

ISS 3713: War: Napoleon

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Term: Spring 2026
- Day/Time: W/6:15-9:10 PM
- Location: CSE 429

Instructor

- Dr. Michael Leggiere
- Office location: CSE 542
- Office hours: W/3:00-6:00 PM or by appointment
- Email: leggierem@ufl.edu
- Phone: 352-294-3440

Course Description This interdisciplinary course covers the evolution of warfare, society, geopolitics, geostrategy, and grand strategy during the Wars of Napoleon. Students will employ critical analysis methodology to analyze the military, social, political, and diplomatic history of the period. Fundamental to this approach are the processes of research, establishing causal relationships, deep analysis, and iterative deduction.

Course Textbook

1. Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War: Essays in Honor of Donald D. Horward. Revised and Extended Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).
2. The writing manual for this course is *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th edn. (University of Chicago Press, 2024). ISBN: 978-0226817972. Online: <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Assigned Readings provided by the Professor:

1. Napoleon, *Letters and Documents of Napoleon*, trans. John E. Howard (The Cresset Press, 1961), vol. I.
2. Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford University Press, 1994).
3. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, any edition.
4. Christopher T. Goodwin, “Surviving Crisis: The Napoleonic Upheavals and the ‘Time of the French’ as Cultural Trauma in Prussia, 1806–1812,” *War & Society* 41, no. 1 (2022): 1–20.
5. François Crouzet, “Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815,” *The Journal of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (1964): 567–88.
6. William M. Sloane, “The Continental System of Napoleon,” *Political Science Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1898): 213-231.

7. Michael Leggiere, "Napoleon's Quest: Great Britain versus France," in *Great Strategic Rivalries*, ed. James G. Lacey (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 289-320.
8. Napoleon I, *A Selection from the Letters and Despatches of the First Napoleon*, trans. and ed. Denis Arthur Bingham (Chapman and Hall, 1884), vol. II.
9. John Lawrence Tone, "Napoleon's Uncongenial Sea: Guerilla Warfare in Navarre during the Peninsular War, 1808-1814," *European History Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1996): 355-381.
10. Charles Esdaile, "War and Politics in Spain, 1808-1814," *The Historical Journal* 31, no. 2 (1988): 295-317.
11. Philip G. Dwyer, "Self-Interest versus the Common Cause: Austria, Prussia and Russia against Napoleon," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008): 605-632
12. Steven T. Ross, "Napoleon and Maneuver Warfare," USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #28, 1985, 10 pp.

Course Objectives

1. Know how political, economic, and social factors that contributed to the evolution of warfare during the Napoleonic era (1792-1815).
2. Articulate the relationship between politics, diplomacy, grand strategy, and war. Analyze the complex and ambiguous nature of political, social, ideological, geographic, economic, and technological factors and how they shaped national military organizations and the methods of waging war.
3. Understand the evolution of military institutions and the factors that shaped their development during this period. Articulate the demographic, logistical, and geographical factors that affected war's conduct during the Napoleonic era.
4. Analyze the changing nature of warfare. Identify and evaluate the relative importance of factors that contributed to successful military leadership in various circumstances during this period.
5. Evaluate the conduct and changes in warfare at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels during this period. Critically evaluate examples of successful and unsuccessful employment of military force at all levels of war and in operations other than war.
6. Demonstrate analytical and communication skills through writing and participation in class discussions. Recognize moral issues and apply ethical considerations in decision-making.
7. Enable graduates to anticipate and respond effectively to the uncertainties of a changing technological, social, political, and economic world.

II. Course Requirements

1. Active Participation and Attendance: 10%

a. Participation: 5%

- i. An exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerably to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)

b. Class Attendance: 5%

- i. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. Class attendance will be recorded daily. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty, but starting with the third class missed your grade will be affected. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A- becomes a B, and so on.
- ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.

2. In-class Reading Quizzes: 30%

- a. Reading quizzes will be administered at the start of every class throughout the semester. They will test the students' knowledge of the week's readings, and will contain multiple-choice questions.

3. Midterm Exam: 20%

- a. In Week 7, a midterm examination will be administered in class. The examination will be an in-class, 120-minute exam including essay, short-answer, true-false, and/or multiple-choice questions. I will provide written feedback on your essay and/or short-answer questions. See examination rubric below. (R)

4. Final Exam: 40%

- a. On Wednesday, 29 April, a Final Exam will be administered in class. The examination will be an in-class, 120-minute exam including essay, short-answer, true-false, and/or multiple-choice questions. See examination rubric below. (R)

III. Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION (1/14/26)

Before Class, read Steven T. Ross, "Napoleon and Maneuver Warfare," USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #28, 1985, 10 pp.

