Politics and Practice of International Security Policy
PUBP 505
George Mason University
Schar School of Policy and Government
Spring 2021

GENERAL INFORMATION

Listing: PUBP 505
Time/Location: Thursdays, 7:20 – 10:00 pm
Instructor: Dr. Jason Dechant
Phone: 703-861-4493 (mobile)
Email: jasondechant@gmail.com
Office Hours: Virtually, by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is a core course in the master’s program in international security. Drawing on current and historical cases, the course provides greater understanding of how international security policies are conceptualized and progress through the policy process. The course is organized around (1) understanding basic theories in international security, (2) examining the actors and processes in policy development and execution, and (3) applying this in the exploration of three case studies in international security.

COURSE GOALS

Effective participation in international security analysis and policy making requires a range of skills and knowledge. Individuals should have a sense of the theories that underlie the positions held by policy makers and stakeholders from across the community. They must understand how decisions are made, and what are the constraints on decision makers, from domestic and international sources. This requires an appreciation of the organizations, processes, and actors involved. The course complements other core courses in the international security program by focusing on domestic institutions and their bureaucratic behavior, and the political factors that shape or limit presidents as they are faced with key decisions about international security and US engagements overseas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students should have acquired:

- Fundamental knowledge about the institutions and processes that comprise the US national security system
- 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 critical reasoning skills regarding the decision making process and the motivations and behavior of participants in domestic and international security forums
● Expanded skills in communicating in written and oral formats about major international security issues
● Enhanced ability to work collaboratively

COURSE FORMAT
This course is offered in a synchronous, online manner. That is, it has a regular meeting time where attendance is expected. There is no asynchronous component planned at this time. The synchronous instruction will be a combination of lecture, student presentations, engaging discussion, and periodic group exercises.

ONLINE PRACTICE AND POLICY
The online forum that will be used is Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. There is a link to Collaborate Ultra on the menu on the left of the Blackboard page for the course. Please logon 10-15 minutes prior to the first class period to ensure you know how to access the room. It is expected that students engage with their webcams on, unless there are extenuating circumstances that make this impractical. All sessions will be recorded but information will not be available outside of the course Blackboard page. In addition, it is recommended (but not required) that students access Blackboard via a laptop or desktop computer and not a mobile device/tablet, if possible.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS
Class members are responsible for obtaining and reading all of the assigned course materials. In addition to the full-length books below, the course will draw on case studies available online and for purchase from the Harvard Kennedy School and the Georgetown Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, supplemented by think tank essays and monographs and other online materials. These additional sources and readings are listed in the Additional Readings section of this syllabus. Those readings are available online or are posted on Blackboard (under “Course Content”). We will read each of the following required books:

● Stephanie Lawson, Theories of International Relations: Contending Approaches to World Politics, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2015).

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT
Both individual work and active participation through discussion are important skills to be developed and you will be evaluated on each throughout the course. They will allow you to demonstrate your knowledge of theories, strengthen your research skills, and refine your presentation and writing proficiency. Group activities, presentations, and papers are treated as pedagogical exercises to showcase your learning throughout the course. Grades will be assigned and apportioned as follows:

- Seminar Discussant 25%
- Class Participation 25%
- Policy Memos 20% (2 memos, 10% each)
- Policy Paper 30%

Late assignments will be penalized one grade level (for instance, from A+ to A) for each calendar day or part thereof. The discussant assignments will not be accepted late; students missing one of these assignments will receive an F for it. If you anticipate difficulty completing these assignments, please try to trade your date with another student or contact the instructor.

**Seminar Discussant**
At the first class meeting, students will be assigned a class period from January 28 through the end of the semester to lead a discussion for ~30-45 minutes of the period. The discussion will be based upon a question provided at least a week in advance. Discussants are encouraged to go beyond the basic question and address any related topics from the reading or current events. The discussion should begin with an opening statement ~10-15 minutes long which should, at a minimum, answer the discussion question. A good statement will not summarize all of the week’s readings, but address those topics relevant to answering the question and providing a thoughtful response. Speaker’s notes should be typed and handed in the evening of the discussion. The notes will aid in the evaluation of the discussant and be evaluated on substance, not style or format.

**Class Participation**
Class participation is expected throughout the semester. Even when students are not assigned discussant responsibilities, they are expected to actively participate during the seminar. Grades in this category will be assigned based upon degree of class participation. For example, as a general guide: a frequent (multiple times a class) participant will get 90-100, a regular participant (weekly) will get 80-90, a sporadic participant 70-80, and so on. A student who misses three or more classes will receive a zero for the class participation portion of the grade. It is also expected that you notify the instructor if you anticipate missing class, or if an emergency arises.

