Syllabus
Revised January 11, 2018

Elective Course 710: Information and Intelligence in Support of Smart Power
Ellen Laipson
Spring 2018

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?

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.

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.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 short papers, two quizzes and an open book final exam. Grades will be based on:
- Class participation 30%
- Papers 30% (15% for each)
- Quizzes 20% (10% 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

Readings: Nichols book and assigned on-line readings

**Session One (Jan 24, 2018)**

Please read the Brookings report (link provided above)
And Chapter One of the Nichols book (Experts and Citizens)

**Session Two (Jan 31, 2018)**

Chapter Six of the Nichols book (When the Experts are Wrong)
There will be an in-class practicum (to be provided that night)

**Session Three (Feb 7, 2018)**

Chapter Four, Nichols (Let me Google that for you)
A second in-class practicum

**Sessions Four/Five** – quiz and papers due on first section, more detail to be provided

**Sessions Six through Nine:**

Information and Intelligence Needs for US National Security
Overview of Intelligence Functions and Analytic Products
Trends in integration of intelligence with non-government expertise
Debates within the intelligence community about new information and sharing strategies and policies
Comparing information needs of National Security to Homeland Security

Readings:
Excerpts from the big intelligence reform commissions
Stimson Center report on information needs of DHS
Laipson Georgetown Case study on Diplomacy and Intelligence
Betts book

**Session 10**: Quiz and discussion of papers

**Sessions 11-14**

Smart power and the role of information in support of policymaking
US government as producer of knowledge to share, influence
Examine the global trends series
Identify information produced by other US government agencies that has security relevance: DHS, Energy, Agriculture, Health

Final Exam