WEEK 2: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WARFARE (1/21/26)

This week, we will discuss eighteenth century warfare as well as the evolutionary and revolutionary reforms that the French pursued following the Seven Years War. We will see how the forces unleashed by the French Revolution democratized war and created the "citizen-soldier" and the "nation in arms."

Readings (87 pages):

1. Hans Joas, "The Modernity of War: Modernization Theory and the Problem of Violence," *International Sociology* 14, no. 4 (1999): 457–472.
2. Jonathan Abel, "The Prophet Guibert," *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 8-38
3. Jordan Hayworth, "The French Way of War," *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 39-86.

Reading Quiz 1

WEEK 3: THE FIRST ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1796-1797 (1/28/26)

Starting in 1796, General Bonaparte conducted a blitzkrieg campaign in Northern Italy. In just two weeks he and his rag-tag army of half-starved and half-clothed men, knocked the Italian state of Sardinia out of the war. With his army just seventy-five miles from their capital, the Austrians asked for peace in April 1797. This week we will examine the roles played by Britain, Spain, and Prussia in the First Coalition. We will understand how the French Revolution affected warfare at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. We will analyze Napoleon's First Italian Campaign to understand the tactical, operational, and strategic elements of Napoleon's "way of war." We will assess why Napoleon was successful while his opponents were not during the period 1796-1797.

Readings (77 pages):

1. Select letters from *Napoleon's Correspondence*
2. Phillip Cuccia and Michael Leggiere, "Napoleon's First Italian Campaign," *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 116-193.

Reading Quiz 2

WEEK 4: WAR OF THE SECOND COALITION 1798-1801 (2/4/26)

Before the ink on the treaty that ended the War of the First Coalition could dry, France and the Great Powers were again preparing for war to settle the geostrategic issues that arose after General Bonaparte altered the balance of power. Still at war with Great Britain, the French decided to launch an ambitious offensive against the British by taking over Egypt and launching from there an invasion of India. General Bonaparte led the invasion of Egypt. In this unit, we will see how continued French aggression after the signing of Campo Formio led to the formation of the Second Coalition. We will assess why Napoleon was successful in his Second Italian Campaign while his opponents were not during the period 1798-1801. We will understand the geopolitical and geostrategic consequences of French victory and the impact on the Great Powers.

Readings (75 pages):

1. Select letters Napoleon, *Letters and Documents of Napoleon*, trans. John E. Howard (The Cresset Press, 1961).
2. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 177-210.
3. John Weinzierl, “The Second Italian Campaign,” *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp.194-220.

Reading Quiz 3

WEEK 5: WAR OF THE THIRD COALITION 1805 (2/11/26)

In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor of the French and King of Italy and proclaimed the French Empire. The geostrategic issues that arose after Bonaparte altered the balance of power and the threat to long standing national security interests led Britain, Russia, and Austria to form the Third Coalition. War erupted when Austria launched a surprise invasion of Bavaria—a French ally. This week we will evaluate Napoleon’s generalship and understand the role his leadership played in the success of French arms. We will assess why Napoleon was successful while his opponents were not. We will understand the geopolitical and geostrategic consequences of French victory and the impact on the Great Powers.

Readings (138 pages):

1. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 231-287.
2. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book III, Chapters 7-19, @55 pp.
3. Mark T. Gerges, 1805: Ulm and Austerlitz, *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 221-248.
4. Select letters from Napoleon’s *Correspondence*.

Reading Quiz 4

WEEK 6: WAR OF THE FOURTH COALITION 1806-1807 (2/18/25)

In 1806, Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire. The First Reich, the thousand-year empire was established in 800 AD by Charlemagne. In its place, Napoleon created the Confederation of the Rhine, a French satellite consisting of the “Third Germany.” Austria and Prussia now found themselves on the outside of German affairs looking in. Austria was too weak to respond but Prussia decided on war, forming the Fourth Coalition with Russia and Britain. Many in Europe predicted that Napoleon was no match for the vaunted Prussian army yet in one day, 14 October 1806, he destroyed it. This week we will continue to evaluate Napoleon’s generalship and understand the role his leadership played in the success of French arms. We will continue to assess why Napoleon was successful while his opponents were not. We will understand the geopolitical and geostrategic consequences of French victory and the impact on the Great Powers.

Readings (82 pages):

1. Christopher T. Goodwin, “Surviving Crisis: The Napoleonic Upheavals and the ‘Time of the French’ as Cultural Trauma in Prussia, 1806–1812,” *War & Society* 41, no. 1 (2022): 1–20.
2. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 287-324.
3. Dennis Showalter, “The Jena Campaign: Apogee and Perihelion,” *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 249-274.
4. Select letters from Napoleon’s *Correspondence*.

