International Conflict and Security

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Course Description

This course serves as a general introduction to the study of international security, a field primarily concerned with the threat and uses of force by state and non-state actors for political ends. Topics examined include the origins of major power wars, the nuclear revolution, terrorism, as well as cyber and information warfare.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should have acquired knowledge and understanding of key concepts, theories, and debates involved in the study of contemporary international security. Students should also have developed the skills to analyze complex situations, synthesize information, and communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Participation.** All students must attend and actively participate in class. Students will be graded on their attendance and punctuality record as well as their participation in class discussions.

- **Complete all Readings.** *Warning:* The reading load for this course is heavy, **averaging around 100 pages per week.** To succeed in this (or any) course you must engage in **active reading.** Reading without taking notes is a futile exercise. Take notes as you read, distilling the key arguments made by the authors. The discussion questions listed on the syllabus are there to help you - Use them as a study guide.

  For tips on how to read effectively in college, see:  

- **Complete all Assignments.** There will be one take-home assignment, three in-class quizzes and a take-home examination.

Assignments and Evaluation

Course grades will be based on the following criteria:

- **Attendance and Punctuality** (5%) Baring illness or an emergency, students are expected to attend
every class session and be on time.

- **Class Participation** (15%) Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Participation means you contribute to discussion regularly and intelligently. In order to contribute to class discussions, one must do the readings prior to class.

Students should also stay abreast of current events and developments that pertain to the subject matter of the course by reading publications like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* (both of which are available for free online) and the *Economist*.

For tips on spotting a fake news story, see: [https://www.summer.harvard.edu/inside-summer/4-tips-spotting-fake-news-story](https://www.summer.harvard.edu/inside-summer/4-tips-spotting-fake-news-story)

**How to Participate Effectively:**

Participation includes thoughtful engagement with all parts of the class. This course is taught around class discussion, debate, and activities. This means we will all be dependent on each other’s efforts to prepare for and engage in class activities and have a worthwhile learning experience.

Each class session’s participation will be graded as following:

- **2 points:** Active, thoughtful participation demonstrating understanding of the assigned material and current events. Full participation in classroom activities, discussion of readings.

- **1 point:** Limited participation demonstrating some understanding of the assigned material and current events. Limited participation in classroom activities and discussion of readings.

- **0 points:** Attendance with little or no participation in class.

As noted above, you are expected to complete all of the assigned readings before class and come prepared to talk about them. You may also find it helpful to prepare notes and talking points before each session, including your thoughts, opinions, analysis, and questions about the week’s materials.

- **Policy Memo** (20%) Students will write one 3-page policy memo during the course of the semester. Students can choose between one of three topics (and corresponding due dates). If you choose the first topic (US nuclear forces), your memo is due no later than the start of class in Week 7. If you choose the second topic (US negotiations with the Taliban) your memo is due no later than the start of class in Week 10. If you choose the third topic (US military intervention in Syria or Yemen), your memo is due no later than the start of class in Week 11. Students should bring hard copies of their memos to class on the day their memo is due. Electronic submissions will not be accepted without prior permission.

**Instructions:** Building on arguments from the relevant course readings and your own research, write a three-page policy memo on ONE of the following:

**Policy Prompt 1:** You are a member of the National Security Council Staff. Write a memo to your boss (i.e. the National Security Advisor) in which you make a case for why the US
should/should not increase its nuclear arsenal. **DUE: Week 7 (Start of Class)**

**Policy Prompt 2:** You are a member of the National Security Council Staff. Write a memo to your boss (i.e. the National Security Advisor) in which you make a case for why the US should/should not negotiate with the Taliban. **DUE: Week 10 (Start of Class)**

**Policy Prompt 3:** You are a member of the National Security Council Staff. Write a memo to your boss (i.e. the National Security Advisor) in which you make a case for why the US should/should not intervene militarily in either A.) Syria or B.) Yemen. **DUE: Week 11 (Start of Class)**

**NB:** Policy memos are not like other papers. For guidance, please consult the folder titled “How to Write a Policy Memo” on Blackboard.

