Grand Strategy (Draft Syllabus)

PUBP 504-DL2

Spring 2021

**Room:** Online (Synchronous discussion session via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra; more info to be sent via email)

**Professor:** Ketian (Vivian) Zhang

**Time:** Monday 4:30-7:10pm

**Office:** Given Covid, I will hold online office hours/chat via phone, skype, zoom, etc.

**Office hours:** Appointment preferred (we can have office hours via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, Zoom, Skype, or phone)

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**Course description**

What is grand strategy? What is the difference between grand strategy and military strategy? What were the grand strategies that states have adopted in the past? What are the international relations theories behind the format of grand strategies? What is current U.S. grand strategy? Are there debates about what is a good or bad grand strategy? How should we evaluate grand strategies?

In this course, we examine one of the most important aspects of the field of security studies, grand strategy. Grand strategy, the use of certain means to achieve desired ends, is far from a fixed concept. Theoretically, scholars debate what grand strategy entails. Empirically, states adopt different kinds of grand strategies. One cannot understand, analyze, and debate about particular policies in national security without examining the big picture: grand strategy.

As such, in this course, we explore the theoretical and empirical aspects of grand strategy, by examining the concept, the sources of grand strategy and the international relations theories behind grand strategy formation, as well as the grand strategies adopted by various states in different periods, including U.S. grand strategies and the grand strategies of contemporary China, Japan, Russia, and India. This course aims at putting grand strategy in a comparative perspective, as opposed to looking at U.S. grand strategy only.

**Course objectives and learning outcomes**

This course meshes theoretical discussions of grand strategy with empirical analyses of the sources and consequences of grand strategy. Students are expected to gain deeper understanding of the concept of grand strategy, the theories behind grand strategy formation, and the grand strategies of different states. Furthermore, students should be able to apply analytical tools to explain the origins of certain grand strategies and to evaluate particular grand strategies. Students will be able to apply
the course information and skills to real world situations such as policy evaluation. Finally, students are expected to improve their analytical and communicative skills through research papers and oral presentations.

**Course requirements**

- **Active and timely participation in seminar discussion (30%)**
  - Given the online setting (and sometimes the technical difficulty that could come up regarding your audio setting), participation through both audio and the chat function in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra count as participation.

- **Seminar presentation (10%)**
  - Each student will make an oral presentation on selections from at least one week's required readings. The purpose of the presentation will be to critique, and not to simply summarize a major reading for that week. Students presenting should prepare a one-page handout for each member of class, to complement the presentation. We will coordinate this on the first day of class.

- **Review essay (10%)**
  - Write one short essay, of approximately 5 pages, double-spaced, on one of the week's required readings. A hard copy of this essay is due in class the day of the assigned reading.
  - This is not a summary of the readings, but your reactions toward them. E.g.:
    - What do you agree on? What is the strength/valuable part?
    - What do you disagree, and why?
    - What has been left out? What should we be looking further into?

- **Research paper (50%)**
  - Write an analytical research paper of 15-20 pages, double-spaced. The paper is due on the last day of class, via email (word documents preferred but pdf is also fine); of course, if you'd like to submit the paper earlier, that is fine, too.
  - Students are strongly encouraged to discuss with the instructor in advance about the topic of the research paper. I’d be more than happy to read and comment on an outline of your paper (two pages max) but will not accept drafts of the paper.
  - The paper can be aimed at explaining the origins of the grand strategy of a particular state, using theories of international relations. For example, what explains the grand strategy of the United States during the first 10 years of the Cold War? Please use primary sources to support your argument. Please feel free to come to chat with me about the sources.
  - Or the paper can evaluate current or past grand strategies. If you choose the grand strategy evaluation paper, in offering your evaluation, please consider (a) the validity or falsehood of the factual and theoretical assumptions that produced the strategy; and/or (b) the results the policy produced: were they those that policymakers sought to produce? Were they good or bad? If you argue that a policy was mistaken, identify the alternative policy that you prefer. You are also invited to identify prescriptions for current grand strategy that follow from your analysis, if any do. Use deductive logic and historical evidence to support your argument.

