

Virtual Conference of Wargamers 2022



Knuston Hall – the home of COW but not the location of VCOW!

4-6 February 2022

INTRODUCTION

Virtual COW 2020 (VCOW) was set up so that Wargame Developments could run its annual conference - the Conference of Wargamers or COW - during the current COVID-19 pandemic. VCOW 2021 followed on from its success and an annual VCOW is now firmly on WD's calendar. VCOW 2022 will consist of a programme of talks, lectures, online discussions, and games.

VCOW is brought to you by Wargame Developments and has been created by a management committee comprising Tim Gow, Bob Cordery, Matthew Hartley, John Armatys, John Bassett, David Burden, John Curry, Jerry Elsmore and Alex Kleanthous.

NOTES FOR SESSION PRESENTERS

If you need to use a Zoom account other than your own, or other help with IT for your session, please contact [REDACTED] Sooner rather than later please!

BOOKING FOR SESSIONS

Sessions fall into two categories – those with no limit on numbers and smaller, numbers-limited games sessions. On the timetable these are colour coded in green and yellow respectively.

For the first, Zoom links will be sent to attendees a few days before VCOW.

If you'd like to attend any of the smaller sessions, please send an email with the subject heading 'VCOW SESSIONS' to [REDACTED] **by 1200 noon UK time on Friday 28 January** with a list of the sessions you'd like to book for in order of preference. Any late, mislabelled or garbled emails may be disregarded.

Your booking will acknowledged by e-mail within 24 hours - if you haven't got an acknowledgement you should assume that you haven't booked.

For oversubscribed sessions, players will be selected randomly, though we'll make an effort to ensure that those who want to are able to attend at least one such session.

If you secure a place in a game session, the presenter will contact you by email in the week before VCOW. The presenter may expect a reply to their email – so remember to check your inbox!

If sessions are oversubscribed you may be offered a reserve place or the chance to 'sit in' as an observer. 'Spare' player places may be advertised on the Slack channel.

Some presenters of "numbers limited sessions" may be prepared to have spectators. This might be mentioned in the programme or advertised on Slack. If you particularly want to watch a "yellow" session you can ask to do so by following the instructions in the "Booking Sessions" section of the programme and specifying that you want to watch and not play.

THE BENCH OUTSIDE KNUSTON HALL

One of the great joys of COW for many is the chance to meet and chat with friends old and new, often while perched on the benches outside the main door at Knuston Hall. To this end we present a Jitsi chat session which will run throughout the weekend. Other chat sessions will be available on Zoom, as per the timetable.

VCOW2022 SLACK CHANNEL

This will run throughout the weekend at vcow2021.slack.com

Presenters of talks may put their slides on the Slack channel.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR ZOOM MEETINGS

All sessions will run on Zoom unless stated in the notes.

In the event of an emergency (like a Zoom channel falling over or a link failing) attendees should evacuate to the Bench Outside Knuston.

Only registered attendees will be allowed into the meeting. You MUST ensure that your full name (as used to sign up) is showing as your name in Zoom. People calling themselves e.g. timg or Wargamer01 will not be admitted. If you are unsure how to do this, look at the instructions at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193> [support.zoom.us]. Specifically, if you are signed into Zoom, check the name it has for you and amend if necessary before joining the meeting. If you are not signed in, put your name in.

When you have joined a session, please mute your microphone unless the presenter has asked for your input.

Please join sessions 5 minutes before the start time.

Attendees must not record or film sessions.

Some talk sessions may be recorded by the organisers with the agreement of the presenter. If a session is to be recorded a warning will be given both in the programme and at the start of the session.

Recordings will not be made available to the public.

SESSION TIMINGS

All times given relate to UK time. If you are resident in another time zone you may like to have a 'world clock' running to keep you straight, such as :

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

COW regulars will notice that the timetable has fewer session slots than usual. This is due both to several sessions being lectures which can accommodate all attendees and the need to have longer than usual meal breaks, on the assumption that attendees will be either cooking for themselves or spending time with the other members of their households.

Speaking of breaks, please remember that there is such a thing as too much screen time. So, take breaks, move about and stay hydrated! Told you there'd be lectures...

THE SESSION LIST:

The sessions are presented in the following format:

Presenter(s)

TITLE OF SESSION

running time

number of players

description

David Isby

ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED:

WARGAMING, SPI, AFGHANISTAN AND THE PENTAGON

1 hour

any number

Award-winning game designer for SPI, author and security consultant David Isby takes us from the heyday of SPI in the 1970s to the wars in Afghanistan, about which he has written several books and numerous articles - and been condemned by the former Soviet regime.

Russell King

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF MUNICH: DEGENERATE ART

EXHIBITION, JULY 1937

1 hour

any number

A panel of expert art assessors in Germany 1936 meet to make judgements to identify art for the proposed Degenerate Art exhibition and associated German Art Exhibition the following year. Panel members, one of whom will act as chairman, will play an essential part in the National Programme of German Purity. Historical briefings from the Fuhrer, the Gauleiter of Berlin and the Reich Minister of Propaganda. Decisions reached will involve the deployment and disposal of items and action to be taken, if necessary, involving the artists concerned. Exhibition items shown by the latest ND-Zoom/Powerpoint.