There will be periodic in-class exercises that will comprise a portion of the class participation grade. These exercises are detailed in the “Additional Readings and Class Background” section below. Some exercises may be ad hoc (unscheduled), similar to a “pop quiz” to test your command of the material.
Policy Memo
Also at the first class meeting, students will sign-up for dates to submit short policy memos. The memo is due at the beginning of class and should generally address the topic of the class period (and assigned readings) as it pertains to a current event. The memo should specify the audience or recipient, the position the author is writing from (constituent, staffer, special interest group, etc), address a problem/challenge, and offer some solutions. It is intended to provide an introduction to a policy issue and is not to be in-depth policy analysis. The memo will be evaluated based upon the critical thinking, effective analysis, clarity of presentation, and the appropriateness of the audience/author (and whether they reflect a reasonable change agent in the policy process). The maximum length of the memos is 1250 words (roughly 3 double-spaced pages). There is no specified format although many examples/templates are available on the internet and students are encouraged to create a discussion thread to share examples with classmates.

Policy Paper
In the policy paper, students will, subject to instructor approval, choose an international security policy matter of interest to them. The policy should be from the past 10 years (or present) and cannot have reached resolution or conclusion. They will provide background, highlight key issues, and identify the central problem(s). The paper should describe the U.S. role (both objectively and normatively, drawing upon theories from class or outside readings) and list the stakeholders, detailing their roles in the policy process and their positions. The paper should include policy options for the U.S., choosing one among them and outlining the roles of U.S. actors in pursuit of the policy and its implementation. There is no page length minimum, but papers should not exceed 15 pages. Bibliographies and required 1-page executive summary do not count against the page limit. Paper topics are due February 11. Final papers are due April 29 (the last class). Each student is also responsible for introducing and briefly discussing their topic (for ~5 minutes) at a selected session. No formal presentation is required.
**SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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| 1     | Jan 28 | Theoretical Concepts of International Security I: Rationalism, Realism, and the Balance of Power | ● Lawson, Chs. 2-3  
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 2     | Feb 4  | Theoretical Concepts of International Security II: Liberalism and International Institutions | ● Lawson, Chs. 3-4  
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 4     | Feb 18 | Congress and the Judiciary: Roles in National Security               | ● George and Rishikof, Chs. 13-14  
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 5     | Feb 25 | Interagency Actors in International Security Policy                  | ● George and Rishikof, Chs. 4-12 (focusing on assigned chapters)                             |
| 6     | Mar 4  | Case Study 1: Cuba                                                  | ● Allison and Zelikow, Chs. 1-2  
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 7     | Mar 11 | Case Study 1: Cuba (cont.)                                          | ● Allison and Zelikow, Chs. 3-6  
       |       |                                                                      | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 8     | Mar 18 | Case Study 2: Bosnia                                                | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 9     | Mar 25 | Case Study 2: Bosnia (cont.)                                        | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 10    | Apr 1  | Case Study 3: Saudi Arabia                                          | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 11    | Apr 8  | Case Study 3: Saudi Arabia (cont.)                                  | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 12    | Apr 15 | Waging War in Iraq: A Comparative Perspective                       | ● Additional Readings (BB)                                                                   |
| 13    | Apr 22 | Policy Through Theoretical Lenses                                   | ● George and Rishikof, Chs. 15-17                                                           |
| 14    | Apr 29 | External Actors in International Security Policy                    | ● George and Rishikof, Chs. 15-17                                                           |
ADDITIONAL READINGS AND CLASS BACKGROUND

Week 1: Theoretical Concepts of Int’l Security: Rationalism, Realism, and the Balance of Power


Week 2: Theoretical Concepts of Int’l Security II: Liberalism and International Institutions


Week 3: Overview of the National Security Council (NSC)

- The National Security Act of 1947
- Recent Reform Proposals (Read at least one)
  - *A New NSC for a New Administration*, Brookings Institute, I.M. Destler and Ivo H. Daalder
    [https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-new-nsc-for-a-new-administration/](https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-new-nsc-for-a-new-administration/)

Week 4: Congress and the Judiciary: Roles in National Security


Week 5: Interagency Actors in International Security Policy

In class exercise/role playing to be detailed in final syllabus.
Week 6: Case Study 1--Cuba

This is the first of three case studies in international security policy. It focuses on Cuba from the revolution to the present, focusing primarily on the Kennedy Administration and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

  Available at: https://casestudies.isd.georgetown.edu/collections/latin-american-studies/products/the-united-states-and-the-cuban-revolution-1958-1960

  Available at: https://case.hks.harvard.edu/kennedy-and-the-bay-of-pigs/

Topic 7: Case Study 1--Cuba (cont.)

This is a continuation of the case study and will involve a deeper examination of the Missile Crisis and studies about the crisis that illuminate the decision-making and bureaucratic behavior.

