

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2023 Semester
U.S. Military MIA Research Project
HIS 200-001 Historical Studies – 3 credits
TTH 9:30-10:45 in Ingraham Hall, Room 223, in-person
Office hours TTh 10:45-11:45 Ingraham Hall by appointment
Dr. Vaneesa Cook - vcook@wisc.edu

Syllabus details, dates, and requirements subject to change

Course Description and Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to introduce students to the process of researching, recovering, and identifying military missing in action (MIA) personnel. Students will learn about the history of MIA recovery efforts in the U.S. since World War II. They will gain hands-on, practical research skills and utilize a variety of methodological techniques as they investigate MIA cold cases since 1941. Students will work extensively with primary sources, collect and analyze data, and practice writing battle narratives and individual MIA profiles that synthesize the historical and geographic details of their case research.

This class meets for two, 75-minute class periods each week over the fall/spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc) for about 3 hours out of the classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Regular and Substantive Student-Instructor Interaction: *including direct instruction, providing feedback on student work, providing information about course content, facilitating discussion of course content, meeting in-person and online to answer student questions or concerns*

Course Expectations: This course is research and writing intensive, intended to introduce and train students in the historical methodology of Missing in Action research. This course will combine lecture format with seminar-style discussion and in-class exercises. Please bring your laptops to each class period.

Course Designations: Requisites - Sophomore standing or 3 credits in HISTORY
Breadth - Either Humanities or Social Science; Level - Intermediate
L&S Credit - Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S

Grading Scale:

92-100% A
87-91.9% AB
82-86.9% B
77-81.9% BC
72-76.9% C
67-71.9% D
0-66.9% F

- Note: Earning an A for any assignment in this class requires excellent writing and organizational skills as well as creativity and a demonstration of knowledge of course material. Therefore, As will be awarded sparingly. Please refer below for guidelines.

Grading standards for written work.

a. Organization:

- (1) Does the essay begin with an effective introduction that (a) engages the reader, (b) Identifies the historical problem under consideration, and (c) posits the student's **thesis**?
- (2) Do paragraphs comprise discrete ideas defined by identifiable topic sentences?
- (3) Does the student make effective use of transitions (especially between paragraphs)?
- (4) Does the student arrange his or her paragraphs (ideas) in a logical sequence that furthers the argument while maintaining a coherent, chronological narrative?
- (5) Does the student conclude with a summary of the paper's most salient findings and (if appropriate) an allusion to their broader significance?

b. Use of sources:

- (1) Is the student's research adequate?
- (2) Does the student make appropriate use of the *best available* sources?
- (3) Does the student effectively use evidence from these sources to further his or her argument?
- (4) Does the student make excessive or inappropriate use of direct quotations?

c. Critical Thinking:

- (1) Does the student present an original, compelling argument substantiated by appropriate historical evidence? Would a general, educated reader find the argument compelling?
- (2) Does the student demonstrate mastery of the subject matter?

d. Style and Polish:

- (3) Is the essay well written? Would a general, educated reader understand it and enjoy reading it?
- (4) Is the essay properly formatted and free of errors?

Guidelines for Written Assignments:

Unless otherwise instructed, students should assume that all written assignments are typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins or less, with Chicago Manual of Style footnote/endnote citations, no separate title page needed, titled at the top of the first numbered page, and submitted as **stapled** hardcopy on or before the due date. Problems with printers or other technical issues are the sole responsibility of the student and will not be accepted as an excuse for late work. Extensions are never given, unless under emergency circumstances related to health or family death with a documented excuse. Late assignments will be deducted half a letter grade for every 24 hrs. late.

Required Books (2): *The Ghost Mountain Boys* – James Campbell; and *Spearhead: A Complete History of Merrill's Marauders* – James Hopkins (paperback ed. 2013)

Additional Suggested Book (1): *What Remains: Bringing America's Missing Home from the Vietnam War* – Sarah Wagner (chapters available on CANVAS)

Note: Additional readings available on CANVAS or as handouts in class

Reading Schedule:

What Remains book – read pages 1-103 by Sept 21

What Remains book – read pages 104-221 by Oct 5 for discussion

Ghost Mountain Boys book – read pages 1-161 by October 24

Ghost Mountain Boys book – read pages 162-297 by November 3 for discussion

Assignments: (Writing Tips and Grading Guidelines available on CANVAS)

Assignment 1 – Paper (3 pages) on “the Challenges of MIA Research and Recoveries” - due Thursday, **October 12** (15%) – must cite sources including Sarah Wagner book

Assignment 2 – In-class exam – Thursday, **October 26** (25%)

Assignment 3 - Battle Narrative of Myitkyina – (3-4 pages single-spaced) – due Tues., **November 14** (20%)

Assignment 4 - Final paper (5-7 pages single-spaced) – Individual Case Summary on Myitkyina MIA, due Tues., **December 12** (25%) (including written Battle Narrative of Assignment 3)

Participation (attendance, engagement, and quality contributions to class) (15%)

Schedule of Lectures and Activities:

Thurs., September 7 – Syllabus review and introduction

Tues, September 12 – History of Missing in Action Work in U.S. and MIA Project

- In-class reading: *Soldier Dead* excerpts, Chapters 1-2

Thurs., September 14 – Basics of MIA Research Tutorial – IDPF and MACRs

- FOIA Requests and MACR lookup
- In-class reading: *Soldier Dead* excerpts, Chapters 1-2

Tues., September 19 – Bringing Home Remains in the Wake of WWII

- Basics of MIA Research Tutorial – ancestry.com etc.

- Ancestry.com practice in class

Thurs., September 21 – X-Files and Unknowns

- In-class reading: “When X Does Not Mark the Spot” by M. Dolski

Tues., September 26 – Causes of World War II (Background Lecture)

- In class reading: *Soldier Dead* excerpt, Chapter 4

Thurs., September 28 – Pacific Theater and Papua New Guinea Lecture

- Writing Tips for Papers

Tues., October 3 – Air Losses of Europe – Plane Types – Air Warfare Video

- In-class group activity on WWII

Thurs., October 5 – Book Discussion of *What Remains* – Sarah Wagner

Tues., October 10 – Battle of Myitkyina – Burma WWII – Context for MIAs

- Research MIAs on list for project

Thurs., October 12 – Assignment 1 Paper Due in class

- Tour of MIA Project Suite, Discussion of Field Missions

Tues., October 17 – Documentary on Merrill’s Marauders

Thurs., October 19 – Writing Battle Narratives and Case Summaries – examples

- Choosing MIA for Project

Tues., October 24 – Family Members and MIAs; DNA and MIA Research

- In-class reading DNA Guide and eDNA *Science* article

Thurs., October 26 – Exam in-class

Tues., October 31 – Korean War and Cold War Lecture

Thursday, November 3 – Book Discussion of *Ghost Mountain Boys*

Tues., November 7 – Vietnam War Era and Controversy over POW-MIAs

- read and discuss article in-class

Thur., November 9 – Missing in Action in Popular Culture – The Rambo Effect

Tuesday, November 14 – Assignment 3 Due - Battle Narratives for Myitkyina

Thursday, November 16 – In-class Research Time (to write papers, ask questions)

Tuesday, November 21 – In-class Research Time

Thursday, November 23 – Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, November 28 – Cases of MIAs since 1970s

Thursday, November 30 – Underwater Recovery Efforts – Project Recover

Tues., Dec. 5 – Guest Lecture – Dr. Gregg Jamison, Anthropologist

Thurs., Dec. 7 - In-class Research Time

Thurs., Dec. 12 - Final Paper Due; Extra Credit Papers Due