

University of Western Ontario
Department of History
Fall 2017

The History of Aviation
2814F

Prof. Jeffery Vacante
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Office hours: Tues. 10:30-11:30
in Lawson Hall 2218

Lectures: Thurs. 2:30-4:30
in Somerville House 2355

This course explores the idea of flight from the end of the eighteenth century to the present day. When men began to experiment with flight they were seen as visionaries but also as somewhat eccentric. For many of those who supported these experiments balloons and then flying machines represented great scientific and technological achievement as well as the hope that science might bring the world together in peace. But the early promise of flight would be shattered when airplanes were shown to be efficient weapons in war. The early dreams of flight persisted during the middle decades of the twentieth century, which helped to propel the creation of a commercial aviation industry. The decades following the Second World War were the so-called golden age of aviation, a time when flight became more comfortable, safer, and more accessible to a new generation of people with both the means and the desire to travel as a form of leisure. The deregulation of the skies beginning in the seventies, however, would ultimately spell the end of the carriers that had done so much to sell the public on the romance of flight. Flying would become more accessible to the masses but it would also become a rather prosaic means of transportation. This course focuses on the key events and personalities in the history of aviation, including the Orville and Wilbur Wright, Charles Lindbergh, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. We will also consider how some of the past century's major literary figures, including H.G. Wells, Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, have understood flight. As well, we will trace the development of a commercial aviation industry including the rise of such companies as Pan-Am, TWA, Canadian Airways, and Trans Canada Airlines. This course, in the end, is concerned with the idea of flight in the western imagination.

In this course students will, in addition to learning the broad outline of the history of aviation, sharpen their ability to read and think critically, develop their analytical skills, and learn to organize and present their thoughts and research in formal academic essays. Throughout the course, students will also demonstrate critical engagement with the course readings.

Texts:

- Richard Holmes, *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air*
- Lawrence Goldstone, *Birdmen: The Wright Brothers, Glenn Curtiss, & the Battle to Control the Skies*
- Thomas Kessner, *Flight of the Century: Charles Lindbergh & the Rise of American Aviation*
- Brendan Koerner, *The Skies Belong to Us: Love and Terror in the Golden Age of Hijacking*
- Tom Wolfe, *The Right Stuff*

These books, which are available at the university bookstore, will be supplemented by articles and other readings to be made available on the course website.

Mark Breakdown:

Midterm 25%
Book Review 40%
Final Exam 35%

Requirements: In the **book review** (ten pages) students are to review Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*. Wolfe is an American journalist and novelist who has written some of the great works of American fiction. His most significant works, including *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, have captured particular cultural moments in the American imagination and have come to define those eras. But Wolfe is also part of a group of writers that transformed the practice of journalism in the sixties and seventies with what came to be called the New Journalism, which employed first-person narrative techniques and novelistic approaches to non-fiction writing. When *The Right Stuff* was released in 1979, it was not without controversy. In this work of non-fiction, which grew out of a series of articles written for *Rolling Stone* magazine, Wolfe examines the space program, and in particular, the tension between test pilots and the astronauts. This tension is presented within a larger frame that considers the manner in which the astronauts were constructed in a way that served the needs of a country in desperate need of heroes. This book is a study of heroism as well as how the pilot and aviator came to terms with the changes in technology that fundamentally transformed the act of flying in the space age. Your task in this review is to do much more than simply summarize the contents of the book. You are to discuss the larger points that Wolfe is presenting in this book. The review is to be well-written, provide sound analysis, follow proper scholarly conventions (including citation style) and include a cover page. This review is **due November 16**. An identical copy of the essay must be submitted to **turnitin** through the course web page. Essays submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty of five percent the first day and one percent for every day thereafter (including weekends).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Students will also write a **midterm exam** on **October 5** and a **final exam** during the December exam period.

Lecture Schedule:

Sept. 7: Introduction

Sept. 14: Balloons

• Richard Holmes, *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air*

Sept. 21: The Pioneers

- Lawrence Goldstone, *Birdmen: The Wright Brothers, Glenn Curtiss, and the Battle to Control the Skies*

Sept. 28: The Pioneers II

- Goldstone, *Birdmen*

Oct. 5: Midterm Exam

Oct. 9-13: Fall Break

Oct. 19: The Age of Lindbergh

- Thomas Kessner, *The Flight of the Century: Charles Lindbergh and the Rise of American Aviation*

- John W. Ward, "The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight," *American Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 3-16.

- Modris Eksteins, "Night Dancer," in *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989): 241-274.

Oct. 26: The Bush

- Ronald A. Keith, *Bush Pilot with a Briefcase: The Happy-Go-Lucky Story of Grant McConachie* (Toronto 1972): 25-30, 43-66, 78-126.

Nov. 2: Commercial Aviation

- Shirley Render, *Double Cross: The Inside Story of James A. Richardson and Canadian Airways* (Vancouver 1999): 39-67, 228-252.

Nov. 9: Commercial Aviation II

- Peter Pigott, *Wingwalkers: A History of Canadian Airlines International* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Pub., 2003): 187-232.

Nov. 16: The Jet Age

- Robert Gandt, *Skygods: The Fall of Pan Am* (New York: William Morrow, 1995): 3-43.

Nov. 23: The Jet Age II

- Tom Wolfe, *The Right Stuff*

- Charles Lindbergh, "A Letter from Lindbergh," *Life* (4 July 1969).

Nov. 30: The Paradox of Flight

- Brendan Koerner, *The Skies Belong to Us: Love and Terror in the Golden Age of Hijacking*

Dec. 7: Conclusion

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Prerequisites and Antirequisites:

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the

reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Medical Issues:

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or vangalen@uwo.ca