- **Quizzes** (30%) There will **three** in class quizzes (each worth 10%). The dates of the quizzes are listed in the course calendar (Weeks 6, 9, 12). There will be **no** quiz make-ups. Students who are a no-show on the day of a quiz (or arrive after the quiz has been administered) will receive a mark of zero. Students who arrive late on the day of a quiz will *not* be given extra time to complete it.

- **Take-Home Exam** (30%) The final exam will be cumulative, take-home, and consist of short-answer essay questions. (Hint: Discussion questions make excellent exam questions.) Students will be given one week to complete the exam. The exam will be handed out on the last day of class (Thursday, April 30, 2020) and will be due on **Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 5:00 pm**. Any exams turned in after this date will be marked late and penalized according to the late policy stipulated below. **NB:** Students who do not take the exam will receive a failing grade.

**Readings and Films**

There are **two required textbooks** for this course which can be purchased (or rented) online, or from the book store:


  NB: Later editions are fine as well. Please note that the page numbers contained in the syllabus refer to the fourth edition. Students using later editions must locate the relevant page numbers on their own, using the index of the edition they are using and titles of the assigned readings listed on the syllabus.


Other readings listed on the syllabus can be found online via the Blackboard site that has been established for this course.

In addition to the readings, students are required to watch **two films** as part of their preparation for class. Students should come prepared to discuss the film alongside the assigned readings for that day. Students may be tested on the material covered in the films and should keep that in mind when viewing them. Links to the films have been posted to Blackboard so that students can stream them on their own time.
Policies and Resources

- **Accommodations.** It is the policy and practice of Seton Hall University to promote inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law against Discrimination. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office for Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003 or by e-mail at DSS@shu.edu.

- **Counseling.** The Office of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers assistance to students in need of support. CAPS is located in Mooney Hall and can be reached at (973) 761-9500.

- **Absences.** Students are expected to attend all class sessions and be on time, as well as participate in discussions. If a medical situation or other emergency arises students should inform the professor via email at the earliest possible opportunity as to the reason for their absence. Unexcused absences will bring down your participation grade.

- **Athletes and Members of Other Student Groups.** It is the responsibility of the student to contact the professor about any extracurricular activities that may impinge on their attendance or participation in the course.

- **Late or Incomplete Assignments.** Failure to complete an assignment on its due date will result in a grade penalty. All late papers (this includes those handed in at the end of class or emailed to me during class) will be penalized by one-third letter grade per day (i.e., an A paper turned in one day late is an A-, two days late a B+, etc.) except in cases of medical or family emergency.

- **Incompletes.** Incompletes will be given only in exceptional cases for emergencies. Students wishing to request a grade of Incomplete must provide documentation to support the request accompanied by a Course Adjustment Form (available from the Diplomacy Main Office) to the professor before the date of the final examination. If the incomplete request is approved, the professor reserves the right to specify the new submission date for all missing coursework. Students who fail to submit the missing course work within this time period will receive a failing grade for all missing coursework and a final grade based on all coursework assigned. Any Incomplete not resolved within one calendar year of receiving the Incomplete or by the time of graduation (whichever comes first) automatically becomes an “FI” (which is equivalent to an F). It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they have completed all course requirements within the timeframe allotted. Please be aware that Incompletes on your transcript will impact financial aid and academic standing.

- **Extra Credit.** There will be no opportunities for extra credit assignments in this course so do not bother asking for them. Extra credit assignments for you is extra work for me. (Spoiler Alert: I already have enough work.) If you are struggling in the course, come see me in office hours or make an appointment *early on*. Do not wait until the last week of the course to ask for help.
Office Hours Cancellation Policy: If you are have signed up for office hours (or made an appointment outside of them) and are a No-Show I will deduct one point from your participation grade. Please be considerate of my time as well as that of your colleagues and cancel any appointments you plan to skip in advance, via email.

