PUBP 505
Politics and Practice of International Security Policy
Spring 2020

Instructor: Professor Edward Rhodes

office: Founders Hall 551, Arlington Campus
email: edrhodes@gmu.edu
telephone: 703-993-8497

office hours: Thursdays, 6-7 pm
or by appointment

Course Description:

This class is a core course in the master’s program in international security. Drawing on historical cases, this course develops knowledge, strategies, and skills required to transform policy ideas and proposals into implemented policy on issues of international security.

Course Goals:

Effective participation in international security analysis and policymaking requires three inter-related but distinct sets of skills. Individuals must be able to evaluate alternative strategies and policies for their feasibility, probable consequences, anticipated costs and benefits, and effectiveness in achieving identified goals. They must be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate the ethical issues and trade-offs embedded in policy choices. And they must be able to understand and evaluate the political, institutional, and psychological context within which policymaking takes place and correctly gauge the challenges, strategies, and options involved in getting effective, ethical policies adopted and implemented.

This course focuses primarily on the last of these three skill sets.

While the class will necessarily at times examine the comparative effectiveness of alternative international security policies, and will at times consider how best to weigh the goals, means, and probable outcomes of these alternative policies in an ethical balance, the principal thrust of this course is to examine – and learn from -- the experience of real-life decision-makers as they have sought to transform ideas and preferences into policy outcome.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should have acquired:

- Improved practical understanding of the domestic and international political processes associated with developing, adopting, and implementing policies associated with issues of international security.
• Improved critical reasoning skills regarding the motivations, strategies, and behaviors of participants in domestic and international decision-making processes.
• Improved knowledge of the historical context within which today’s policies are being pursued and increased sensitivity to the need to understand issues and options within a historical context.
• Improved ability to communicate analyses and recommendations in written and verbal form.
• Improved ability to work collaboratively.

Course Materials:

The course is built around analysis and discussion of case materials. Case materials will be available via direct online purchase and download from copyright owners.

Among the cases we may use are the following:

Harvard Kennedy School cases can be purchased at https://case.hks.harvard.edu/content/cases.

• HKS Case 271: “Americanizing the Vietnam War”
• HKS Case 279: “Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs”
• HKS Case 280: “CIA to 1961”
• HKS Case 298: “Korea and the Thirties (A)”
• HKS Case 299: “Korea and the Thirties (B)”
• HKS Case 494: “Verdun and Versailles”
• HKS Case 661: “Falklands/Malvinas (A): Breakdown of Negotiations”
• HKS Case 662: “Falklands/Malvinas (B): The Haig Mediation Effort”
• HKS Case 802: “Trident: Setting the Requirements”
• HKS Case 1356: “Getting to Dayton: Negotiating an End to the War in Bosnia”

Institute for the Study of Diplomacy (“Pew”) cases can be purchased at https://casestudies.isd.georgetown.edu/collections/frontpage?page=2.

• ISD Case 188: “The 1940 Destroyer Deal with Great Britain”
• ISD Case 244: “Watershed in Rwanda: The Evolution of President Clinton’s Humanitarian Policy”
• ISD Case 290: “Inside the Water's Edge: The Senate Votes on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty”
• ISD Case 331: “State Narratives in Complex Media Environments: The Case of the Ukraine”
• ISD Case 344: “From Civil War to Civil War: The Struggle for Peace in Sudan and South Sudan”

Requirements and Grading:

Class members are required to complete all assigned readings prior to class meetings; come to class prepared to participate fully, actively, and thoughtfully in class discussions and exercises; contribute constructively and effectively to these discussions and exercises; and complete all required writing assignments prior to the beginning of class meetings. Writing assignments will be framed as brief policy memos based on case materials.

Grading for the seminar will break down as follows:

Participation in class discussions: 50%
Policy memos: 30%
Group projects: 20%

Course grading is NOT on a curve. Class members are not competing with each other for marks. Although individual writing assignments are to be done independently and without assistance from other class members, course members are encouraged to work collaboratively in preparing for class, in classroom activities, and in reviewing materials and ideas developed in class.

As indicated above, this course is built around classroom discussion. Individuals who anticipate being absent for more than two class sessions are encouraged to discuss their situation with the instructor prior to the drop date for the course.

It is understood that class members may encounter specific professional or personal demands that may prevent attendance at specific meetings of the class. In such circumstances, class members are expected to behave in a professional manner: in as timely a manner as possible, they should inform the instructor, by email, that they will be unable to attend, and to provide appropriate explanation of the reason for their absence. In the absence of this sort of timely notification or of an appropriate reason for the absence, the professor may, at his discretion, regard the absence as unexcused.

Assignments and Due Dates:

Topics for written assignment will be posted on the Course Blackboard Site. All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. All written assignments are to be submitted in two formats: (1) online through the Course Blackboard Site, where, consistent with Schar School policy, they will be reviewed for possible plagiarism and recorded to protect against possible future plagiarism; and (2) in paper in class. Each student will be responsible for two individual policy memos and for full participation in the preparation of two group projects.

Assignment to groups for the group projects will be posted on the Course Blackboard Site.

To facilitate weekly discussions, course participants will be divided into four “cohorts.” Each “cohort” will have different dates on which assignments are due. Assignments to “cohort” will be posted on the Course Blackboard Site.

NB: Class members should carefully review their professional and personal calendars at the start of the semester. If conflicts are anticipated that would interfere with completion of any
scheduled assignment, students should convey this to the instructor as early as possible. Similarly, course members should let the instructor know of professional and personal commitments that arise during the course of the semester if these will interfere with the completion of an assignment. If informed in a timely manner, the instructor is willing to make adjustments to the scheduling of assignments.

**Academic Accommodation for a Disability:**

The following is Schar School policy with regard to accommodation for a disability:

“If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.”

**Schar School Policy on Plagiarism and Other Academic Dishonesty:**

The following is Schar School policy with regard to plagiarism:

“Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.”

**Use of Cell Phones, Computers, and Other Electronic Devices in Class:**

Class members are expected to focus entirely on class activities and to refrain from other personal or professional activities during class periods. Class members engaged in other personal or professional activities during class time will be asked to leave the classroom until they are finished with such activities and to return only when they are prepared to participate in the class.

Use of cell phones in class is not permitted. Class members who for professional or other reasons need to carry a cell phone with them must turn these devices off or set them to “vibrate.” Students whose phones ring during class will be asked to leave the classroom and to return only when their conversation is finished and they are prepared to participate in the class.

Class members with disabilities that necessitate the use of computers or other electronic devices should inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS). All accommodations must be arranged through ODS.