

# GOV 364D EVOLUTION OF SPEC OP FORCES

Unique [39045](#)



*Instructor:* Ami Pedahzur



*Meets:* Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. PAR 206



*Office Hours:* Tuesdays 1 p.m.-4 p.m. *Online*



*Office:* MEZES 3.140



*Phone:* 512-232-1452



*Email:* [pedahzur@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:pedahzur@austin.utexas.edu)

## The subject matter of the course

Imagine for a moment a contemporary military operation. Does the following scenario resemble what you see? A helicopter emerges stealthily in a dark night sky. It hovers over the ground.

A small team of warriors jumps out quickly. Seconds later, the aircraft disappears back into the night. Armed with suppressed M4A1 assault rifles, the soldiers squat and survey their surroundings through their night vision goggles. The path seems clear.

Meanwhile, in the command and control center, hundreds of miles away, analysts review up-to-the-minute satellite imagery and compare it to the video feed from a reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicle.

They layer the information and update the 3-D map on the tablet computers that the operators on the ground carry. Action cameras mounted on the soldiers' helmets stream live video and audio back to headquarters.

The operators move closer to their target - a suspected insurgents' stronghold. They stop half a mile away from the small compound and observe the outpost with enhanced military binoculars.

They identify a group of men carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. They outnumber the team, but this is their sole advantage.

The soldiers position a lightweight laser designator on the ground and aim it at one of the buildings. A second drone launches a guided missile that follows the laser beam and demolishes the target.

Amid the commotion, the team retreats. The soldiers move quickly to the rendezvous point where they climb into the helicopter that dropped them off several hours earlier.

If you follow the news, watch TV series, or read about military affairs, you probably came across similar scenarios. Nowadays, the armed forces of developed countries carry out such operations routinely.

They enable resource-intensive and highly technological militaries to maximize their advantages while significantly minimizing the economic and political costs as well as the potential for escalation that is commonly associated with military operations.

Since their modern debut in the early 1940s, such operations and the units that carried them out have captivated the imaginations of journalists, novelists, and filmmakers.

Researchers, on the other hand, have shown little interest in these units. Until the last decade of the 20th century, only a handful of scholars studied them. Among the researchers who discovered units of interest were some who ultimately concluded that they were insignificant.

As military historians and scholars of security studies grew increasingly interested in SOF, they often referred to them as a new branch of the armed forces, a distinctive feature of contemporary warfare new entities.

In the course, we will take a closer look at the evolution of modern-day SOF and test the main assumptions regarding their evolution and roles.

## Course objectives

The course will equip you with critical perspectives for analyzing contemporary political issues.

We will address historical examples and case studies and frame them using relevant concepts and theories.

By the end of the course, you will:

1. Understand the role of SOF in contemporary warfare.
2. Be familiar with the increasingly complex nature of warfare through multiple theoretical prisms.
3. Be able to consider the role of SOF in contemporary conflicts.

## Course format and procedure

This class meets twice a week for 75-minute sessions.

### On Tuesdays

I will lecture and lead a discussion.

I will refer you to the documents or audio-visual contents that we will discuss on Thursdays.

I will provide you with guiding questions for reading articles or watching videos.

### On Thursdays

- We will engage in discussions about the readings or the documentaries that you watched.
- The discussions will be held online. I will let you know in advance if the discussion session includes a quiz.
- You can expect to spend 2-3 hours reading or watching for every hour of class.

## Required technology and access to materials

Access to the internet is essential. You should have a reasonably fast internet connection, both for downloading and uploading. Such a connection is important for watching lectures and participating in discussions via zoom.

Computers and tablets are better suited for such purposes than smartphones. We will read articles from academic journals and magazines which you will find on Canvas. We will also watch documentaries and films.

I will upload both the required readings and movies to Canvas at least a week in advance.

I work with the library to obtain access to all the audiovisual materials. I will let you know in advance how to reach any source.

The following books are recommended but **not** mandatory

Tucker, David, and Christopher J. Lamb. 2019. *United States Special Operations Forces*. New York: Columbia University Press.

McRaven, William Harry. 1995. *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare - Theory and Practice*. Novato, CA: Presidio.