Potential in-class role playing to elucidate different views of US national security players.

Topic 8: Case Study 2--Bosnia

This is the second of three case studies in international security policy. It focuses on Bosnia—the emergence of conflict and the U.S. and international response.

  Available at: https://casestudies.isd.georgetown.edu/products/anthony-lake-and-the-war-in-bosnia?_pos=1&_sid=24c932085&ss=r

- “Case Study: Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Laura Wise, University of Edinburgh, undated.
  Available at: https://www.politicalsettlements.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/201704_BP17_Wise_BRIJ5361_Case_Study_Bosnia-Herzegovina.pdf


- Additional Resources (highly recommended, multimedia clips)
○ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Eyewitness Testimony: Bosnia and Herzegovina
  
  Available at:  
  https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/bosnia-herzegovina/eyewitness-testimony

○ Case Study Bosnia (good graphics)
  
  Available at:  
  https://ethniccleansing101.weebly.com/case-study-bosnia.html

**Topic 9: Case Study 2: Bosnia (cont.)**


  
  Available at: https://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/bjarnason.pdf

- David Harland, Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Bosnia and Herzegovina Case Study, Stabilisation Unit, February 2018.
  

- Additional Resources: Feature Length Movies (recommended, not requires)
  
  ○ Welcome to Sarajevo (1997). Woody Harrelson and others portray war correspondence during the conflict. [Available on Amazon Prime for rent, perhaps at local library]

  ○ Sarajevo Roses

**Topic 10: Case Study 3: Saudi Arabia**

This is the third of three cases studies--Saudi Arabia. It will examine security issues not defined by a single event, but a complex relationship unfolding over many decades. Approach and additional readings to be provided in the final syllabus.

**Topic 11: Case Study 3: Saudi Arabia (cont.)**

Approach and additional readings to be provided in the final syllabus.

**Topic 12: Waging War in Iraq: A Comparative Perspective**

Available at: https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd45.pdf

  Available at: https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd54.pdf


- Frontline: The Iraq War Decision
  Available at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/choice2004/bush/war.html

*Topic 13: Policy Through Theoretical Lens*

No additional readings. In class presentations/exercise to be described in final syllabus.

*Topic 14: External Actors in International Security Policy*

- No additional readings
GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Papers
Writing research and policy papers is a fundamental part of graduate study. The quality of a paper is determined by a number of factors, including presentation of facts, development of argumentation, clarity of analysis, acknowledgment of sources, and accuracy of format and style. A good guideline for elements and format of a research paper and bibliography, including online sources, is *A Pocket Style Manual*, Seventh Edition (2015), by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. Note that your written assignments in this class will be used to evaluate whether you might need to take a writing class as part of your course of study.

Grading
All written and oral assignments will be judged using the GMU system for grading graduate courses as laid out in the university catalog. Grades earned for each assignment will be added numerically, and the weighted average will be used to determine the final grade, which allows for the grades of A+ (98-100), A (92-97), A- (90-91), B+ (88-89), B (82-87), B- (80-81), as well as C (70-79), D (60-69) F (59 and below), and IN. Assignments that are submitted late will lead to a grade reduction, up to being marked as missed entirely. Unacceptably frequent periods of absence (missing more than three classes) will result in grade reduction as well. No extra credit will be given.

A grade of A or A- reflects exceptional performance across course assignments and requirements. A grade of B+ indicates command of the course material and very good performance on all aspects of the course. A grade of B denotes good performance in meeting requirements of the course. A grade of B- is given for marginal work that does not fully meet graduate level requirements. The grade of C indicates work that consistently fails to meet graduate level standards. A grade of F is assigned upon failure to perform adequately in the course (assignments, discussions, etc.).

Electronic Communication and Blackboard
The GMU email accounts are the primary and authoritative means of electronic communication; announcements regarding classes will be sent to those accounts only. Students are free to use other accounts, but are solely responsible for any failed communication, missed deadline, etc. Blackboard will also be used to post announcements, presentations, and other items, so be sure to check regularly.

Use of Cell Phones, Computers, and Other Electronic Devices in Class (During In-Person Class)
Students are expected to focus entirely on seminar discussion during class. They are expected to refrain from carrying on other professional or personal activities while the class is meeting. This means on both phones and computers. Devices should be turned to vibrate and only used in case of emergency (personal or professional). Computers are permitted only for use pertaining to the course and may be prohibited at the discretion of the instructor.
Strengthening an Inclusive Community
As a member of the George Mason University community, I will work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. I affirm that in this class, faculty and students will work together to interrupt cycles of racism against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just learning environment for all participants, regardless of racial background.

Special Needs
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at http://ods.gmu.edu/. All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS before classes start.

Policy on Plagiarism
The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

The faculty of the School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The School’s policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.