

# **The Iraq War 2003-**

History 199 – Freshman Seminar

Winter 2010 - CRN 26454

MWF 11-11:50, MCK 121

Professor Dracobly

MCK 329 (300 feet and two floors up from our classroom: don't be shy about visiting)

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## **Aims of course**

“The Iraq War? But that’s not history, is it?” That is the response I often receive when I tell people that I’ll be teaching a class on the Iraq War. It is true that the war has not yet ended – or perhaps it has? But while it remains difficult to establish the history of some aspects of the war, other dimensions have come into a tolerable degree of focus. One of our aims this term will be to distinguish between those questions that can be answered, at least provisionally, and those that must remain open.

The class is organized around three key questions:

1) The U.S. administration’s decision to invade Iraq (How did it arrive at the decision? When? By what process? What were the administration’s aims? How did it hope to achieve them?);

2) The subsequent course of events (Why did the situation in Iraq deteriorate so quickly? To what extent was the situation in Iraq due to U.S. policies and actions on the part of the occupational authority? To what extent was it due to forces within in Iraq itself? To what extent was it due to outsiders besides U.S. agents? What happened in 2007-2008 to improve the situation? Was there ever any realistic possibility that the occupation might have turned out differently?)

3) What is/was the Iraq War about? (How does it fit into the larger “war on terror”? What is its significance for Iraq? For the Middle East more generally? What might the future hold?)

Those are a few of the questions I hope to examine this quarter. The central organizing principle of the course, however, is much simpler. The central argument is that the war began as the result of a decision on the part of the U.S. administration. Until Saddam Hussein’s the U.S. largely directed the course of events. Since that time, however, the role of U.S. aims and actions has taken on an ever-lessening significance as Iraqis and other participants have come to the fore as the major actors in directing the course of events. Any account of the course of the war must therefore take into account these other actors. We will thus begin with U.S. decision-making and planning and then bring in other participants as we move beyond the invasion and into the occupation and beyond.

## **Assignments and expectations**

Attendance and fulfillment of course readings and assignments is expected.

Grades will be compiled on the basis of three on-line quizzes (or “exercises”), participation on the on-line discussion board, and a final (which is scheduled for 10:15 Tuesday, March 16).

The quizzes and discussion boards are designed to develop and test 1) basic factual knowledge of the Iraq War; and 2) broader interpretive concepts as these apply to the Iraq War. I assess grades according to a combination of these two elements. Please note the implication: you cannot receive top scores simply by “knowing the facts.” The facts and evidence are just the beginning. The more important and interesting part of historical thinking is what one does with all of that stuff.

Two **on-line quizzes** (15 points each for 30 points): these will take place on the class Blackboard site. The quizzes may be taken anytime from Monday at noon to Wednesday at five in the second, third, and fourth weeks of the term. Each quiz will cover readings and material covered in the previous week.

### **Quiz schedule:**

Quiz #1 will close on January 24 at midnight

Quiz #2 will close on February 28 at midnight

**On-line discussion board** (15 points per “board” for 45 points): three distinct discussion boards will be open beginning in the second week of the term and continuing through to the end of classes. For each board the **minimum requirement** is to post a question (as a “thread”) and to respond to at least **two** questions (or “thread”). I’ll also be posting questions as well and you must respond to at least **one** of my questions. You may of course post as much as you like.

**Evaluation:** Discussion board participation will be evaluated primarily on the basis of the quality of your contributions (both with respect to the questions and, more especially, the answers). Are your answers substantial, knowledgeable, and thoughtful – that is, do they demonstrate an awareness of the “facts,” and understanding of the bigger issues, and an attempt to grapple with them thoughtfully? It will be possible to receive a top grade with the minimum number of posts but only if the contributions are truly outstanding.

**How to post:** on class Blackboard site, go to either “Communications” or the “Discussion Board” under the course menu (on the upper left). From the “Discussion Board” page, click on the desired Discussion Board (#1, #2, or #3), click on the “Thread” icon toward top of page. That will open up a page with a “subject” and “message” box: indicate a topic for your question in the former and put the question in the message box. Then click “**Submit**.”