Calculating Your Grade: Do not ask me to calculate your grade. Your grade is computed according to the breakdown outlined in this syllabus. With the exception of your participation grade, you have ALL OF THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO COMPUTE YOUR OWN GRADE. If you ask me to calculate your grade for you during the course of the semester (in writing, in person, or in any other medium,) I will instead deduct one point from your participation grade.

Understanding Your Grade:

A  90+  You did all of the things REALLY WELL!
B  80-89  You did all of the things.
C  70-79  You tried to do all of the things.
D  60-69  It seems that you don’t really understand the things.
F  <60  Did you do ANY of the things?

Grade Appeals. Grades in this course are not negotiable. If you think a clerical error has been made in the grading of your assignment, you may make a formal appeal. All appeals should be made in writing and sent to the professor via email within one week of taking receipt of the graded assignment. Clerical errors will be corrected; all other grading decisions will NOT be revisited. NB: I do not give grades; you EARN them.

Plagiarism, Cheating and Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the administration, and may result in a lowered or failing grade for the course and up to possible dismissal from the School of Diplomacy. See University and School standards for academic conduct here:

- http://www.shu.edu/academics/diplomacy/academic-conduct.cfm

Technology. Technology can be beneficial as well as harmful to learning. Laptops may be used for taking notes ONLY. Use of other electronic devices (including phones) during class is prohibited. Students found checking email, using the internet, text-messaging or otherwise violating the prohibition will leave the class and forfeit their laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester.

Recording Policy. There is to be ABSOLUTELY NO recording (audio or video) of classroom discussions or lectures without prior permission of the instructor. It is expected that you will respect the privacy of other individuals in an educational and professional setting. Those found violating this policy may be asked to leave the class and face additional sanctions. As a reward for reading the syllabus, the answer to the bonus question on the first quiz is 93.

Email. Before emailing the professor, students should consider the following: First, always check the syllabus. Often, the answer has already been provided for you. Second, students should include the name of the course in the subject line of the email, e.g., Subject “DIPL 2120 AA (or AB): Question about Reading.” Doing so will enable me to locate your email more quickly and hence
respond more promptly. Third, students should communicate professionally, avoiding informal salutations (e.g. “Hey Prof!”), casual language, and emoticons. Fourth, please keep your communications brief. Complicated questions or issues are best discussed in person in office hours or by appointment.

- **Disclaimer.** The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus in the course of the semester. Students will be given ample warning of any changes.
Course Calendar

1. Introduction (Thurs. January 16, 2020) (17)


- Edward Luttwak, “Give War a Chance,” Foreign Affairs (1999) vol. 78, no. 4, pp. 36-44. (9)

- Paul Poast and Nisha Fazal, “War is Not Over,” Foreign Affairs (Oct. 15, 2019). (6)

Discussion Questions

What is International Security (IS) and how should we study it?

Why study war?

What does/doesn’t constitute war?

Is “war” going out of fashion?

Part I: Causes of War


- Arthur Waldron, “There is No Thucydides Trap.” (4)


- Geoffrey Blainey, “Power Culprits, and Arms,” in Betts, pp. 120-132. (13)


Discussion Questions

Is major war more likely when great powers are equal or unequal?

Does the sweeping historical pattern that Gilpin discerns provide lessons for the 21st century?
Does the security dilemma always operate? What factors mitigate its severity?

Is the US a regional or global hegemon? Does it matter?

Are the US and China headed for war?


- V.I. Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” in Betts, pp. 309-316. (8)
- Norman Angell, “The Great Illusion,” in Betts, pp. 299-301. (3)
- Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and War,” in Betts, pp. 380-393. (14)

Discussion Questions

Do countries’ participation in the international economy push them toward competition and conflict or does trade foster peace?

What is Angell’s core thesis? Did world events prove him wrong?

Does conquest (still) pay?

Is there such a thing as democratic (or capitalist) peace?

Which of the explanations for the democratic peace do you find more convincing and why?

Do Mansfield and Snyder discredit democratic peace theory?

Is ethnic conflict caused by “ancient hatreds” or collective fears of the future?