Reading Quiz 5

WEEK 7: MID-TERM EXAM (2/25/26)

WEEK 8: THE FIRST POLISH CAMPAIGN 1807 (3/4/26)

The Polish Campaign of 1807 was a significant military campaign by Napoleon against the Russian Empire. It began after the Prussian campaign, where Napoleon's forces annihilated the Prussian army during the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt on 14 October 1806. Following this victory, Napoleon settled in Berlin, the remaining Prussian troops retreated to Poland, seeking to link with the approaching Russian army. The Polish campaign ensued between January and June 1807 in a series of battles, including the Battle of Eylau and the Battle of Friedland, and was marked by Napoleon's attempts to turn the Russian left and right flanks. The campaign was a pivotal moment in Napoleon's military career, showcasing his ability to command a large army and his strategic foresight. However, it also highlighted the challenges of leading a large army in harsh conditions and the importance of accurate reconnaissance and logistics.

Readings (75 pages):

1. Select Letters from *Napoleon's Correspondence*.
2. Alexander Mikaberidze and John H. Gill, "Napoleon's Operational Warfare During the First Polish Campaign, 1806–1807," *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 275-305.
3. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Chapter 8, @20 pages.
4. Select pages from General Bennigsen's Memoirs.

Reading Quiz 6

WEEK 9: WAR BY OTHER MEANS (3/11/26)

With the sinking of French fleets in 1798 and 1805, Napoleon had no way to invade Britain. He correctly identified the British as his main threat because of London's economic strength that continued to finance the coalitions fighting France. Unable to invade the British Home Isles, Napoleon resorted to war by other means: economic war. To destroy the British economy, he closed the entire continent of Europe to British trade. This week we will analyze the grand strategic implications of Napoleon's economic war against Britain and understand the origins of the Peninsular War (1807-1814). We will learn how Napoleon's Continental System impacted his empire and Britain.

Readings (94 pages):

1. François Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815," *The Journal of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (1964): 567–588.
2. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, pp. 371-395.
1. William M. Sloane, "The Continental System of Napoleon," *Political Science Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1898): 213-231.
2. Michael Leggiere, "Napoleon's Quest: Great Britain versus France," in *Great Strategic Rivalries*, ed. James G. Lacey (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 289-320.
3. Primary Documents on the Continental System @ 30 pages
 - a. Neutral Powers 1806
 - b. Berlin Decree 1806
 - c. British Order 1807
France and Russia

- d. [Secret Treaty](#)
- e. [British Order 1807](#)
- f. [Milan Decree 1807](#)
- g. [British Order 1809](#)
- h. [Rambouillet Decree 1810](#)

Reading Quiz 7

WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK (3/18/26)

WEEK 11: THE PENINSULAR WAR (3/25/26)

The only hole in Napoleon's Continental System was Portugal—Britain's main trade partner on the Continent. Napoleon decided to send a small army to conquer and partition Portugal. The Spanish agreed to help and share in the spoils. However, Napoleon found the Spanish to be incompetent and believed that they could not administer the Continental System Efficiently. This week we will analyze the geostrategic implications of Napoleon's Continental System. We will also examine the Peninsular War and learn how it drained French resources and became Napoleon's "bleeding ulcer."

Readings (83 pages):

1. Napoleon, *A Selection from the Letters and Despatches*.
2. Huw Davies, "An Ulcer Inflamed: Napoleon's Campaign in Spain, 1808," *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 306-341.
3. John Lawrence Tone, "Napoleon's Uncongenial Sea: Guerilla Warfare in Navarre during the Peninsular War, 1808-1814," *European History Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1996): 355-381.
4. Charles Esdaile, "War and Politics in Spain, 1808-1814," *The Historical Journal* 31, no. 2 (1988): 295-317.
5. Art Analysis: Goya

Reading Quiz 8

WEEK 12: WAR OF THE FIFTH COALITION (4/1/26)

With Napoleon tied down in Spain, the Austrians made another attempt to defeat the French. In 1809, the Austrians appealed to the Germans of the Confederation of the Rhine to revolt against the French. The appeal fell of deaf ears. Again, the Austrians started the war with a sudden invasion of Bavaria in April. Napoleon reached the front just in time to stop the advance of a huge Austrian army. Although he suffered his first battlefield defeat in May 1809, he rebounded to defeat the Austrians in July and end the Fifth Coalition. This week we will look at the changing composition of Napoleon's army. We will see that it became less "French" and more international, with tens of thousands of Germans, Italians, Poles, Belgians, Dutch, and even Spanish troops serving in the emperor's army. We will evaluate how Napoleon's strategy and tactics changed as well. We will understand the strategic, operational, and tactical conduct of war with Austria in 1809 and the changes that the Austrians made to make them a formidable opponent.

