PUBP 505  
Politics and Practice of International Security Policy 
Spring 2017  
Thursdays, 7:20-10:00 p.m.

Instructor: Professor Edward Rhodes  
office: Founders Hall 551, Arlington Campus  
email: edrhodes@gmu.edu  
telephone: 703-993-8497  
office hours: Thursdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. or by appointment

Course Description:

This class is a core course in the master’s program in international security. Drawing on current and 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 from copyright owners – e.g., Harvard Kennedy School. A complete list of the case materials being used this semester will be provided in a revised syllabus prior to the beginning of the course.

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.

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 prior to the second meeting of the course.

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.
Schedule:

A detailed schedule of topics, readings, and assignments will be available prior to the start of the semester.