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HSS 404-102: Special Forces: History, Operations, Impact

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HSS 404-102
Capstone
SPECIAL FORCES: HISTORY, OPERATIONS, IMPACT

Spring 2021

Office hours: TBA

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Instructor: Dr. K.W. Schweizer

Federated Dept. of History, JIT/Rutgers

Class times: Tuesdays 6 – 8:50 pm

Course Description: This course offers a historical overview of “Special Forces”—elite, highly trained and superbly equipped tactical teams armed with specialized weapons and equipment who have become a key component in carrying out the most challenging and difficult military tasks.

Operations include but are not limited to reconnaissance, surveillance, guerilla warfare, foreign internal defense, counter-insurgency and increasingly, counter terrorist actions with a global focus. Most of these operations are performed deep behind hostile lines or within enemy strongholds.

With a battlefield effect far exceeding their numbers, Special Forces today are usually the first into combat and the last out. Deploying infiltration tactics, these small units attack enemy rear perimeters while bypassing enemy frontline strong points and isolating them for attack by follow-up troops with heavier weapons.

Often glamorized, inaccurately reported—the subject of distortions and myths—these unconventional forces are here analyzed from a sound and balanced historical perspective, with emphasis on the diverse factors that make them indispensable to conventional military establishments.

Course Goals:

- This course aims to clarify the heritage and current status of small unit elites (Special Forces) within the context of ever changing military practices and needs around the world.
- It will explain why, increasingly, these operatives have become integral components of conventional formations, their skills, training, and tactics making them uniquely capable to deliver precision strikes against high value targets.
- The course will provide illustrative examples of such engagements, with special emphasis on the little known training, weaponry, equipment and operative tactics deployed.
- As a result, by the end of this course, students will have a better understanding of the often decisive impact special forces have on the battlefield through high standards of professionalism and expertise.

Assignments:

On Canvas there will be 7 written assignments throughout the course; each assignment will be 2 to 3 pages in length and will be based on the class lecture, assigned readings, and occasionally online links. The assignments will equal 70 percent of the final class grade. The last day an assignment may be submitted is on the day the next assignment is posted.

- 1) Posted Tuesday, January 26 – due on or before Tuesday, February 9.
- 2) Posted Tuesday, February 9 – due on or before Tuesday, February 23.
- 3) Posted Tuesday, February 23 – due on or before Tuesday, March 9.
- 4) Posted Tuesday, March 9 – due on or before Tuesday, March 23.
- 5) Posted Tuesday, March 23 – due on or before Tuesday, April 6.
- 6) Posted Tuesday, April 6 – due on or before Tuesday, April 20.
- 7) Posted Tuesday, April 20 – due on or before Tuesday, April 27.

Marks:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Written assignments: | 70% |
| Final Quiz: | 20% |
| Class Attendance and Participation: | 10% |

Grading Scale for Assignments and Participation:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| A = 85 – 100 | B+ = 80 – 84.5 | |
| B = 75 – 79.5 | C+ = 69.5 – 74.5 | |
| C = 65 – 69.5 | D = 50 – 64.9 | F = 49.9 – 0 |

Class texts: (required readings)

Chris Chant, *Special Forces: History, Roles and Missions Training* (NY, 2015).

Samuel A. Southworth & Tanner, *US Special Forces* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

Howard Watson, *Elite Fighting Units* (2014).

John Winters, *Special Forces* (2017).

Semester Schedule:

Tues., Jan. 19, Jan. 26, Feb. 2:

Introduction

History of Special Forces:

- a) Early Period: Greeks, Praetorian Guard, Samurai, Janidstird
- b) American Revolution: Roger's Rangers, Francis Marion, Ethan Allan
- c) Civil War: Sharpshooters: Union and Confederate

Readings: K.W. Schweizer: "Special Forces" to be supplied; Southworth & Tanner, ch. 1; Chant, ch. 1.

Tues. Feb. 9:

Activators Behind Special Forces: Changing Military Technology and Combat Zones.

Readings: Lecture by Professor to be supplied.

Tues. Feb. 16, Feb. 23:

World War I: Storm Troops and Trench Warfare: Training, Assault and Infiltration Tactics, Equipment and Effectiveness.

Readings: Chant, ch. 2; Watson, ch. 1

Tues. Mar. 2, Mar. 9, Mar. 23:

World War II:

Britain:

- a) Commandos
- b) Special Air Service (SAS)
- c) Special Boat Squadron (SBS)
- d) Long Range Desert Group (LRDG)
- e) Chindits (Burma)

United States:

- a) Office of Strategic Service (OSS)
- b) Darby's Rangers; Merrill's "Marauders"
- c) Air Commandos
- d) Marine Force Recon

Germany:

- a) Brandenburgers (KSK)
- b) Seventh Paratroop Division
- c) SS Special Forces Platoons

Israel: Shayetet

Readings: Southworth & Tanner, chs. 1, 3, 4, 8; Chant, chs. 2, 5, 6; Winters, chs. 2, 5, 11

Tues. Mar. 30, Apr. 6:

Post World War II Operations:

- a) US Army Rangers
- b) Delta Force

- c) Green Berets
- d) US Marine Corps
- e) US Navy Seals
- f) Alpha Group
- g) SOCOM (Special Operations Command)

Readings: Southworth & Tanner, chs. 3, 4, 5, 7; Watson, chs. 4, 5; Winters, chs. 4, 7, 8, 10

Tues. Apr. 13, Apr. 20:

European Special Forces:

- a) British Royal Marines
- b) French Foreign Legion
- c) German, GSG-9
- d) Soviet Spetsnaz

Weapons and Training

Readings: Chant, chs. 4, 5; Winters, ch. 6; Watson, ch. 5

Tues. Apr. 27: Quiz Review

May 4: Final Quiz

Course Requirements:

- HSS 404 requires students to prepare 7 brief, written assignments submitted on Canvas at intervals as the course progresses. Each assignment will be 2 to 3 pages in length and each will be worth 10 marks, totaling 70 percent of the final grade.
- There will also be a final quiz worth 20 percent. The final quiz will be on the last evening of class, May 4.
- Class attendance and participation will be worth 10 percent.

Policies:

- This is an **intellectually demanding course** and all students will be expected to do all the readings listed in the syllabus and start work on their written assignments as soon as they are posted.
- Attendance will be taken during each class and attendance and class participation will be worth 10 percent of the final class grade.
- It is the **student's** responsibility to ascertain that all assignments have been duly submitted and all required term work completed **prior** to the end of the semester.
- There will be no "make-up" final quiz. If you miss the final quiz you will have to supply medical proof through the Dean of Students' office.

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

*Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.** If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”*