To respond to a “Thread,” click on “Reply.” A “subject” and “message” box will open. Click on “**Submit**” to finish.

**Discussion board schedule:**

- Board #1: Open Monday January 11 through Sunday January 31 (midnight)
- Board #2: Open Monday February 1 through Sunday February 21 (midnight)
- Board #3: Open February 22 through Sunday March 14 (midnight)

**Final exam** (25 points): in our classroom, 10:15 Tuesday, March 16

The final will be based in part on material drawn from the three quizzes; there will also be a more general interpretative question on the final that will test your general knowledge of the readings and themes of the class.

In summary:

Two quizzes of 15 points each	30 points
Three discussion boards, 15 each	45 points
Final exam	25 points
Total	100 points

**Schedule of readings:** You should do the reading for the class day under which it is listed. All readings can be found on the class Blackboard site under “Course Readings.” Anything listed after “Also” is optional. All else is required.

>>>>> **on-going personal reading:** one of the more interesting sources for the Iraq War are blogs authored by Iraqis. We will be reading two of the best known Iraqi bloggers (Salam Pax and Riverbend).

Toward the beginning of the second week, you will select one or more Iraqi blogs to read for the remainder of the quarter (you may need more than one since some were quite ephemeral: you need one blog that was running in 2003-2005 and another in the period 2006-2009). (If you can find an archived Mideast media source, that may substitute for a blog). There will be questions on the second and third quizzes as well as on the final that will require you to draw on the blog you choose to read. You may also draw on the blog for posts to the Discussion Boards.

The easiest way to find a blog is the website **Iraqi Bloggers Central** (a link can be found on the Blackboard site, right after the first link to Salam Pax’s original blog, “Where Is Raed?”). There are also a couple of links from the **Iraqslogger** site (in particular Alive in Baghdad). Finally, although it only began at the beginning of 2007, the McClatchy site for Iraqi journalists, “Inside Iraq,” is perhaps the best of its kind – it isn’t easy to navigate but I can show you how I get to the earliest posts. Links to both Iraqslogger and Inside Iraq can be found on Blackboard.

Jan. 4: Introduction: the big questions and what we know (or think we know) about them

We'll start the quarter by discussing three big questions:

- 1) Why did the Bush administration decide to invade Iraq? (And linked to this, what was the "end state" it was aiming for in Iraq? What were its objectives?)
- 2) Having invaded and removed Saddam Hussein, why did the situation deteriorate so dramatically between 2003 and 2007?
- 3) Given just how badly the security situation had deteriorated by the end of 2006 (by some estimates 3,000 civilians were being killed each **month**), how can we account for the improvements seen between the beginning of 2007 and 2009?

January 6: Continuation of Monday

January 8: Why invade Iraq? The Bush doctrine and the neo-conservative position

Read: President Bush, West Point address, June 1, 2002 (especially focusing from "History has also issued its call to your generation ..." – 11<sup>th</sup> paragraph); and Kagan and Kristol, "What to Do about Iraq," Weekly Standard, January 21, 2002.

If you are unsure about the implications of the new national security policy represented in Bush's speech, see Richard Falk, "The New Bush Doctrine," The Nation, July 15, 2002.

January 11: Another view of the decision: from inside the White House

Read: Bob Woodward, Plan of Attack (2004):154-66, 173-79, 192-204, 220-35, and 240-54.

January 13: Another view of the decision: the role of Dick Cheney

Read: Barton Gellman, Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency (2008): ch. 9 (215-53).

January 15: What can we conclude?

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, ch. 1

January 18 – no class

January 20: Pre-war planning

Read: Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq (2006): ch. 8 (138-163)

January 22: What was Saddam thinking?

