Flight Culture & the Human Experience

HIST 2377

Semester Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: none

To access representative course materials, visit: http://scottwpalmer.com/flightculture

Course Description:

Of the twentieth century’s many remarkable inventions, none exerted so powerful or lasting a hold on the human imagination as the airplane. As a transportation technology, a weapon of war, and a symbol of both political power and personal liberation, the airplane has been a vital element in the emergence of the modern world. Beginning with an investigation of the meanings of flight in ancient mythology and concluding with a discussion of the state of aviation and aerospace technology in the early twenty-first century, “Flight Culture & the Human Experience” provides students with a cross-cultural, multi-media survey of flight's social, cultural, political, and military impact on world history. Among the numerous topics that will be addressed in this course are: the physics of flight; the impact of aviation on twentieth-century art; the development of civil and commercial aviation; cinematic images of flying; the airplane as an instrument of war, and contemporary developments in the aviation industry.

Core Course Purpose and Objectives:

Students who successfully complete the class will possess a better understanding of the airplane’s role as an agent of cultural and artistic transformation as well as an awareness of how distinct social and political factors have contributed to technological development and modernization across the globe.

This course satisfies the UTA core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy, & Culture by including coverage of the following four (4) “Foundational Component Areas” identified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board:
• **Critical Thinking Skills**: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information. Must be addressed in all core curriculum courses.

• **Communication Skills**: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication. Must be addressed in all core curriculum courses.

• **Personal Responsibility**: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making. Must be addressed in all core courses that satisfy the following requirements:
  - Communication
  - Language, Philosophy and Culture
  - American History
  - Government/Political Science

• **Social Responsibility**: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities. Must be addressed in all core courses that satisfy the following requirements:
  - Language, Philosophy and Culture
  - Creative Arts
  - American History
  - Government/Political Science
  - Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1) identify and explain how the idea and reality of human flight has inspired aesthetic visions in the arts, music, and literature and effected social, political, and economic transformations across time and place

2) develop an understanding of civic and social responsibility by studying the interrelationships between state agents, public organizations, and private individuals in fostering, sustaining, and institutionalizing technological change
3) demonstrate awareness of the ethical dilemmas that accompany modernization through reference to the impact of aeronautical technologies in transforming the conduct of war, influencing international affairs, and the altering the socio-economic relationships of disparate national, ethnic, and social communities

4) enhance critical thinking skills by describing and analyzing the cultural, social, and political factors that have shaped the international development of aeronautical technologies and institutions

5) develop an ability to communicate ideas clearly and concisely with appropriate organization and style through analytical narratives targeted to educated audiences

Required Texts:

Tom Crouch, Wings: A History of Aviation from Kites to the Space Age (Norton, 2002)
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Night Flight (Harvest Books, 1974)

Additional required and recommended readings will be made available each week via the course website.

Course Requirements:

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<td>Exam #1</td>
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<td>Exam #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Exams:

[Note: Each exams assesses Student Learning Outcomes #1, 4 & 5 and the Critical Thinking and Communication Skills Core Curriculum Component Areas.]

Each of the three (3) exams administered in “Flight Culture & the Human Experience” will consist of twenty (20) Multiple-Choice questions (worth a cumulative 40% of the exam grade), 10 short-answer “Jeopardy!” questions (30%), four (4) short-answer Identification items (20%), and a single (1) short, written essay (10%). The exams are
not cumulative. Each will cover only those lectures, readings, and relevant course materials presented in the four weekly units preceding their administration.

Signature Assignment: The Biographical Sketch

[Note: The Biographical Sketch signature assignment assesses Student Learning Outcomes 1 through 5 and all four (4) Core Curriculum Component Areas.]

In partial fulfillment of this course students are required to submit a short research/writing assignment focusing on a historical figure or aircraft.

The Biographical Sketch must be typed, double-spaced, in black ink. It must be between 5-7 pages in 11 or 12 pt. font size.

The sketch must draw upon no fewer than three (3) sources. Of these, no more than two (2) may come from the Internet. These sources must be above and beyond materials assigned for class or identified on the course web site.

The sketch must be accompanied by a bibliography and must include proper citations, when necessary.

