Syllabus
Spring 2021 – subject to revision (updated 11/11/20)

POGO 750-004: Information, Intelligence and Smart Power
Ellen Laipson
Spring 2021   Monday 4:30 PM   Van Metre Room 111

This course will examine the changing role of intelligence in an information-rich age, and how information and knowledge from diverse sources support US government policies. It will deepen students’ understanding of different information cultures, within and outside government, and explore the new debates about the quality and reliability of information that informs citizens and contributes to government decision-making. It will look at the US government as a producer and consumer of information, as related to national security and “smart” power.

The course will be organized around three broad clusters of topics:

1. What are the sources of information, intelligence and knowledge in today’s world? How do different information subcultures work? Do they have distinct ways of gathering and interpreting data? How do consumers know how to assess the value, quality and reliability of information in the public domain? How do the media, academy, think tanks and private sector contribute to new knowledge in our society? How do our society and our government cope with the assaults on objective knowledge and the challenge of fake news? Who or what institutions should be the official “fact checkers” for citizens and consumers?

2. How have information needs changed as the international security agenda has evolved since the end of the Cold War? How does government access the information it needs? Is intelligence the dominant source of information for national security policymaking? How do policymakers distinguish between intelligence and non-government information sources? Do those different parts of the knowledge industry compete for access and influence?

3. The US government as producer and consumer: navigating the role of information and intelligence in support of smart power. New ways information and intelligence are used to promote American interests, values and strategies. In an era of major geopolitical shifts, is the US still a uniquely capable and willing transmitter of knowledge? Does that serve as an important component of American hard, soft and smart power?

Readings will include:

*The Death of Expertise: The campaign against established knowledge and why it matters*, by Tom Nichols. Oxford University Press, 2017
How to Combat Fake News and Disinformation, by Darrell M. West

https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/

Truth Decay, by Jennifer Kavanaugh and Michael Rich
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2314.html


https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-INTELLIGENCE/content-detail.html

https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-WMD/content-detail.html

Intelligence: A Key Partner to Diplomacy, by Ellen Laipson. Georgetown University Institute for the Study of Diplomacy Case Study #337, 2017.


The course will require two quizzes, one paper and an open book final exam. Grades will be based on:
Class participation 25%
Paper 25%
Quizzes 30% (15% each)
Final Exam 20%
**Sessions One through Four** will focus on:

- Understanding the hierarchy of knowledge
- Exploring the information revolution and its consequences
- Examining our own information styles and susceptibility to misinformation
- Comparing information systems in different institutions
- Addressing the crisis in information credibility, fake news and disinformation
- Identifying new Fact-Checkers in our society and institutions

Readings: Nichols book and assigned on-line readings

**Session One  1/25/21**
Please read the Brookings report (link provided above) and Chapter One of the Nichols book (Experts and Citizens)

**Session Two  2/01/21**

Chapter Six of the Nichols book (When the Experts are Wrong)
Chapters Two and Three RAND study Truth Decay

In-class practicum: Misinformation, Disinformation and Elections
Readings and Podcasts to be posted on Blackboard

**Session Three  2/8/21**

Chapter Four, Nichols (Let me Google that for you)
Chapter Four of Truth Decay – (The drivers: What is Causing Truth Decay?)

A second in-class practicum on vaccines/ autism and other health disputes
Readings, Videos to be posted on Blackboard

**Sessions Four  2/15/21**

Chapter Five RAND study  The Consequences of Truth Decay
Conclusions of Nichols Book – Experts and Democracy

Practicum on Bomb Damage Assessment from the first Gulf War (1991)
Video of General Schwartzkopf testimony
DOD and Congressional reports to be posted on Blackboard

**Session Five  2/22/21 This week is online only - no in person class**
First Quiz to be posted by students on Blackboard by 11:59 pm on 2/22
Quiz will be five questions on the readings, and a short essay on your own reflections on being an information consumer
Sessions Six  3/1/21

Topic: Overview of Intelligence and its role in Security

Description of intelligence and US Intelligence Community
https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are


Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security, by Richard Betts  Read Chapters One and Seven

Stimson Study on Intelligence Needs of DHS

Session Seven  3/8/21

Topic: Intelligence Failures and Intelligence Reforms

Betts, Chapters 5, 6 and 8

https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-INTELLIGENCE/content-detail.html

https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-WMD/content-detail.html

Session Eight  3/15/21

Topic: Intelligence Roles in War and Peace

Possible Guest Speaker, Jim Danoy, Adjunct professor at Schar School

Pick one of the battles to discuss in class:
https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol50no2/html_files/Intelligence_War_2.htm

Intelligence in War: It Can Be Decisive — Central ...
www.cia.gov
This INR study is quite a big document but pls familiarize yourselves with the main points and read at least two of the sections.

https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB121/index.htm

Intelligence and Vietnam: The Top Secret 1969 State

... nsarchive2.gwu.edu

Paul Pillar, Intelligence, Policy and the War in Iraq, Foreign Policy, 2006

Intelligence: A Key Partner to Diplomacy, by Ellen Laipson. Georgetown University Institute for the Study of Diplomacy Case Study #337, 2017.

Session Nine  3/22/21  Paper Due – no in person class

Paper on Intelligence Due 11:59 PM 3/22

Paper Topic: institutional intelligence issue of your choice – such as intelligence reforms, intelligence support to policy makers, Congress’ role in intelligence, intelligence failures or successes, evolving role of intelligence in the information age, intelligence challenges regarding fake news and disinformation

Session 10:  3/29/21

Discussion of papers
In class quiz on readings on intelligence readings

Sessions 11-13

Broad themes: how the federal government uses information and intelligence to promote US interests, specific policies. Information/intelligence as a tool of public diplomacy, soft power

Session 11  4/5/21

Hope to have 2 guests joining us for part of the class from CRS (Congressional Research Service) and one other federal agency that creates knowledge – perhaps the NOAA-led climate assessments. We'll ask them about the core mission of their institutions, their research methods, review and sharing protocols, as well as the content of their own portfolios.
Pls spend a few minutes on their websites
https://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/about/
https://nca2018.globalchange.gov
Read Betts’ Chapter 8 - Enemies at Bay...we’ll wrap up our discussion of his book.

Session 12  4/12/21

Pls read at least 2 of the links on the syllabus to reports of CRS, GAO, NOAA or the Stimson study on DHS, or find other studies from their websites. Discussion will compare the purpose, quality and content of these research institutions, as compared to intelligence. Will assign presentations on diverse research entities in the federal government.

Discussion of CRS, GAO, DHS as information sources:

Congress and intelligence

Stimson study on intelligence needs of DHS

Climate Change reports
https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/
https://nca2018.globalchange.gov

GAO studies on cyber
https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-533T

Session 13  4/19/21

Final discussion on smart power and intelligence outreach...Read Joseph Nye from the Oxford Handbooks (or a longer Nye piece - his books on power are very readable and not too long)

Read at least 2 of the NIC Global Trends reports - particularly notes on methodologies and the executive summaries.


The Global Trends series from the National Intelligence Council

Readings to be assigned on intelligence sharing as a formal function of the intelligence community.
Joseph Nye from the Oxford Handbook

Session 14  4/26/21

Wrap-up and review session for the final

FINAL EXAM  5/3/21