BIOD-609-DL1: Biodefense Strategy
Fall 2017
Online
3.0 Credits

Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University

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Office Hours: Virtual office hours via Blackboard Discussion Board, or by appointment for meeting in person or via Skype or phone

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to introduce students from various backgrounds to the best social science literature on issues related to biodefense. These books are too new to be considered classics but they represent the most important scholarly works in the field of biodefense. Our goal is to confront each of these works as an extended argument and then to determine their value to the field and to our understanding of biodefense issues today. Students who plan to write dissertations in biodefense or security studies will find this approach particularly useful.

Course Objectives:
1. Familiarity with the intellectual foundations of biodefense strategy as a subfield of security studies and an appreciation of how recent research builds on them
2. Knowledge of the key theories and concepts in the field of biodefense and the ability to identify their relevance to current policy debates
3. Ability to analyze and critique theories about the causes and consequences of natural and man-made biological threats and to apply those theories as frameworks for understanding historical and contemporary cases
4. Ability to write a literature review that captures thematic dimensions of the research in question and identifies gaps in the literature
Course Format and Process

This course is an online version of a traditional graduate seminar. That means you will not be listening or watching me lecture very much. Instead, the course structure encourages and requires you to spend a good deal of time assessing and responding critically to each reading and to one another’s arguments.

This course is also “asynchronous,” meaning that we will not be meeting (virtually or in person) at the same time. Instead, everyone can log in to Blackboard to listen to the lectures and make their posts to the Discussion Board when it is convenient for them (as long as they do so by the deadlines for each assignment).

The general weekly flow of the course will be as follows:

- You will typically read and/or watch a brief lecture by me.
- You will read the week’s assigned readings.
- You will post a Weekly Analysis Memo on the Discussion Board in response to that week’s question. The memos should be at least 500 words long and be based on that week’s lecture and assigned readings.
- All Weekly Analysis Memos will be due on midnight EST on Sundays, giving you a full week to read, digest, and respond.
- You will post twice each week to the Up for Debate Forum on the Discussion Board with your take on the implications of the readings for current events or debates. Your first post, due Thursdays at midnight EST of each week, will be an original comment on the topic and should be at least 500 words long. Your second post, due by midnight EST on Sunday, will be a response to someone else’s first post and should be at least 250 words long.
- A document detailing the guidelines and grading for the Weekly Analysis Memos and Up For Debate assignments is available in the Assignments section of Blackboard.
- Twice a semester, you will be responsible for posting a review of one of the assigned books (more on this below).

Interaction

We will be able to interact several different ways this semester. First, feel free to post questions to the Question and Answer section of the Discussion Board which will serve as my virtual office hours. Do not email me questions related to the readings or lectures; instead post them to the Question and Answer section so the entire class can benefit from our exchange. Second, for communications that you want to be confidential or are directly related to your literature review that would not be relevant to the rest of the class, please email me with your question. I can respond via email or we can set up a time to talk on the phone or via Skype (my username is gkoblentz). I will try to respond to all emails within 1 business day. Third, I will be available to meet in person at my office by appointment. Please email me to set up a time to meet in-person.
Class Participation

Graduate seminars traditionally require you to be prepared to discuss the readings and actively participate in discussion. Online courses are no different; we just measure participation a bit differently.

For full participation credit students should complete each Weekly Analysis Memo assignment by the deadline and contribute actively to the Up For Debate discussion each week. Participation will be evaluated in terms of timeliness, volume, and overall quality of contributions to class discussion. Posts made after the due date will only receive half credit.

Students are not expected to have an extensive background in biodefense. However, students are expected to share their thoughts and insights with the class. Those students with direct professional and related knowledge of these subjects are especially encouraged to participate actively in discussion.

The Weekly Analysis Memos will count for 25% of your grade and the Up For Debate: memos will count for 15% of your final grade.