The topic of the sketch must be approved by the instructor in advance. No more than one student will be allowed to write a sketch on a given personality or plane. (i.e. if another student has already received approval to write on the F-16, you can’t.) Topics will be approved/assigned on a “first come, first served” basis.

Sketches on the following subjects will not be approved: the Wright Brothers, the Wright Flyer, Charles Lindbergh, The Spirit of St. Louis, or Amelia Earhart.

The sketch is due at the beginning of the class coinciding with your topic. (Ex: A biographical sketch of Manfred von Richthofen would be due on the night devoted to “The Great War in the Air.” A sketch of the B-17 “Flying Fortress” would be due on the night devoted to “World War II,” etc.) You will be given your exact due date upon approval of your topic. Late papers will not be accepted.

Although you are free to structure your sketch as you see fit, your final product must do the following:

For Sketches about People:

• provide essential background/biographical information relating to the individual’s life in aviation
• identify the individual’s broader significance to the contemporary world through references to his/her impact on the development of aviation/aeronautics
• assess the civic and social contexts in which the individual operated by describing the state agencies, public organizations, and/or private associations that supported or sustained his/her activities
• address pertinent ethical or philosophical considerations arising from the individual’s contributions to the development of military and/or civil aviation

For Sketches about Airplanes:

• situate the origins, development, and production history of the aircraft within its contemporary contexts
• compare and contrast the airplane’s initial technical specifications and expected function(s) with its actual deployment and subsequent service history
• evaluate the airplane’s enduring significance through reference to its impact in altering previously existing social relationships and civic institutions
• assess the extent to which the aircraft influences present-day values, beliefs, and attitudes by assessing its representation in historical records and contemporary media
• identify and describe the ethical considerations arising from the development and application of the aircraft within its historical contexts

Optional Assignments:

Film #1: Wings (1927) + 5% to Exam #1 score
Film #2: Ceiling Zero (1936)  + 5% to Exam #2 score
Film #3: Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970) + 5% to Final Exam

[NOTE: Available only to students who have fulfilled all other course requirements and missed no classes. Dates & locations - TBA]

POLICY STATEMENTS:

Drop Policy - Students may drop classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period. After the late registration period, students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the semester. It is the student’s responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial
aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (HYPERLINK “http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao”)

**Academic Integrity** - All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code: “I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.”

**Americans with Disabilities Act** - UTA is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at HYPERLINK "http://www.uta.edu/disability" www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Student Support Services** - UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to HYPERLINK "mailto:resources@uta.edu" resources@uta.edu, or view the information at HYPERLINK "http://www.uta.edu/resources" www.uta.edu/resources.

**Electronic Communication** - UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at HYPERLINK "http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php" http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php.
When communicating with your instructor via email, please follow basic email etiquette. For a handy guide, visit: [http://www.netmanners.com/e-mail-etiquette-tips/](http://www.netmanners.com/e-mail-etiquette-tips/)

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/](http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/)

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington ("University") is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.

**Final Review Week:** for semester-long courses, a period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, Through the glass doors, between FA South and FA Central, then down the stairs. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an
elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

https://mavalert.uta.edu/ or https://mavalert.uta.edu/register.php

**Student Feedback Survey** - At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit HYPERLINK "http://www.uta.edu/sfs" [http://www.uta.edu/sfs].
Schedule:

**WEEK 1:** Introduction - The Culture of Flight in Historical Perspective

**Overview:** Orientation to the course; The history and culture of flight as an academic discipline; Representations and meaning of flight in non-Western mythologies and religions (Native American, Islamic, Chinese, and Indian cultures); Kite-flying in China and among the Maori Islanders

**WEEK 2:** Pre-History of Flight: Myth, Legend, and Lighter-than-Air Travel

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapter 1

**Overview:** As both dream and desire, the occupation of the air — flight — possesses universal, archetypal significance. At virtually every time and in nearly every place in human history, cultures across the globe have endowed flying with symbolic, metaphorical, and mystical meanings. Today, in Europe, the USA, and throughout the Western world, the myth of Icarus is regarded as the touchstone in understanding the “meaning of flight.” A symbol and statement of the power of personal liberation (and its tragic cost), Icarus dominates Western consciousness and popular culture. But the “Icarus myth” is itself a myth (and a relatively recent one at that). By way of describing the evolution of the modern “idea of flight” our first “Destination” takes us from the temperate isles of ancient Greece to the frozen steppes of medieval Russia (with several stops in between). Thereafter, we examine the first systematic attempts to come to terms with the nature of the heavens in the cosmology of pre-Socratic philosophers. Our investigation then turns to to the fanciful flying devices imagined by a Renaissance genius. We conclude with a description of humankind’s first physical occupation of the heavens via the lighter-than-air craft contrived by two French paper makers — and the showmen and charlatans who profited in their wake.