## Course Plan and Pages (Weekly)

### Week 1

#### *Introduction*

1. What are SOF?
  2. Why Should we Study them?
  3. What led to their rise?
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### Week 2

#### *The Industrial Revolution and Warfare*

1. The American Civil War
  2. The Second Boer War
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### Week 3

#### *World War One*

1. Gallipoli
  2. Trench warfare
  3. Tunneling
  4. Stormtroopers
  5. Tanks
  6. TE Lawrence
  7. Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck
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### Week 4

#### *World War Two (I)*

1. Blitzkrieg
  2. Panzer grenadier
  3. Paratroopers (Fallschirmjäger)
  4. Brandenburgers
  5. Decima Flottiglia MAS
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## **Week 5**

*World War Two (II)*

1. Army Commandos
  2. Special Operations Executive - SOE
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## **Week 6**

*World War Two (III)*

1. Long Range Desert Groups - LRDG
  2. Special Air Service - SAS
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## **Week 7**

*World War Two - (IV)*

1. Office of Strategic Services - OSS
  2. Paratroopers
  3. Army Rangers
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## **Week 8**

*World War Two - (V)*

1. Marine Raiders
  2. UDT
  3. UK and US - Chindits and Air Commandos
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## **Week 9**

*Malia and Vietnam*

1. 22 SAS
  2. SOG  
Green Berets  
Navy Seals
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### Week 10

*The Munich Massacre*

1. 22 SAS
  2. GSG9
  3. Delta
  4. Seal Team Six
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### Week 11

The Yom Kippur War

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### Week 12

*The First Gulf War*

1. 22 SAS
  2. Delta
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### Week 13

*Somalia*

1. Delta
  2. Rangers
  3. Seals
  4. Air Force
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### Week 14

*The War on Terror (I)*

Army SF

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## Week 15

*The War on Terror (II)*

JSOC - Special Missions Units

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## Week 16

*The War on Terror (III)*

1. Army Rangers
  2. Marine Raiders
  3. Navy Seals
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## Grade Range

A 100% to 94%  
A- 94% to 90%  
B+ 90% to 87%  
B 87% to 84%  
B- 84% to 80%  
C+ 80% to 77%  
C 77% to 74%  
C- 74% to 70%  
D+ 70% to 67%  
D 67% to 64%  
D- 64% to 61%  
F 61 to 0%

## Assignments

- 10 out of 11 short open-book quizzes (10% each).
- All instructions, readings, and essential information will be on the canvas website.
- Check this site daily and use it to engage with us and with your peers.
- Changes to the schedule may be made if circumstances require.

## Late work and absences

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Absences that will be considered excused are for health-related, religious holidays as well as extenuating circumstances due to an emergency.

## Other issues

If there are particular circumstances relating to your performance in this class that I should be made aware of, please come and talk to me close to the beginning of the semester as possible (or as problems arise).

## Classroom expectations

This course is a safe place to explore controversial issues, ideas, and arguments.

To keep this class a safe place for exploring multiple perspectives, respect for fellow students is mandatory, especially if you disagree.

Please read the policies of UT as they appear in the Catalog (app 11; app 13) as well as Handbook of Operating Procedures 9-1810. By participating in the class, you express your understanding of and consent to these regulations.

Students must not record activity in classrooms by any means without my written permission.

Authorized recordings must be used only by the student who received my consent during the semester in which the student is enrolled in the class. Also, an authorized student-initiated recording must not be made available to anyone else in any fashion. This includes but not limited to posting online or through other media.

## Personal pronoun preference

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important concerning individuals and topics dealing with differences in race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name different than what appears on the roster, and by the gender pronouns, you use. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

## A notice regarding accommodations for religious holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence."

## Course Drop Policy

At the beginning of each semester, you can add and drop classes without penalty. Check the [academic calendar \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for specific dates. Refer to the General Information Catalog for all [official add/drop policies and procedures \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

## Title IX Reporting

UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. Faculty members and certain staff members (TAs) are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit [titleix.utexas.edu](https://titleix.utexas.edu) (Links to an external site.) or contact the Title IX Office at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu).

## A notice regarding academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, **academic integrity** is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin. More specifically, you and other students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University.

This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.
- UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/>) •
- [Maintaining Your Academic Integrity in Online Learning](#) (Links to an external site.)
- UT's [Standards of Conduct](#)

## University Resources for Students

- Contact [University Health Services](#) (Links to an external site.) if you feel physically unwell.
- Contact the [Counseling and Mental Health Center](#) (Links to an external site.) if you need counseling or psychiatric services.
- Visit the [Staying Well While Staying Home](#) (Links to an external site.) page for tips and things to consider as you take care of yourself and others during this time.

## Services for Students with Disabilities

- [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [Using Accommodations at UT](#) (Links to an external site.)
- [How to register with SSD](#)

## COVID-19 University Information/Policies



**Safety and Class Participation/Masks:** We will all need to make some adjustments in order to benefit from in-person classroom interactions in a safe and healthy manner. Our best protection against spreading COVID-19 on campus are masks (defined as cloth face coverings) and staying home if you are showing symptoms.

**Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:** No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

## FERPA and Class Recordings

**Class Recordings:** Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

**COVID Caveats:** To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students (and faculty and staff) report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to the HealthPoint Occupational Health Program (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link \(Links to an external site.\)](#).