

# HIST 471F2

## FLYING HIGH: A GLOBAL HISTORY OF AVIATION



TWA Terminal at JFK Airport, a midcentury masterpiece designed by the Finnish architect Eero Saarinen and photographed here in 1962 by Ezra Stoller (source: Yossi Milo Gallery).

**Instructor: Prof. Steven E. Harris**

**University of Mary Washington – Fall Semester, 2015**

**This class meets TR, 12:30pm-1:45pm, Monroe Hall 233**

**Office Hours: M, 1:00pm-4:00pm; TR, 1:45pm-2:45pm; and by appointment**

**Office: Monroe Hall 224; tel. (540)-654-1390; e-mail: [sharris@umw.edu](mailto:sharris@umw.edu)**

**Course blog: <http://flyinghigh.umwblogs.org>**

### **Course Description:**

This course explores the history of aviation starting with H. G. Wells's harrowing visions of aerial warfare in his 1908 novel *The War in the Air* and ending with anthropologist Christine Yano's study of Pan Am's "Nisei" stewardesses and their experiences of flying on what was once the world's most cosmopolitan airline. We will examine how this new technology transformed life on a global scale in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the conduct of warfare and visions of empire to urban architecture and popular culture. The course is designed around book discussions, collective and individual research projects, and even the occasional aviation happening to examine how this now ubiquitous form of transportation, exploration, and warfare came to shape modern life on a global scale.

### **Format of the Class and Preparation for Each Class:**

This seminar is structured around class discussion of the assigned texts. While I will provide brief introductory lectures on major themes in the course, our main focus will be on discussing the texts we read for class. For this reason, your daily participation in this course is extremely important. Attendance in this class is absolutely mandatory and crucial. For each class, you are expected to have read all the readings assigned for that day in order to discuss them in class.

### **Course Credits, Goals, and Objectives:**

This course counts as a 400-level course for a major in History.

This course aims to teach students critical skills of historical analysis. As a course in the Department of History and American Studies, this course aims to teach the following skill sets:

1. Ability to analyze sources and arguments
2. Comprehension of historical process
3. Historical understanding of global processes

### **Course Assignments and Requirements:**

All students begin the class with a 0% grade. Your task is to earn a grade for each of the assignments and requirements, which together will determine your final grade (see breakdown of grades below).

1) Class participation: the quality of this class depends largely upon what each student will contribute to it, so your class participation is of paramount importance. You are asked to engage one another's interpretations and opinions in an effort to understand better any given text and also to challenge one another's readings of the texts.

Blog entries: For each book we read, you must write a 500-word comment on our course blog in which you describe the main topic of the work, identify the author's main argument, critique the work, and discuss what you find to be most interesting about the book or article. Use illustrative examples from the text in addressing these and other points. You must post your comment before 8am on the first day we begin discussing each text and read what your peers have written before class. Your blog entries will be counted as part of your participation grade.

The following is the guideline for participation grades: A range (90-100%): student shows that he/she has read all of the assigned readings, and he/she makes several comments and poses questions that are insightful and guide the discussion for that particular class; B range (80-89%): student shows that he/she has read most of the readings and makes some comments/questions; C range (70-79%): student may have read some of the readings, but makes little or no comments; D range (60-69%): student shows little effort to read the texts or participate in class; F range (0-59%): student never participates in class and shows no effort in reading the texts.

Each student will lead discussion on one book; this will be graded as part of the final participation grade. Failure to attend class without an excused absence on a day when your peers present their work in class (introducing a book, bibliographies, final paper projects) will result in an automatic lowering of your final participation grade by a full letter grade.

2) Secondary sources bibliography: Each student will research and devise a comprehensive bibliography of scholarly and secondary sources on an assigned topic. Each student will make a short presentation on the bibliography in class and post it to the course website.

3) Primary sources annotated bibliography: Each student will research and devise a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of primary sources on an assigned topic. Each student will make a short presentation on the bibliography in class and post it to the course website.

4) Research paper proposal and bibliography: Each student will write a 2-page research paper proposal, including a bibliography, on a topic of his/her choice, approved by the instructor.

5) Research paper and presentation: Each student will write a 12-14 page research paper on his/her proposed and approved topic. Each student will give an 8-10-minute presentation on this project at the end of the semester.

Numerical grades in this course correspond to the following letter grades: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (60-66); F (59 and below).

When computing final numerical grades, I do not round up to the highest decimal point (i.e., if your final numerical grade is an 82.99, your final grade is a B-).

Midterm Deficiency Report: You will receive a midterm deficiency report if you receive a C- or below on any assignment or class participation before those reports are due.