**Topics Covered:** Images of flight in Greek & Roman mythology; Flight and Christian cosmology; representations of flight in Renaissance painting; Leonardo Da Vinci’s sketchbooks; Scientific principles of ballooning; Montgolfier brothers; Aeronautics and popular culture in eighteenth-century France; First aeronautical showmen and women (Sophie Blanchard)

**WEEK 3:** The Dawn of Aviation

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapters 2-4

**Overview:** 17 December 1903. The most famous date in the History of Flight Culture — the day on which two brothers from Dayton achieved world-renown by piloting a wooden and canvas machine off the sandy dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina to become the “first in flight,” together inaugurating the Age of the Airplane and forever altering human history.

Or did they?

By any measure, the Wrights’ accomplishments were monumental — and their contributions to aviation profound. But their historic flight (now seared into the popular imagination thanks to a fortunate
photograph) went virtually unnoticed at the time. Far from the image they subsequently cultivated, the Wright Brothers were hardly alone in their effort to realize the dream of flight. They relied upon the assistance of a great many people and depended upon a range of others’ inventions without which their famous “Flyer” would never have flown. Our second “Destination” begins with an overview of the exciting and turbulent age of technical innovation which marked the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. From there, we travel backwards to the early eighteenth century and the origins of aeronautical theory before visiting Paris, Berlin, and Pittsburg (Texas), homes to some of the legions of creators, crackpots and cranks who aimed for the skies in the years before 1903. Our journey ends at the beginning – 17 December 1903 – the “Dawn of Aviation” and the criticisms and counter-claims which accompanied “L’affaire Wright.”

Topics Covered: Fundamentals of aerodynamics (the “four forces of flight”); How internal combustion engines work; Basics of propeller design; International law and the geopolitics of military aviation; Early aeronautical institutions and governing agencies (US and Europe); Pre-cursors to the Wright Brothers; The Wrights and their achievement; Alberto Santos-Dumont

WEEK 4: The Airplane and the Arts, I

Reading: Assorted poems and short stories (on-line)

Overview: As a technological milestone, Louis Blériot’s 25 July 1909 flight across the English Channel was rather less than noteworthy; as symbol and spectacle it was nothing short of epochal. In the thirty-six-and-a-half-minutes between the Frenchman’s take-off from the shores of Calais to his touchdown (or, more accurately, crash down) on the white cliffs of Dover — everything changed. England was “no longer an island;” the obstacles imposed by geography were conquered; humanity had imposed its collective will upon nature; time and space were transcended via mechanical device. Blériot’s accomplishment was universally proclaimed the realization of a Great Deed.

In the weeks and months that followed, men and women from all walks of life in Europe, the United States, Russia, and elsewhere were seized by a “passion for wings.” They flocked in the tens and hundreds of thousands to witness for themselves the public performances of the era’s “new Prometheans.” Almost overnight aviators and their aeroplanes took hold of the popular imagination. Their feats transformed understanding of the individual’s relationship to nature, re-shaped international relations, gave birth to new industries, and inspired the creativity of the world’s leading artists.

This week’s journey begins with a glance at Blériot’s flight and the delirium which ensued in its aftermath. From there, we stop off at airfields and exhibitions in Europe and the United States to meet the leading fliers of they day, participate (by proxy) in the “miracle of the ages,” and examine the earliest artifacts of aeronautical pop culture. Our final stop transports us into the realm of imagination as we conclude our “Destination” with an extended investigation of the aeroplane’s influence in transforming modern painting, poetry, and the arts.

