What is war? “War is hell,” so we are told by General Sherman—as “realist” moral justification for his own “scorched earth” strategy. War is destructive and its impact can be felt within the soul of an individual and the soul of a nation. We have to think in both general and particular terms. How does war come into being? War is a social creation. What figures into the complex relationship between war and society? What about specific wars and specific societies? What about specific people and specific war situations? The historical-fictional account in *All Quiet on the Western Front* brings out specificity for our consideration—the context, one hundred years ago, World War I.

Other questions for our careful reading, research, reflection, journal noting, and discussion: How can the sociological imagination help us understand the relationship between war and peace, war and justice, war and freedom, war and self-identity? What are the factors which shape our understanding of war? What shapes our moral analysis of war? How can we best combine the social and moral analysis of war and of the systemic dimensions—structural and cultural—involved in the national/international military-industrial complex? How does war—and anti-war—give meaning to our lives? How can we best express the theater of war and to what end? Why are personal stories—across the generations—so significant for our understanding of the relationship between self, society, ecosystems, war, liberty, justice, and peace?

Our course is a small group and large group seminar—designed to foster deep study, reflection, dialogue, and consciousness of the social dimensions of war in historical and biographical context. The central organizing principle of this course is the sociological imagination.

Here is the outline of our journey, week by week. Please be sure that you have read the assigned readings ahead of discussion.

**Week I (Monday, March 31 and Wednesday, April 2)**  
Our Sociological Imagination and the Sociology of War

How can we develop our sociological imagination so that we can better understand the complex relationships between self, family, community, society, and war? This first week we begin with our stories—our personal biographies and how these relate to the public history (various interpretations) of wars, beginning with WWI—but remembering that a larger participation in sociological imagination encompasses communities of memory and vision across time and space well beyond and before 1914.
Please read in preparation for our second week: *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque. Begin to read *The Sociological Imagination* (Fortieth Anniversary Edition), by C. Wright Mills.

Week II (Monday, April 7 and Wednesday, April 9) **Deeper into the Sociological Imagination**

Be ready to discuss *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Sociological Imagination* (complete the C. Wright Mills book before Wednesday session).

Week III (Monday, April 14 and Wednesday, April 16) **Guests: Personal Experiences of War and Society**

Both days this third week we will welcome guests who will share their personal experience of war and society—and we will learn from them and also share from our experiences as well. For this week please read *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War*, by Susan Griffin. Develop your personal journal notes each week, but especially this week.

Week IV (Monday, April 21 and Wednesday, April 23) **War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning**

For discussion both days this week please read ahead, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*, by Chris Hedges. What questions arise, what insights, what aspects of your sociological imagination...as you read this journalist’s account of self, specific wars, various interpretations of wars, and society?

Week V (Monday, April 28 and Wednesday, April 30) **World War I, The Great War and Modern Memory—Communities of Memory (and Amnesia)**

For discussion both days this week please read ahead, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*, by Adam Hochschild.

Week VI (Monday, May 5 and Wednesday, May 7) **Weaving In Other Dimensions – Ways of Knowing, Understanding, Analyzing...**

This week we take a break from the readings. We step back and think about all that we have encountered—from our guests, from one another, from each of the readings, from other sources we may have been pondering throughout the term (e.g. films, music, art, other readings, interviews and conversations, places, memories, realities happening in the world as we meet...). Questions for our discussion this week—think carefully about everything you have encountered and reflected upon up to this point, and with all this in mind please develop a two paragraph reflection which you will share with the class on Thursday, May 7, as an informal sharing of insights and analyses of self, society, war, peace, freedom, and justice. We will hear from one another and gain a sense of a potential *gestalt* thereby. This is the week when we converge conscientiously as a community of learning...an organic process going on throughout the term, but a process we specifically honor this week. Class on Tuesday will begin with a musical meditation and with an artistic visual for our reflection.
Week VII (Monday, May 12 and Wednesday, May 14) Preparation for Your “Theaters of War”

Theater teams will have already formed—during Week Four—and this Week Seven gives you the opportunity to refine your team dramatization; we will schedule the Theaters of War on Thursday of this week, as the dramas are to commence next week.