Read: “Saddam’s Delusions: The View from the Inside” Foreign Affairs vol. 85 (May/June 2006): 2-26 (I’ve set up a link to this article through the Ebsco database, though it looks better in the original if you can find it).

This article is drawn from a larger book, Iraqi Perspectives Project, A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam’s Senior Leadership (2006) – a pdf version is posted if you care to take a look.

January 25: What were ordinary Iraqis thinking?

Read: Salam Pax, “Where Is Raed” (blog), January, 2003 (you can access the blog via the Blackboard link); and Anthony Shadid, Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War (2005): ch. 2 (39-56)

I have posted a link to **Iraqi Bloggers Central**, which will give you access to a large number of blogs authored by Iraqis – of greater interest after the invasion but you will want to start looking at them.

January 27: The invasion

No reading: **spend the time choosing one or more blogs to read for the remainder of the term.** I advise that you choose one that 1) has plenty of posts; and 2) runs for some length of time (ideally both before and after the surge but at least enough time to see how the author responds to the changing situation in Iraq – whether from 2003 to 2004 or a longer period of time)

January 29: The situation in Kurdistan

Reading: Quil Lawrence

February 1: The Shi’a of Iraq

Reading: Patrick Cockburn, Muqtada al-Sadr and the Battle for the Future of Iraq (Scribner, 2008), chs. 2 and 7 (“The Shia of Iraq” and “The White Lion”)

February 3: The immediate aftermath of the invasion

In class movie: “No End in Sight”

February 5: Bremer and the CPA

Read: Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq’s Green Zone (2006): chs. 4, 6, and 12 (58-80, 102-126, 223-233)

February 8: Two Iraqi bloggers

Read: Riverbend, “Baghdad Burning,” Aug. 2003 and Nov. 2004; and Salam Pax, June 2003 and Feb. 2004

Feb. 10: Military operations

Read: Thomas Ricks, Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq (2006), ch. 11 (214-269)

Feb. 12: Portrait of an insurgent

Read: Shadid, Night Draws Near, -----

Feb. 15: Muqtada and Sadrism

Read: Cockburn, Muqtada al-Sadr, chs. 11-13 (“Seizing the Moment,” “The Siege of Najaf,” and “The Fall of Najaf”)

Feb. 17: Abu Ghraib and prisoner abuse

Read: Ricks, Fiasco, ch. 12 (270-297)

Feb. 19: Abu Ghraib from the Iraqi side

Read: Farnaz Fasshihi, Waiting for an Ordinary Day: The Unraveling of Life in Iraq (2008): ch. 15 (136-156); and Riverbend’s blog (April – May 2004. I’ve also posted two other links to her blog but they are optional)

Feb. 22: A bit of Iraqi politics

Read: Ali A. Allawi, The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace (2007): chs. 13, 25, and epilogue (233-48, 436-460)

Feb. 24: Insurgencies and civil war

Read: International Crisis Reports, "In Their Own Words"; Iraq Index: compare selected data from March 2004 and December 2006 indexes; and Salam Pax and Riverbend blogs, 2006 and Riverbend's last blog

Feb. 26: The Surge and Awakening

Read: David Kilcullen, The Accidental Guerrilla (2009): ch. 3 (115-185)

March 1: Domestic consequences of the war

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, chs. 2 and 3 (especially 3).  
Chapter 3 contains a section on economic costs. I have posted chapters 3 and parts of 6 of Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, The Three Trillion Dollar War if you want to see a fuller analysis.

March 3: Iraqification

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, ch. 4; **also** take a look at latest Iraq Index. I've also kept a link to Biddle, O'Hanlon and Pollack, "How to Leave Iraq Stable," if you want to see how three liberal pundits see the issue.

March 5: No more Iraqs?

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, ch. 5

March 8: The U.S. military and the war in Iraq

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, ch. 6

March 10: What now for U.S. security?

Read: Snow, What After Iraq?, ch. 7

March 12: Looking forward: can history offer any lessons?

March 16: 10:15 **FINAL EXAM** – in the classroom.