Several cultures have encouraged the formation of cadres that honor self-destruction in order to destroy others: the list includes the Assassins of medieval West Asia, the “Kamikaze” Japanese pilots of World War II, and the Arab suicide bombers today. What common denominators exist between them? What motivates them: tradition or track record? What defenses exist against them?


This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of "Loving War," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).

**About the Series:**

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception...
of war as protective public policy?

- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that
distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or
"modernity"?

- What happens when this distinction is not honored?

- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy
killing

**Upcoming Events**

April 6, 2005: Nicola DiCosmo
April 13, 2005: Karl Friday
April 20, 2005: Thomas Kuehne
April 27, 2005: Robert H. Pape
May 4: Eliot Cohen
May 11: Peter A. Fritzsche
May 18, 2005: Barry Strauss
May 25, 2005: N.A.M. Rodger