Readings (75 pages):

1. Napoleon, *A Selection from the Letters and Despatches*.
2. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, pp. 324-370.
3. John H. Gill, “1809: The Most Brilliant and Skillful Maneuvers,” *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 342-371.

Reading Quiz 9

WEEK 13: THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN 1812 (4/8/26)

The friendship that Napoleon forged with Tsar Alexander I at Tilsit in 1807 soured after just one year. The Tsar did little to help Napoleon during the War of the Fifth Coalition and Napoleon did little to convince the Ottomans to make peace with Russia. Tsar Alexander coveted the Grand Duchy of Warsaw—Napoleon’s “outpost in the East.” With Russia’s economy wrecked by Napoleon’s Continental System, the Tsar resumed trade with Britain in late 1811. Napoleon threatened that it would constitute an act of war, but Alexander proceeded. As a result, Napoleon invaded Russia with a multinational army of 600,000 soldiers. This week we will evaluate whether invading Russia was Napoleon’s best course of action. We will examine how the various nationalities in Napoleon’s army reacted to the six-month struggle in Russia. Lastly, we will understand why Napoleon lost in Russia.

Readings (100 pages):

1. Alexander Mikaberidze, “The Limits of the Operational Art: Russia 1812,” *Napoleon and the Operational Art*, pp. 372-422.
2. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book X, Chapters 26-39, @60 pages.
3. Selected letters from Napoleon’s Correspondence.

Reading Quiz 10

WEEK 14: THE GERMAN CAMPAIGN 1813 (4/15/26)

Following Napoleon’s disastrous invasion of Russia, the Russians, Prussians and British formed the Sixth Coalition in 1813. Austria joined in August. This week we will look at how Napoleon recovered from his disastrous defeat in Russia to take on the other four great powers. Through the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, France never faced the combined forces of Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Britain. With 200,000 of his best troops tied down in Spain, Napoleon won several pyrrhic victories over the Sixth Coalition. This week we will examine the reason for those pyrrhic victories and how in their aftermath the Sixth Coalition managed to diplomatically and strategically align for success after the first five coalitions that faced Revolutionary and Napoleonic France.

Readings (68 pages):

1. Napoleon, *A Selection from the Letters and Despatches*, vol. II, select entries
2. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, pp. 445-476.
3. Leggiere, “Prometheus Chained,” *Napoleon and the Operational Art of War*, pp. 423-460

Reading Quiz 11

WEEK 14: THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE 1814 (4/22/26)

In the weeks following Napoleon’s monumental defeat in Germany, forces of the Sixth Coalition failed to catch his army as it retreated through Germany and across the Rhine River. As a result, the Allies decided to launch a comprehensive invasion of France from the North Sea to Switzerland with some 400,000 men. By the end of January, Holland and Belgium had fallen, and two Allied armies stood at the Marne and Aube Rivers respectively ready to march on Paris. This week, we will see how after ferocious fighting in February, Napoleon made a daring gamble. To threaten the Coalition’s lifeline across the Rhine, he

decided to maneuver against the rear of the main Allied army in the hope of forcing it to withdraw from France. With the French emperor between them and the Rhine River, the Allies took advantage of the open roads to reach Paris. The city surrendered on 31 March. Six days later, Napoleon abdicated unconditionally.

Readings (116 pages):

1. Napoleon, *A Selection from the Letters and Despatches*, vol. II, 290-356.
2. Clausewitz, *Clausewitz: Historical and Political Writings*, 205-223.
3. Leggiere, “Prometheus Chained,” Napoleon and the Operational Art of War, pp. 460-492

Reading Quiz 12

WEDNESDAY, 27 APRIL 2026
FINAL EXAM
6:15-8:15

IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see [here](#).

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

A	Typically comes to class with pre-prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
B	Does not always come to class with pre-prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
C	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion.
D	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is an unwilling participant in discussion.
E	Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Refuses to participate in discussion.

Examination Rubric: Essays

	Completeness	Analysis	Evidence	Writing
A	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.
B	Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely.	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.
C	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.
D	Fails fully to answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts.	Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.
E	Does not answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events.	Does not adduce any evidence.	Incomprehensible organization and prose.

Writing Rubric

	Thesis and Argumentation	Use of Sources	Organization	Grammar, mechanics and style
A	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	No errors.

B	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	A few errors.
C	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Some errors.
D	Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material.	Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.	Many errors.
E	There is neither a thesis nor any argument.	Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent.	The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence.	Scores of errors.

V. Required Policies

- All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found here: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>