Topics Covered: Louis Blériot and the Channel crossing; The first air shows and air races; Survey of leading aviation personalities; Representations of airplanes and aviators in popular culture; Airplanes and the origins of modern art (Cubism, Orphism, Futurism, and Suprematism)
WEEK 5: The Great War in the Air

Reading: Crouch, Chapter 5
Film #1: Wings (1927) [OPTIONAL]

Overview: Born from the dreams of hobbyists and sportsmen, the airplane came of age under the command of officers and “gentlemen.” As the armies of Europe’s leading states competed for advantage in the “War to end all Wars” (1914-1918), once frail vehicles handcrafted from fabric, wood, and wire were transformed into killing platforms mass-produced by industry. At the same time, new cadres of trained pilots emerged to supersede earlier showmen and adventurers. Their exploits gave rise to enduring images and myths that have defined public perception up to the present day.

This week’s “Destination” in the History of Flight Culture examines the impact of the First World War in hastening the airplane’s technical development as well as the airplane’s role in transforming the nature and scope of battle. We begin with a discussion of pre-1914 ruminations on “future air wars” (and preemptive efforts to legislate them) before traveling to the deserts of North Africa and, thereafter, the Balkans to witness the first instances of heavier-than-air attacks. Following a long stop-over at Verdun and the Somme, our journey concludes with a discussion of the differing national embodiments of the WWI fighter “ace” — and the day-to-day realities pilots faced fighting the “Great War in the Air.”

Topics Covered: Depictions of future air wars in literature and painting; Earliest uses of airplane in combat; How rotary engines work; Technical hurdles to aircraft design; Machine gun technology; Comparative approaches to institutionalizing air power; The realities of aerial warfare; The myth of the air “ace;” The pilot as an embodiment of national character; African-American pilots in the First World War

WEEK 6: Exam #1

WEEK 7: The Golden Age of Flight

Reading: Crouch, Chapter 6
Film #2: Ceiling Zero (1936) [OPTIONAL]

Overview: Notwithstanding images of thrilling aerial “dog fights” between chivalrous “knights of the air” that seized the popular imagination starting in late 1915, the airplane had only a limited impact on the course of the Great War. The same cannot be said for the impact of the War on the development of the airplane. The design and construction of airplanes was transformed under “Total War” from a task undertaken by specialist craftsmen into a mass-manufacturing enterprise. By the close of hostilities in November 1918, the number of constructed aircraft had risen from somewhere in the range of 900 to well over 200,000. Accompanying these new, far more technologically advanced machines were tens of thousands of individuals now trained as pilots and mechanics. Amid colossal destruction and death, the First World War gave birth to a modern aviation complex.

Fears of the airplane’s potential military threats continued to dominate the thinking of post-War theorists. Others, however, saw things in a more positive light. They envisioned the airplane as a multifaceted “instrument of the future,” one that would advance modernity by improving transportation,
promoting communication and commerce, and raising the cultural level of otherwise backward peoples. In the West (and especially in the skies above America) the airplane was also celebrated as an object of mass culture and entertainment.

This week’s “Destination” explores the “Golden Age of Flight,” the decade or so which unfolded following the end of World War I. We begin with a survey of the wartime transformation of aviation by considering German contributions to airfoil and engine design. Afterwards, we examine the foundations of commercial and naval aviation as witnessed, respectively, in the earliest multi-engine aircraft and the first attempts to use ocean-going vessels for take-offs and landings. Our journey concludes in the USA. There, we meet one of the most outspoken and controversial figures in the history of flight before introducing the twentieth century’s first true celebrities: the barnstormers and airmail pilots who captured the hearts of millions in advance of re-establishing America’s standing as the global leader in aviation.

**Topics Covered:** Technical issues in all-metal airplane construction; Ludwig Prandlt & “boundary layer theory”; Developments in airfoil & propeller design; Contrasting national approaches to research in aerodynamics; Origins of strategic bombing; Institutionalizing American & European commercial aviation; Development of the US airmail system; Aviation in Interwar US popular culture; Barnstormers and aerial daredevils

**WEEK 8:** The Dawn of Commercial & Civil Aviation

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapters 7-9
Exupéry, Night Flight (entire book)

**Overview:** Lindbergh. Earhart. More than any other aeronautical events, the exploits of these two most famous American fliers dominate contemporary understanding of the aerial 1930s. In an age of expanding communication and new mass media, both soared to heights of world renown as the twentieth century’s first international celebrities. Yet Flight Culture during the decade c.1927-1937 involved much more than his triumph and her tragedy. Thanks to major breakthroughs in technology and design fostered by public-private partnerships, philanthropists, and profiteers, the era marked the real beginning of civil aviation. Independent, commercially sustainable passenger flight came into being; and everything changed.