Writing Assignments

There are four written assignments for this course: a literature review proposal, a literature review, and two book reviews. All writing assignments should be uploaded to Blackboard as a Word file. The deadline is by midnight EST the day the assignment is due. The file should be labeled as Your Last Name_Your First Name_Name of Assignment. Writing assignments should be double-spaced with 12-point font, 1-inch margins, numbered pages, use the Chicago Manual of Style for footnotes, and include your name and G#.

Book Reviews

Book reviews are a great way for graduate students to practice their analytical skills. The book reviews should run no more than 2,000 words and follow the general format of book reviews that one sees in professional journals. A guideline to writing book reviews and several links to good reviews are posted on Blackboard.

Each student will be assigned to one of five teams: Anthrax (A), Plague (B), Smallpox (C), Ebola (D), and Influenza (E). These team assignments will determine when you write your book review. These book reviews are not group efforts, but independent analytical activities. Your team assignment is for administrative purposes only. Each book review is worth 10% of your grade.

Literature Review Proposal

A literature review proposal is due on September 24. The proposal should be 2-4 pages long (1,000 words maximum) plus a 1/2 to 1-page bibliography. Your research proposal should identify a question or puzzle in the field of biodefense or global health security that is suitable for an independent research project or dissertation. Please see the “Aims and Scope” for the journal Biosecurity and Bioterrorism (now Health Security) on Blackboard for the broad parameters that your selected topic should fall into.

The research proposal should clearly identify the question or puzzle that your literature review will address. A good proposal will also consider why this question is important from both a scholarly and policy perspective (in other words, why you have chosen to study it). You should select a question or puzzle that allows you to research and write about issues that matter to you. In selecting your topic, you are advised to consult the course readings (even if we haven’t had
the relevant class yet) and the suggested readings (posted on Blackboard). When selecting a question to be addressed by your literature review, start with the questions most central to this course as well as the questions that led you to enroll in the course. You are required to make an appointment with Professor Koblentz (in person, over the phone or Skype, or via email) prior to submitting the proposal to discuss your proposed research topic. The literature review proposal is worth 10% of your grade.

**Literature Review**

The final assignment is a literature review that is due on **December 13**. The literature review should be 16-20 pages long (4,000-5,000 words). The purpose of the literature review is to critically analyze the existing literature that addresses the question in your research proposal. A literature review is not a compilation of book reviews. Instead it organizes the existing literature thematically or methodologically and explains where and why there are areas of agreement or disagreement regarding the topic. Ultimately, the literature review should identify a theoretical, empirical, or methodological gap in the existing literature. The literature review should conclude with a brief proposal for how you would conduct original research or analysis to fill that gap. The literature review should provide a useful foundation for a future research project or dissertation. Several resources for conducting research on biodefense and articles about writing literature reviews have been posted on Blackboard to assist you with this assignment. The literature review is worth 30% of your grade.

**Grading**

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Weekly Analysis Memo: 25%
- Up for Debate: 15%
- Literature Review Proposal: 10%
- Literature Review: 30%
- Book Reviews (x2): 10% each

The deadlines for all written assignments are strict and extensions will not be permitted in the absence of a genuine emergency or documented illness. A late assignment will be penalized a full letter grade (for example, from A to B) for every 24 hour period that it is late.

**Readings**

The following books are recommended for purchase from the Mason bookstore or online. E-books are also available for select books (however they have various restrictions on how and for how long you can access the books):


Aside from the books recommended for purchase, all course materials (unless indicated otherwise), will be available on GMU library’s E-Reserves which is accessed via Blackboard. Given the dynamic nature of this subject, additional readings may be assigned during the semester.

**A Note on Work Load**

The reading load for this course is heavy. I appreciate that many students work demanding jobs and that it may be difficult to complete all of the reading for each week. The goal for the weekly workload for the course is 8 to 10 hours, with about 75% of your time devoted to reading and 25% of your time devoted to writing. That means you should plan to be reading somewhere between 6 and 7.5 hours each week.