John Bassett

THE DOG-ROSE REVOLUTION

1.5-2 hours

6-12

A game about a possible near-future crisis in eastern Europe, focusing on the need to achieve your objectives with minimal or zero use of hard power, but quite a lot of information-psychological operations. A sequel of sorts to "Bitter Medicine" at COW 2021.

Russell King, Bob Cordery, Graham Evans and John Bassett

WARGAMING THE INTERWAR YEARS 1919 TO 1938

90 minutes

any number

From the bitter confrontation between the Bolsheviks and the Whites to the Spanish Civil War by way of the Greco-Turkish War, the Anglo-Irish War, Nicaragua, the Mukden incident, the Chaco War, Abyssinia and many more, the interwar years are decades torn apart by conflict. In this discussion and workshop we'll be looking at how the era has been wargamed, what makes a good interwar wargame and how we should take forward gaming this important period.

Vish Odedra

DUNE: HOUSES OF THE LANDSRAAD

90-120 minutes

5-15

A game of political intrigue and diplomacy. Currently it is designed with five to fifteen players in mind, each takes the task of joining each of the following actors and the game is played over a series of rounds.

House Corrino, House Atreides, House Harkonnen, Bene Gesserit, Bene Tleilax.

John Armatys

CLUEDO HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAM

1.5 hours

up to 8 players

A chance to play the virtual version of the silly game run at COW 2021. Terrorists have taken hostages in Tudor Mansion. The area has been secured by local security forces but, as they approached the house, Dr. Black was murdered by the terrorists. The Hostage Rescue Team has been deployed....

Graham Evans

THE MONSTROUS REGIMENT - CROSS DRESSING CAVALIERS AND TRANSVESTITE TROOPERS

1.5 hours

any number

A talk about the 18th century phenomenon of women dressing as men in order to join the army.

Michael D'Alessandro

HIROSHIMA – A VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD TOUR

1 hour

any number

We will start the tour in Chicago (first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction), move on to New Mexico (first nuclear explosion) and then journey to Tinian (world's largest airfield) discussing along the way why the atomic bomb was used, why Hiroshima was chosen as the target, the technological leap that was the B-29, and the crew of the Enola Gay. We will then arrive at Hiroshima and take a walk around the city, the Peace Dome and the Peace Museum. We will end with a discussion of the interesting aftermath for all involved.

Nick Riggs

TOPGUN

1 hour

any number

Is combat performance innate, or can it be improved through training and experience? Understanding combat performance in infantry is limited by the confusing and unclear nature of ground actions. By comparison, aerial combat can be highly visible and quantifiable. Studying how combat effectiveness evolves for fighter pilots can inform a model of infantry performance. **This session will be recorded by the presenter, the question and answer session at the end will not be included if the recording is made available to the public.**

David Burden

WARGAMING URBAN CONFLICT

1 hour

any number

A quick look at the SPI games list shows only 9 of their 340+ games as dealing primarily with urban warfare. Even a larger search across multiple games publishers has yielded only around 60 urban wargames. But all the indications are that urban warfare will become

increasingly important in the 21st century, and possibly the dominant form of land warfare. This presentation will provide some initial thoughts on what makes urban warfare different and how it has been approached in wargames. Discussion will be encouraged as to which wargames do a good (or particularly bad) job of representing urban warfare, and how it might be done better. David is currently applying to Bath Spa University to do a PhD in Wargaming under John Curry. The database that David is building (and WDers can hopefully add to) will be made publicly available and suggestions for new entries will be welcome.

Vish Odedra

TAMING THE SERPENT

1 hour

any number

Identifying, Understanding & Harnessing the Impact of Metagaming within Wargaming. When participating in a game, often the underlying metagame is obfuscated by rules, artwork and participation behaviour. This seminar will discuss the benefits gained from the identification, understanding and benefits of metagaming for attendees. Closes out with a short 10 minute game at the end.

John Armatys

ANCHORS AWEIGH

2 hours

any number

I am uncertain whether this is a game, a simulation, or a strange interactive lecture. The best description might be “experience”. The game’s (or whatever) objective is to examine officers’ careers during the early history of the US Navy. The participants’ objectives are to reach the highest rank they can and to record the progression of their officer(s) in a journal. Participants will need paper, two six sided dice, pen and ink and a ruler. There will be a brief break part way through the session to allow glasses to be refilled. It would be helpful if participants could read the briefing note which will be circulated in the week before VCOW.

Evan D'Alessandro

PRATAS PRECIPICE

2 hours

3 or more

The Time: Tomorrow, 2027

The Place: The South China Sea

The Force: HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group

... [T]his is Major Kao, A Battalion, 66th Taiwanese Marine Brigade broadcasting in the clear ... [static burst] ... heavy attack by Chinese armor and helicopters ... [short burst of static] ... northeast cut off, many casualties ... [static] ... Colonel Wu killed ... [further static] ... down the airstrip [unintelligible] stopped them ... [static] ... the situation is dire [unintelligible] ... this is Major Kao broadcasting in the clear ... [static brings the transmission to an end]

A near-future committee game where players will represent members of the United Kingdom's COBR committee. Players will invest in capabilities and then manage a crisis with what they bought.