This week’s “Destination” takes-off with requisite coverage of Lindy and Amelia before examining the earliest efforts to profit from passenger air travel. Following a short-hop to Havana for a bit of rum ‘n fun, we stop off in Washington, D.C. to visit the federal agencies and charitable foundations that institutionalized commercial aviation. A run-down of the decade’s major technological advances sets the stage for the second-half of our journey. An extended layover at the newly established Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, CA provides an opportunity to investigate in-depth the The Plane that made it all possible. From there, we embark on a worldwide tour traveling to Latin and South America and across the Pacific Ocean before flying La Ligne from Europe to Africa. Once back home, we pause to consider the lived experience of early passengers — and some of the many changes commercial flying wrought on American society. Our “Destination” ends with twentieth-century aesthetics and the airplane’s lasting influence on the “look” and “feel” of the modern.
Topics Covered: Scientific and technical principles of streamlined design; Early federal regulation of US aviation; Public/private cooperation in the rise of commercial aviation; Streamlining in industrial design and architecture; Le Corbusier; The rise of Pan Am; Stewardesses; Gender & racial sub-texts in aviation marketing; Key developments in Latin & South American aviation

Spring Break

WEEK 9: The Airplane and the Arts, II (Aviation and the Silver Screen)

Viewing: Only Angels Have Wings (1939) [in-class film]

Overview: It is not a coincidence that the “golden age” of flight and the “golden age” of film overlap one another in the historical record. More so than other wondrous inventions which emerged during the decade surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, aviation and cinema shared much in common. Both were invested in the public performance of spectacle; both altered longstanding notions of time and space; both promised to liberate audiences from the constraints of the mundane; both were forms of escape.

By way of revisiting the symbiotic relationship between “the airplane and the arts,” this week’s “Destination” takes us to the South American location of “Barranca,” an exotic (and imaginary) port town serving as backdrop to director Howard Hawks’ 1939 masterpiece Only Angels Have Wings. There, surrounded by swampy mists, torrential rains, and waterlogged fields the pilots of “Barranca Airlines” risk their lives daily flying commercial routes over the treacherous Andes Mountains. Studly aviators, gorgeous dames, and thrilling aerial scenes provide familiar visual cues. Likewise, the appearance of routine character “types” including the driven leader determined to keep to schedule; the veteran aviator grounded against his desires; and the mysterious pilot seeking escape from his tainted past give Only Angels Have Wings a “look and feel” similar to most any other aviation flick.

And yet, something is different. Considered among its celebrated director’s finest films, Only Angels Have Wings is more complex and ambiguous than contemporary productions such as Flight from Glory (1937), Test Pilot (1938), or Hawks’ own Ceiling Zero (1938). Here, the focus is less on individual characters than in characterizing the attitudes and interactions of aviators. In drawing attention to the rites and rituals which structure their world and separate them as a group from those who do not fly Hawks communicates to “outsiders” the values, motivations, and ethos of an elite brotherhood of men who for much of the twentieth-century held the whole world in thrall.

Topics Covered: Technological and cultural influence of cinema and flight; The aviation film as an international genre; Gender roles in aviation films of the 1930s

WEEK 10: Aviation in Service to the State

Reading: Assorted online materials

Overview: This week’s “Destination” explores the images and institutions that characterized the flight cultures of Europe’s “totalitarian” regimes. In contrast to inter-War America, Britain, and France where
citizens saw airplanes and pilots as symbols of individualism and liberty, political leaders in fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union enlisted aviation in service to the state, pursuing prestige flights and promoting collective “air-mindedness” to legitimate political programs born of violence and militarism.