Week VIII (Monday, May 19 and Wednesday, May 21) Theaters of War – as scheduled

Week IX (Monday, May 26 is Memorial Day, highly pertinent to themes of our course, do please reflect in your journal notings for this day and perhaps participate in a Memorial Day ritual to help you consider the role of ritual in relation to war and society; and Wednesday, May 28 we meet anew) Theaters of War – continued, with post-drama full group reflection after all of the dramatizations have been completed; if necessary due to time limitations this Week Nine, we will continue with this process on Tuesday of Week Ten.

Week X (Monday, June 2 and Wednesday, June 4) Your Paper Due at Beginning of Class on Tuesday—We shall share insights from our research/reflection papers, ensuring that each person has occasion to share briefly but significantly. Before we complete the course on Thursday of this week we will do a brief self-evaluation and a course evaluation. There will be no final exam scheduled for the finals week.

Course Required Books (crucial to bring specific books, read and pondered, to seminars for the days when we are discussing them):

*All Quiet On The Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque

*The Sociological Imagination*, by C. Wright Mills (Fortieth Anniversary Edition)

*A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War*, by Susan Griffin

*War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*, by Chris Hedges

*To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*, by Adam Hochschild

Assignments—Basis of Grading:

Read carefully each assigned reading in preparation for class discussion—small group and large group seminar.

Work as a team with your Theater of War group and develop a thoughtful dramatization. Guidelines will be provided during Week IV.
Develop a paper (ten pages if undergraduate; fifteen if graduate). Guidelines will be provided during Week II.

Regular attendance and active participation—listening, being prepared for discussion, sharing and learning from each other—are essential in this seminar course. I use a pedagogy grounded in the popular education approach made so influential by Paulo Freire (see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) in the second half of the 20th century.

I will ask you to meet with me individually at some point during the term so that we can discuss whatever is on your mind in relation to the course journey together; this might certainly include a discussion of the focus of your paper, but could include much more than that...just know that I wish to get to know you and learn about your perspective on the issues related to our course.

I will ask you to do a self-evaluation on the final day of our course; using the above criteria (and the specific guidelines I will have given you for the paper and for the theater) as the basis for your sense of how you think you have done—all aspects considered—and what you think are ways you have grown in this ten week journey together.

**NB**: Throughout our course keep a “sociological imagination” journal—see it as a blend of research, social analysis, and personal reflection. I will not ask you to share it in any formal way, but perhaps you will find it to be a most helpful way to capture with pen what you are getting to know and understand, to reconsider and see from other angles, step by step, in these ten weeks as we engage our sociological imaginations on such a serious matter—war and society, truly and sadly a matter of life and pre-mature death. Also note, for context and for a sociology of hope: As a companion course, in another term, I teach sociology of peace. Some Other Society & War Reads I Would Recommend:

See the American Sociological Association, Section on Peace, War, and Social Conflict (see Resources)
See various web references (I will note some of these during the term)

Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, by Michael Walzer

On War, by Carl Von Clausewitz

An Iraqi Woman’s Account of War and Resistance, by Haifa Zangana

War, by Gwynne Dyer

The Sociology of War and Violence, by Sinisa Malesevic

Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies (see Chapter One, Approaches to War), ed. David Barash

Passionate Declarations: Essays on War and Justice, by Howard Zinn

Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict, by Lewis Coser

Arguing About War, by Michael Walzer
The Face of Battle, by John Keegan

The Forever War, by Dexter Filkins

The Coldest War: America and the Korean War, by David Halberstam

The War: An Intimate History 1941-1945, by Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns

Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide, by Joshua Goldstein

The Political Economy of U.S. Militarism, by Ismael Hossein-Zadeh

The Art of War, by Sun Tzu


War and Modernity, by Hans Joas

Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic, by Chalmers Johnson

Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex, by William Hartung

Bomb Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State, by Garry Wills

The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War, by Jonathan Herzog

The Prince, by Niccolo Machiavelli

Americans at War, by Stephen Ambrose

War, by Sebastian Junger

New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era, by Mary Kaldor

The Poetry of War, by James Anderson Winn

Dispatches, by Michael Herr

A History of Warfare, by John Keegan

Women's Writing on the First World War, eds. Agnes Cardinal, Dorothy Goldman, and Judith Hattaway

The First World War: Context and Commentary, by Dominic Hibberd

A Terrible Love of War, by James Hillman

Blood Rites, by Barbara Ehrenreich

The Great War and Modern Memory, by Paul Fussell

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, by Hannah Arendt