

Teaching the Costs of War Classroom Activity *Created by Dr. Jennifer Greenburg, Stanford University*

Summary

This classroom activity exposes students to the economic, environment, social, and political costs of the post-9/11 wars at the same time as building independent research and analytical reading skills. Using a small group format, the activity asks students to examine the Costs of War summary of research findings, then to explore one particular research paper or dimension of findings to present to their class. Although the format is variable, this activity is well-suited for a section of a larger lecture, or a small class of 15-20 students. *Activity length: 30-45 minutes, depending on class size.*

Preparation

This activity could be assigned independently, or in tandem with lecture and reading material on the post-9/11 wars. Potential reading assignments include:

- Costs of War summary of findings:
<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/summary>
- Map of Counterterror war locations:
<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/US%20Counterterrorism%20Operations%202018-2020%2C%20Costs%20of%20War.pdf>

Scholarship on war, militarism, and 9/11, such as:

- Andrew Bacevich, “The Great Reckoning: A Look Back from Mid-Century,” and “Tomgram: Andrew Bacevich, Future History”
- Hirschkind and Mahmood’s “Feminism, the Taliban, and the Politics of Counterinsurgency”
- Timothy Mitchell, “McJihad: Islam and the US Global Order”
- Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*

Activity Format

Divide class into small groups of four. Students will conduct research in small groups for approximately 15-20 minutes, then each group will give a 2-3 minute summary of their findings to the larger class.

Instructions for students: Spend several minutes reviewing the Costs of War website and especially summary of findings you reviewed in preparation for today:

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/summary>

Follow the links of some of these findings, depending on what is most striking to you within this summary. As you review the summary, discuss with your peers which of

these findings surprised you most. What sorts of thoughts and feelings did you experience while reading these findings?

Then, choose one paper, map, or set of findings you wish to present to the class. Delegate one member of the group to be your representative. Spend 5-10 minutes skimming the paper for its key findings. Also note that many papers have an executive summary. Write down, as a group, 3-5 key points you wish to present the class. These points may also include your own reactions to learning this material – what you found striking, disturbing, to provoke a particular political response, etc.

Give a 2-3 minute summary of your key points to the class.