Following an introductory glance at history’s most infamous propaganda film, we travel to the little-known port of Fiume to investigate Fascism’s origins in the theatrical antics of the original “Duce.” Thereafter, amid the economic wreckage and social dislocations of the 1920s, we recount the rise of Europe’s first “air-minded” dictator — Benito Mussolini. A quick march to Rome, followed by a series of Mediterranean flights and two Atlantic crossings (to Rio de Janeiro and, then, Chicago) round out the Italian “circuit.” The second half of our journey begins in the city of Lipetski. At a top-secret facility built by the Soviet government and run by the German military we consider the cooperative arrangement that led to the Luftwaffe and the birth of tactical air doctrine. Departing the USSR for the Rhön Mountains we ascend Wasserkuppe, headquarters of a patriotic glider movement which sustained German aerial aspirations before succumbing to Nazi regimentation. Our final stop takes us to the Basque region of Northern Spain where, amid the orgy of violence accompanying civil war, we witness a defining moment in the history of flight which shocked the world and foreshadowed global war: Guernica.

**Topics Covered:** Fundamental principles of gliding; Inter-War aviation spectacles and international relations; Nazification of German aeronautical institutions; Development of Soviet aviation institutions and mass societies; Developments in military aviation technology in the 1930s; Competing images and themes in Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet aviation culture; The Spanish Civil War; Picasso’s Guernica

**WEEK 11:** Exam #2

**WEEK 12:** World War II

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapters 10-11

**Film #3:** Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970) [OPTIONAL]

**Overview:** This week marks the airplane’s arrival as a complete weapon of war. Between 1939 and 1945 over Europe and the Pacific, the nightmarish prophecies of aerial propagandists including Douhet, Wells, Trotsky, and Mitchell were realized in the flesh as the flying armadas of the world’s most advanced states rained down destruction and death unsurpassed in history. More than a mere clash of nations and ideologies, World War II radically altered the world’s trajectory. The application of air power on an industrial scale and the accompanying introduction of dread new aerial weapons made it possible to incinerate tens of thousands instantaneously, and even to end the human race.

Our “Destination” begins with an account of the run-up to war and the effectiveness of Nazi bluster (and fresh memories of Guernica) in dissuading Western statesmen from taking a stand against tyranny. The opportunity to secure a quick victory lost, we turn to the onset of hostilities in Europe and air operations over Poland and France, where the myth of German invincibility was forged. The “Battle of Britain” and its “few, who did so much for so many,” follow as we conclude the first leg of our journey with an appraisal of the Luftwaffe’s actual performance.

Flight Culture Syllabus, 12
The second half of our “Destination” begins in the good ol’ USA where the corresponding bluster of 
the US Air Corps fostered popular notions of “precision” bombing and a public relations blitz to 
procure a sleek, modern plane. A return to Europe and the war quickly dispels the myths of America’s 
aerial propaganda. We ponder the murderous realities of strategic air operations at mid-century and 
assess their contributions to the destruction of Nazi Germany. Our journey concludes on the opposite 
side of the globe. We pay due accord to the world’s foremost naval aviation power at the outset of the 
war, Imperial Japan, then observe its rapid demise under the inexorable might of American industrial 
capacity and technological ingenuity. The end comes not with a whimper, but a bang.

**Topics Covered:** International relations and the onset of war; Airpower at war in Europe; How radar 
works; Origins and development of Japanese naval aviation and airpower doctrine; Airpower at war 
in the Pacific; The technology behind the Atomic Bomb

**WEEK 13:** The Jet Age

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapters 12 & 13

**Overview:** This week in “Flight Culture & the Human Experience” begins in post-War America where, 
under the watchful eye of parents, teachers, and civil defense workers, cartoon creatures prepared the 
nation’s school children for the coming atomic Holocaust. After briefly surveying the political and 
ideological contexts that made civil defense exercises seem necessary, we witness the first 
confrontation of the world’s emerging “superpowers” play out in the skies over Berlin. Nebraska (of all 
places!) is our second destination. There, we consider the transformation of American military air 
power and the birth of its Strategic Air Command — a highly trained and well-fed cadre of military 
professionals dedicated to maintaining peace through superior firepower and obscenely large 
airplanes. Changing locations, we cross the Atlantic. Behind British and German lines we witness the 
development of the gas turbine engine before watching American and Soviet-made jet fighters vie for 
supremacy above the Korean peninsula. In the final leg of our weekly journey, we consider global 
responses to dawning “Jet Age” in the form of those international organizations and institutions 
designed to regulate commercial air travel. We conclude with American aviation companies’ successful 
exploitation of British tragedy; the USA’s resumption of technological leadership; and the creation of 
the infrastructure and services that democratized air travel for millions of citizens.

