |</p>
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<th>Reading/Film Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 15</td>
<td>Film Discussion: War in Europe</td>
<td><em>Band of Brothers</em> – first two episodes (&quot;Currahee&quot; and &quot;Day of Days&quot;)</td>
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<td>Class</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading/Film Assignment</td>
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<td>Apr 5 (Thurs)</td>
<td>Film Discussion: The Vietnam Experience</td>
<td><em>Full Metal Jacket</em></td>
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<td>Apr 6 (Fri)</td>
<td>(No class meeting)</td>
<td>Rough draft of paper due by 5pm.</td>
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<td>Apr 24 (Tues)</td>
<td>Film Discussion: War in Iraq</td>
<td><em>Generation Kill</em> – first two episodes (“Get Some” and “The Cradle of Civilization”)</td>
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<td>Apr 25 (Wed)</td>
<td>(No class meeting)</td>
<td>Final draft of paper due by 5pm.</td>
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<td>May 4 (Fri)</td>
<td>(No class meeting)</td>
<td>Take-home final exam due by 5pm.</td>
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