**Relative Weight of Grades for the Course:**

Class participation (including blog entries):	25%
Second sources bibliography:	10%
Primary sources annotated bibliography:	10%
Paper proposal and bibliography:	20%
Final paper and presentation:	35%

**Legitimate Excuses for Missing Class and Turning Work in Late:**

Legitimate excuses include family emergencies, medical appointments, illness, religious holidays, and trips related to official student activities. Athletic practices never constitute a legitimate excuse for missing class. All excuses must be supported with documentary proof, such as a note from a doctor, with the contact information of the person writing the excuse. In the event of a family emergency, such as a death in the family, contact the Office of Academic Affairs and ask them to contact me about the emergency.

If you miss class or fail to turn something in on time and you have a legitimate excuse, do the following: give me the documentary proof explaining your absence or the reasons for which you turned something in late; stop by during office hours to discuss what you missed in class. Unless warranted by a legitimate excuse as defined above, there will be no extensions on the assignments in this course.

If you miss class or fail to turn something in on time without a legitimate excuse, do not e-mail me to tell me this and do not ask me to explain to you over e-mail what you missed in class; I will not respond to such e-mails. For every day after a deadline that you turn work in late without a legitimate excuse, your grade on the assignment is dropped by a full letter grade until you reach an F (0%) on the assignment. Failure to complete any of the writing assignments by the final exam day (even though you will receive a 0% on them for being late) will result in an automatic F for the course. Failure to turn in a final research paper on the final exam day will result in an automatic F for the course.

**Honor Code:**

The Honor Code of the University of Mary Washington will be strictly enforced, as explained in the Honor Constitution. All violations of the Honor Code (e.g., plagiarism on papers) will be immediately reported to the Honor Council.

**The Office of Disability Resources** (401 Lee Hall; 540-654-1266; [odr@umw.edu](mailto:odr@umw.edu)) is the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If a student receives services through that office and requires accommodations for this class, he/ she should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the approved accommodations. All shared information will be held in strictest confidence unless a student permits otherwise. (If a student has not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and has reasonable accommodation needs, the instructor will be happy to help contact the office [which will require appropriate documentation of a disability].)

**Changes to the Syllabus:**

\* This syllabus is subject to change exclusively at my discretion.

**Course Readings:**

The course texts are available for purchase at the bookstore. When purchasing the texts, obtain the edition indicated below since this will facilitate class discussion when the instructor and students refer to the texts. Additional texts will be distributed via the course blog; they are indicated in the course schedule below.

The following required texts are available at the UMW bookstore:

Buckley, John. *Air Power in the Age of Total War*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Morshed, Adnan. *Impossible Heights: Skyscrapers, Flight, and the Master Builder*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Palmer, Scott W. *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Vantoch, Victoria. *The Jet Sex: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Van Vleck, Jenifer. *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Wells, H. G. *The War in the Air*. Bison Books edition with introduction by Dave Duncan.

Wohl, Robert. *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908-1918*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994.

Yano, Christine R. *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

**Course Schedule:****Introduction**

August 25: Introduction to the course

August 27: Distribution of bibliography exercise topics  
\* T. K. Jordan, "Aviation, Past and Present" (blog)

September 1: Meet in Simpson Library for research on secondary source bibliographies

September 3: Class presentations and discussion of secondary source bibliographies  
\* Post your completed bibliography on the course blog before class

### Visions of Progress and War at the Dawn of Aviation

September 8: \* H. G. Wells, *The War in the Air*

September 10: \* H. G. Wells, *The War in the Air*

September 15: Meet in Simpson Library for research on primary source bibliographies

September 17: Class presentations and discussion of primary source bibliographies  
\* Post your completed bibliography on the course blog before class

September 22: \* Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*

September 24: \* Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*

### American and Soviet Paths to Aviation and Modernity

September 29: \* Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air*

October 1: \* Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air*  
\* Paper proposals due at the start of class

October 6: Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*

October 8: Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*

**Fall Break: October 10-13**

### Aviation and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Warfare

October 15: Buckley, *Air Power in the Age of Total War*

October 20: Buckley, *Air Power in the Age of Total War*

### Transformations on the Ground in the Age of Aviation

October 22: Adnan Morshed, *Impossible Heights*

October 27: Adnan Morshed, *Impossible Heights*

October 29: Viewing and discussion of *Ekipazh* (Aleksandr Mitta, 1979)

November 3: Viewing and discussion of *Ekipazh* (Aleksandr Mitta, 1979)

November 5: Viewing and discussion of *Ekipazh* (Aleksandr Mitta, 1979)

**Social Transformations in the Age of Commercial Aviation**

November 10: Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*

November 12: Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*

November 17: Yano, *Airborne Dreams*

November 19: Yano, *Airborne Dreams*

November 24: Class presentations on research papers

**Thanksgiving: November 26**

December 1: Class presentations on research papers

December 3: Class presentations on research papers

**December 8: 12pm, final research papers due.**