Evan D'Alessandro

CUTTING CABLES

2 hours

2 or more

The 70-80-90-99 Rule: The sea covers 70% of the Earth's surface, 80% of the Earth's population lives near the sea, 90% of goods are transported by ships, and 99% of digital information is carried by undersea cables.

What happens when someone starts cutting them? What do you do to try to defend them?

What happens when both of these are attempted at the same time?

A strategic level committee game where players will represent government and commercial organizations responsible for the operation, protection, and disruption of undersea cables.

This game may inform elements of a paper I will be writing.

Jim Roche

1922 THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN WORLD?

1 hour

any number

Military history and songs from the past, with the Irish civil war and the foundation of the USSR. And the publication of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. And some earlier years ending in 22

Tim Gow et al

THE VCOW 2021 CLOSING EVENT

A mercifully brief closing session – come along, you may wear a silly hat if you wish!

ZOOM HOSTING TIPS Thanks to John Wilkie for providing this.

At start

Everyone turn mics off but, if possible videos on, use a waiting room to let people in so encourage everyone to use recognisable names

We also ask people to keep general chat free so the facilitator could send messages directly to the session lead (though these were private messages, we wanted to keep the session leads chat window mostly clear so they could see these messages)

In sessions

- Keep sessions short
- Have a separate facilitator and session lead with division of roles between them
- Mics off through sessions except for facilitator and session lead
 - Use “press to talk” to ask questions – pressing the space bar activates the microphone while space bar is pressed and turns off when space bar is released
 - (something different on macs)
 - Someone always forgets so having the facilitator turn people off is useful
 - Facilitator can also kick people out if rogues get in
- Consider leaving time at the end of the session for general unstructured chat in place of chat over coffee – breakout groups might be useful for this
- Do jazz hands at the end of presentations and end of sessions to let speakers know the appreciation. Without this it can be difficult to get a feel for how a presentation/session has gone

Facilitator:

Control microphones, allow participants in, control who can share screen, put hands down once they have asked their question (quite a lot forget so you don't know if they have a new question or have just forgotten), keep track of timing and give a heads up to the session lead that someone is coming close to running over, give a verbal two-minute warning to speakers over-running (never actually had to do this).

Keep the waiting room running during the whole session as people may come and go (whether by choice or after being cut off by network issues)

Twin screens for hosting helps a lot –have the presentation on one and all the admin (waiting room, participant list, chat window) on the other

Admin tools

Participants list is arranged alphabetically with yourself at the top then facilitator (i.e. Zoom host). Raising a hand lifts the person to just below the facilitator, then ranked by microphone use (so it's easy to identify rogue mics and turn them off)

Technology

Proper microphones are a must for anyone presenting – sound quality is the most critical component. If presenters are using webcam mics, they need to be close to them. We would encourage either headset mics or clip-on lavalier mics as even a cheap lavalier will be better than a webcam mic. (Lavalier mics easily available, e.g. search for “lavalier microphone on Amazon”. NB can either be USB or round jack depending on your computer set up.

Get everyone (presenters, facilitator and session leads at least) to check out their tech beforehand

VCOW and Data Protection

VCOW is held under the WD Data Protection Policy dated 7th November 2021.

Attendees are asked to note that:

- WD shares your data with all members of the WD Committee.
- Your name and contact details will be made available to the presenter of any session at VCOW where you ask to book a place in advance. Note that the presenter of a session you have booked a place at may circulate your contact details to other attendees of that session so that players in a game can do some pre-planning.
- WD will not give your contact details to anyone else unless required to do so by law.
- If you want to contact a fellow member or attendee and do not have their contact details you can ask for a message including your contact details to be forwarded to the person concerned.

VCOW 2022 Timetable

Friday		
1630-1730	Hiroshima – Virtual Battlefield Tour	
1900-1915	Welcome & Introduction	
1915-2015	Arrive Where We Started	
2030-2230	Cluedo Hostage Rescue Team	Pratas Precipice
2230+	Late night chat	
Saturday		
0800-0900	Breakfast chat	
0900-1000	Wargaming Urban Conflict	
1015-1115	TopGun	
1130-1300	Taming The Serpent	
1430-1600	Wargaming The Interwar Years 1919-1938	
1615-1815	Dune: Houses Of The Landsraad	The Dog-Rose Revolution
1945-2200	Anchors Aweigh	Cutting Cables
2200-2300	1922 – The Birth of the Modern World?	
2300+	Late night chat	
Sunday		
0800-0900	Breakfast chat	
0900-1030	The Monstrous Regiment	
1045-1215	Degenerate Art Exhibition	
1215-1230	Conference Closes	

Colour Coding:

Green sessions – unlimited numbers – just turn up

Yellow sessions – must be booked in advance