I certainly encourage students to read as much of each book as they can (especially PhD students who will be taking comprehensive exams). However, this is also a good chance for students to hone their “strategic reading skills.” Not every part of every book (even classics) is equally critical to read. Those of us who read for a living develop strategies for getting the most from each work in an efficient manner. Typically this means starting with the introduction and theory chapters, investigating the data and methods being used, getting a sense of key results from cases or analyses, and then looking for the takeaway conclusions and implications. If you are new to the field this will be more difficult. I give you permission, though, to practice. As long as you are able to provide high quality responses to the weekly questions and contribute to the preparation of your team’s book reviews, I won’t ask you how many pages of the book you read!
**Blackboard**
Access to [MyMason](http://mymason.gmu.edu) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](http://mymason.gmu.edu) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](http://mymason.gmu.edu) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each tool. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

To login in to the course:

2. Login using your NETID and password.
3. Click on the ‘Courses” tab.
4. Click on BIOD-609-DL1 (Fall 2017)

**Technical Help**

If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu

If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu
University Policies & Information

Academic Integrity
Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See http://oai.gmu.edu/].

Honor Code
Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/].

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

MasonLive/Email
Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See https://masonlivelogin.gmu.edu/login].

Patriot Pass
Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See https://password.gmu.edu].

Responsible Use of Computing
Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/university-policies/computing/].

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu].

University Libraries
University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See http://library.gmu.edu/distance].

Writing Center
The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment!
Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL).

**Counseling and Psychological Services**
The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu].

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy].

**Other Considerations**
If there are any issues related to religious holidays, please inform the instructor the first week of class. [See http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/]

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Lectures</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 1 (8/28-9/3) | Introduction | **Readings**  
**Lectures**  
Quick Start Videos (2) and Introduction | Post an introduction of yourself to the Introduction section of the Discussion Board by 8/30; please respond to at least one other person’s post by 9/1 |
| 2 (9/4-9/10) | History of Biological Weapons | **Readings**  
**Lectures**  
Week 2 Video Briefing | Week 2 Weekly Analysis Memo (Due 9/10)  
Week 2 Up For Debate (1st due 9/7; response due 9/10)  
Team Anthrax Book Review Due 9/10 |
| 3 (9/11-9/17) | Security Implications of Biological Weapons | **Readings**  
**Lecture**  
Week 3 Video Briefing | Week 3 Weekly Analysis Memo (Due 9/17)  
Week 3 Up For Debate (1st due 9/14; response due 9/17)  
Team Plague Book Review Due 9/17 |
| 4 (9/18-9/24) | Biodefense Strategy Roundtable | **Readings**  
Gregory D. Koblentz, “Biosecurity Reconsidered: Calibrating | Literature Review Proposal Due by midnight EST on Sunday, 9/24 |
| Week | Topic | Readings | Lectures | Extra Credit
|------|-------|----------|----------|------------------|
*Lecture*
  Week 4 Video Briefing |  
*Week 4 Weekly Analysis Memo (EXTRA CREDIT: Due 9/24)*
  *Week 4 Up For Debate (EXTRA CREDIT: 1st due 9/22; response due 9/24)*
  *NO Book Review Due*
*Lecture*
  Week 5 Video Briefing |  
*Week 5 Weekly Analysis Memo (Due 10/1)*
  *Week 5 Up For Debate (1st due 9/28; response due 10/1)*
  *Team Smallpox Book Review Due 10/1*
*Lecture*
  Week 7 Video Briefing |  
*Week 7 Weekly Analysis Memo (Due 10/15)*
  *Week 7 Up For Debate (1st due 10/12; response due 10/15)*
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<td>14 (11/27-12/3)</td>
<td>Barriers to Bioweapons</td>
<td>Week 12 Video Briefing</td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
<td>Sonia Ben Ouarghram-Gormley, <em>Barriers to Bioweapons: The</em></td>
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<td>12/13</td>
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