**Topics Covered:** Civil defense and American popular culture in the 1950s; Aviation and the new Cold 
War; Origins and development of jet engines; Airfoil design in the jet age; Institutional transformations 
of American strategic airpower; International conventions and organizations; Regulating air travel in a 
global perspective; The air war over Korea

**WEEK 14:** The Limitations of Airpower

**Reading:** Crouch, Chapters 14 & 15

**Overview:** Our penultimate week investigates the intersections between modern aviation and the most 
primordial impulses of the human condition: sex & violence.
During the course of the turbulent 1960s, the image of American commercial aviation was transformed through the onset of a “sexual revolution” born of a counter-culture co-opted by the marketing wizards of Madison Avenue. Simultaneously, the “best and brightest” of the US political and military establishments were being laid low by a “raggedy-assed little fourth-rate country” backed by the might of the USSR and China. Amid the myriad mistakes that contributed to humiliating defeat, the pilots of the USAF and the Army Air Corps laid the foundations for new approaches to air power. A “counter-culture” of a different sort, their response to adversity gave rise to a new understanding of tactical air combat and the types of aircraft necessary to secure future success.

Our “Destination” begins in New York City. At the Museum of Modern Art we briefly consider the 1960’s most famous aeronautical painting before stopping by the offices of an up-and-coming advertising firm to witness the birth of an enduring sexual stereotype (midwifed, no less, by the era’s most accomplished female executive). During a short lay-over in Washington, DC we see the nation’s lawmakers unleash the “creative destruction” of the free-market, re-making an industry, lowering prices for consumers, and raising the stakes for airline executives and employees. We then jet across the Atlantic to observe the development of history’s fastest commercial airplane and the rise of a European business conglomerate. The last half of our weekly tour takes us to the jungles of South-East Asia where, between 1965 and 1972, two decades’ worth of US military air doctrine came crashing to Earth before experiencing a renaissance brought about by a brilliant, foul-mouthed fighter pilot and taxpayers’ largesse. Our final stop is the Mid-East. There, in the skies over Lebanon, revolutionary American technologies and tactics are applied to devastating effect by the Israeli Air Force in the most stunning victory recorded in the history of air power.

Topics Covered: James Rosenquist’s F-111; Aviation, sexuality and popular culture; commercialization and democratization of air travel; Politics and economics of U.S. airline deregulation; Southwest Airlines’ business model; US vs. European approaches to the aircraft industry (rise of Airbus); The air war in Vietnam; Electronic warfare and countermeasures; Institutional transformations in US airpower; Energy maneuverability theory; Technology & design of the Boeing 747

WEEK 15: Turn of the Second Century

Reading: Crouch, Conclusion

Overview: By way of introduction, our concluding “Destination” embarks from “ground zero” in New York City en route to a survey of twentieth-century aeronautical crimes. Following brief stops in South America and Southeast Asia, we find ourselves hijacked to Cuba and the Middle East. There, we examine the evolving motivations and methods of aviation terrorists before pausing to consider the broader impact of their actions in the procedures introduced to enhance passengers’ security — and the death blows dealt to an iconic air carrier. Institutional developments in commercial aviation round out the first leg of our journey. We investigate the damages done by one of America’s most notorious corporate raiders and the consolidation of US domestic air carriers and international “alliances” that dominated the 1990s.

The second half of our farewell tour focuses on the revolutions in U.S. military air power that unfolded in the closing decades of the twentieth century. The lessons of Vietnam apparently learned, we consider the transformation of American training, technology, and tactics that contributed to stunning success in the skies over Iraq during Operation Desert Storm (1991) where America’s century-long search for “precision” bombing came to fruition and the seeds of 9/11 were inadvertently sown.
Topics Covered: History of aviation-related terrorism; The death of Pan Am; Politics & economics of contemporary US & European commercial aviation; Electronic counter-measures & stealth technology; Advances in air-to-air combat; The first UAVs; Development of modern airpower doctrine; The First Gulf War

Final Exam