- **Note**: all assignments will be submitted via email.
- **Absence policy**
Things happen and it is understandable that you might have to miss class once or twice, for example, because of work. Unless it is documented medical emergency or family emergency, please email me a 5-page make-up review essay for the week in which you will be missing/have missed the class.

Course textbooks

The following books are available for purchase at the GMU bookstore (it is often times cheaper to purchase them online via, for example, Amazon). Other articles and book chapters as appeared in the syllabus will be uploaded in the "content" folder on Blackboard:


Special accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Academic integrity policy

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason's honor code. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.
Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1: What is Grand Strategy?

- Recommended (i.e., not required):

Week 2: The Making of Grand Strategy and the IR theories Behind
- Barry Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, Chapter 1, pp. 13-33; Chapter 2, pp. 34-41, 59-80.
  - Ch 2 presents both system and unit (organizational) explanations for military doctrine. Ch 1 is recommended for an overview of the military dimension of grand strategy. Ch 2 presents hypotheses on its variation.
  - This introduces one strand of realism, the strand that combines structural factors and domestic politics
  - An individual level explanation of foreign policy determinants
  - Introduces important concepts such as the spiral model, the deterrence model, and the security dilemma
  - Nuclear postures and nuclear weapons as a factor in international relations

- Recommended:
  - Jack Snyder, Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition (Cornell, 1993), chapter 2.
Week 3: Grand Strategy and Thucydides
  - Book 1, paras. 1-23 (Introduction), 66-88 (The Debate at Sparta and the Declaration of War), 118-146 (The Allied Congress at Sparta, The Stories of Pausanias and Themistocles)
  - Book 2, paras. 1-65 (The Outbreak of War, The First Year of War, Pericles’ Funeral Oration, The Plague, The Policy of Pericles)
  - Book 3, paras. 1-50 (Revolt of Mytilene, The Mytilenian Debate), 69-85 (Civil War in Corcyra)

Week 4: The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire

Week 5: Strategy in the Renaissance

Week 6: Grand Strategy and Clausewitz

- Recommended:

Week 7: Early American strategies

- Recommended: the Wilson and FDR periods

Week 8: the Cold War and the Grand Strategy of Containment


Week 9: The End of the Cold War and the “Global War on Terrorism”
• Anthony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement,” September 21, 1993 [Excerpted in Alvin Z. Rubenstein, ed., The Clinton Foreign Policy Reader, pp. 20–27]

• Recommended:

Week 10: China
• China in the Cold War:
    • Chen is a wonderful historian of China at Cornell. Read the section on Chinese leaders debates regarding the entry into the Korean War, where you will see competing visions of grand strategy.

• Recommend:


Week 11: Japan

- Christopher Hughes, “Japan’s Grand Strategic Shift: From the Yoshida Doctrine to an Abe Doctrine?” in *Strategic Asia*.

- Recommended:

Week 12: South Asia

- John Gill, “Challenges for India’s Military Strategy: Matching Capabilities to Ambitions?” in *Strategic Asia*.

- Recommended:

Week 13: Russia
• Mark Katz, “Putin and Russia’s Strategic Priorities,” in Strategic Asia.

Week 14: Conclusion
What should U.S. grand strategy be in a new era of technological changes and globalization? How to evaluate grand strategy?

• Recommended (regarding the changes that globalization brought on the security landscape):

Additional resources:
• Professor Jon Lindsay at the University of Toronto has a wonderfully detailed syllabus with additional information on the strategies of states covered and not covered in this class. Please feel free to check it out for additional sources. The appendix is particularly useful if you are interested in the strategies of states such as North Korea, South Korea, and Canada. It is available here at: https://politics.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/syllabus/1819_pol486h1f_l0201.pdf