

Understanding the war in Ukraine

Description

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine in open, violent conflict, the likes of which have not been seen in Europe in over 75 years. This course will discuss the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War. The discussion will briefly review geography and selected historical events, Russia's initial military objectives and success or shortfalls in achieving those objectives, some of the military weapon systems and tactics used by both sides, and possible termination of hostilities and resolution of the conflict. This information is intended to help students better understand what is happening in order to help them better form their own opinions.

About the instructor:

Dave Cutler retired from the US Army as a Colonel. He was a Field Artillery Officer and served during the Cold War in nuclear-capable and conventional cannon and rocket, field artillery units in Korea, Germany, and Fort Bragg. After retirement from the Army, he worked as a Defense Consultant before becoming a civilian government employee in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. He holds a MA in International Relations from the Catholic University of America, and graduated from the US Army Field Artillery Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the US Army Command and General Staff College, and the US Marine Corps War College.

Evolution of the conflict:

These are current events that continue to develop and evolve as preparations were made for the Midcoast Senior College (MSC) Fall 2023 Semester. These evolutionary stages are subject to change or historical interpretation of what occurred, but for the purposes of this class with MSC, the stages of the conflict are broken down as follows:

- I. Pre-invasion
- II. Invasion
- III. Static Defense
- IV. Counter-offensive
- V. Termination of Hostilities

Organization and Conduct of the Course:

This course will be presented in 6 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, beginning the week of September 11, 2023. Class will meet Monday from 1:00 to 2:30 PM at The Highlands, Topsham, Merrymeeting Bay Room.

Class sessions will consist of a PowerPoint presentation with opportunity for questions or discussion. All readings and source documents are available in the public domain and are largely journalistic as this war continues and history has yet to be fully researched and written.

Required Reading:

Owen Matthews, *Overreach: The Inside Story of Putin's War on Ukraine*, ISBN 978-0008562786.

Session 1 (11 September 2023): Setting the Stage

- Session 1 will address the Pre-Invasion stage of the conflict.
- Review the significance of Ukraine culturally and economically in Europe and to the rest of the world.
- Discuss the geography of both Russia and Ukraine.
- Briefly discuss several key historical events.

Session 1 suggested additional readings:

Vladimir Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," July 12, 2021. (*last accessed 29 June 2023, 14 pages*) <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949. (*last accessed 20 April 2023, 4 pages*) https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

Session 2 (18 September 2023): Russian Invasion

- Session 2 will address the Invasion stage of the war and the Russian transition from offense to static defense.
- Review Russian apparent military objectives and their ground forces' pre-invasion disposition.
- Review the occupation of Crimea and DNR/LNR, and preparations for follow-on action.
- Discuss the Russian attack into Ukraine and Ukraine's successful efforts to repel the attacks targeted toward Kyiv and Kharkiv.
- Discuss what appeared to be Russia re-focused combat efforts to hold the eastern and southern portions of Ukraine, and the "land bridge" from Russia to Crimea through Mariupol, Melitopol, and Kherson

Session 2 suggested additional readings:

Congressional Research Service. "Russia's War in Ukraine: Military and Intelligence Aspects." Report # R47068, updated February 13, 2023. Andrew S. Bowen. (*last accessed 20 April 2023, 28 pages*) <https://crsreports.congress.gov>

Michael C. Kimmage. "Why Ukraine Matters: On the stand-still and what lies ahead." Commonweal magazine, September 14, 2022. (*last accessed 10 March 2023, 7 pages*) <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/why-ukraine-matters>

Session 3 (25 September 2023): Direct Ground Combat Weapon Systems

- This is an overview and discussion of the direct ground combat systems, such as tanks and infantry fighting vehicles used by both the Russian and Ukrainian Armies.

- Session 3 will not specifically discuss any of the stages of the conflict except to occasionally point out where these weapon systems were used

Sessions 3 and 4 suggested additional readings:

For a complete listing of material provided to Ukraine by the US for security assistance, see:

U.S. State Department Fact Sheet, “U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine,” dated July 25, 2023. (*last accessed 29 July 2023*) <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/>

For additional background and context from a Russian soldier’s perspective, see

Filatyev, Pavel. **Zov = Calling**. (*last accessed 29 July 2023, 77 pages*). (*Note: I could not find this for purchase, and the Air University format does not allow the book to be downloaded or printed – it must be read online, but this site is open to the public.*).

https://aul.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/01AUL_INST:AUL/1296262700006836

Session 4 (2 October 2023): Fire Support Weapon Systems

- This is an overview and discussion that will explain the difference between direct and indirect fires and how they are used.
- Review the types of indirect fire weapon systems – cannon, rocket and missile – that are being deployed and used.
- Review and discuss combat aircraft and drones used by both Russia and Ukraine.
- Session 4 will not specifically discuss any of the stages of the conflict except to occasionally point out where these weapon systems were used.

Session 4 suggested additional readings: See Session 3 above

Session 5 (9 October 2023): Ukrainian Counter-Offensive

- This discussion picks up where Session 2 ended – Russian transition into static defense and the anticipated Ukrainian Counter-offensive. This is the 4th stage of the war.
- The counter-offensive itself is thought to have begun on or about 4 June 2023.
- Discussion will consider the events which have occurred this Summer and any progress made by Ukraine.

Session 5 suggested additional readings:

Frederick W. Kagan , Karolina Hird and Kateryna Stepanenko, “How the Ukraine Counteroffensive Can Still Succeed.” Time magazine, August 3, 2023. (*last accessed 5 August 2023, 16 pages*) <https://time.com/6300772/ukraine-counteroffensive-can-still-succeed/>

Mariano Zafra and Jon McClure, “Sea Drones and the Counteroffensive in Crimea.” Reuters, July 17, 2023, updated August 18, 2023. (*last accessed 19 August 2023*) https://www.reuters.com/graphics/UKRAINE-CRISIS/CRIMEA/gdvzwrmlpw/?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20230818&instance_id=100344&nl=the-

morning®i_id=106184622&segment_id=142336&te=1&user_id=010d2b53cd5df60d3e56e8c9666bf1b5

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publishes daily updates and maintains an interactive map of the war in Ukraine. *(last accessed 19 August 2023)*
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates>

Session 6 (16 October 2023): Termination of Hostilities and Resolution of the Conflict

- This will not be a definitive discussion as much as it will be consideration of what will need to happen to terminate hostilities, the 5th stage of the war.
- Discussion will consider escalation of hostilities to include nuclear weapons.
- Discussion will consider the goals and objectives of both Ukraine and Russia.
- And discussion will also review the pragmatics of ending hostilities and restoring normal living conditions to Ukraine.

Session 6 suggested additional reading:

Williamson Murray, “Future Alliances for Ukraine,” July 17, 2023. *(last accessed 10 August 2023, 2-1/2 pages)* <https://www.hoover.org/research/future-alliances-ukraine>

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