*Mandatory Film*

• Stanley Milgram, “How Good People Do Bad Things,” in Betts, pp. 183-190. (8)
• Margaret Mead, “Warfare is Only an Invention – Not a Biological Necessity,” in Betts pp. 244-248. (5)
• Mandatory Film: Watch Judgment at Nuremberg (1961)

Discussion Questions

What is the ‘banality of evil’?

When should obedience to authority be praised and when should it be feared?

Why did subjects in Milgram’s experiments continue to obey the experimenter?

How has the division of labor in violence transformed the problem of obedience?

What role does misperception play in the onset of war?

Is warfare merely an invention?

Film Questions1

Why did Ernst Janning challenge the authority of the tribunal to try him and the other judges? Where did the Tribunal’s authority – and it’s legitimacy – come from?

What kind of responsibility does each of us have for our own actions? Is ‘following orders’ a legitimate excuse to do wrong? How do we decide what is right and wrong?

Were the Nuremberg Trials just ‘victor’s justice’?

Herr Rolf says that if the defendant judges are to be found guilty then others are guilty too: the Pope, the Soviet Union, American industrialists who profited by re-arming Hitler. Do you agree?

Did the German people have an obligation to know what was happening to the Jews and other minorities during the war and to stop it? Or is it part of the tragedy of war that atrocities may be committed in the name of the people or national security, while the people have no ability to prevent these atrocities? What are Americans’ responsibilities for acts of war committed in our name?

Judge Haywood said, “If these murderers were monsters, this event would have no more moral significance than an earthquake.” What did he mean? Do you agree?

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What is the relevance of the Nuremberg Trials to today’s wars, crimes against humanity, and international tribunals?

**Part II: Strategies of Coercion**

5. **Coercion and the Uses of Force** (Thurs. February 13, 2020) (105)


**Discussion Questions**

- How do states practice coercive behavior?
- What are the four functions of force?
- What are the basic concepts of deterrence theory?
- Which is easier: compellence or deterrence?
- What is the California Principle?
- What are Salami Tactics and how do they work?


*QUIZ 1*


Discussion Questions

What is the nuclear revolution? (i.e. How have nuclear weapons changed the nature of conflict?)

What is the stability-instability paradox?

Which aspects of Cold War deterrence theory and nuclear strategy are transferable to the 21st century and which are not?

Where does the greatest proliferation danger lie: with states or with terrorists?

Spring Break – No class (Thurs., March 5, 2020)

7. Nuclear Proliferation: Causes and Consequences (Thurs. February 27, 2020) (107)
*POLICY MEMO TOPIC 1 DUE DATE*


Discussion Questions

Why do states build the bomb?

Do nuclear weapons increase or decrease the chances of war?

When it comes to proliferation, is “more” better? Why/why not?

Is (US) nuclear primacy a good thing?

8. Terrorism I: Definitions and History (Thurs. March 12, 2020) (103)

• Martha Crenshaw, “The Strategic Logic of Terrorism,” in Betts, pp. 481-495. (15)


• Clint Watts, “What is considered domestic terrorism?” NBC News, October 25, 2016. (2)


Discussion Questions

What is terrorism? How has the meaning of the term fluctuated over time?

What does it mean to say that terrorism is “strategic”?

Can terrorists be deterred?

Does terrorism work?

Is “domestic terrorism” the same as international terrorism? Why/why not?

Part III: Contemporary Conflicts & Security Topics


*QUIZ 2*


• Osama Bin Laden, “Speech to the American People,” in Betts, pp. 511-516. (6)


**Discussion Questions**

Compare and contrast OBL’s 1996 and 2004 messages. What were OBL’s grievances against the United States?

Define and state the significance of the following terms: Jihadism; Salafism; Wahhabism.

How are al Qaeda and ISIS different? Do their different goals necessitate different strategies (and, hence, counter-strategies)?

Does it matter if so-called “lone-wolves” are only inspired (rather than directed) by foreign groups?

Can the US defeat al Qaeda and/or ISIS? Does it matter?

What factors influence Western Jihadists’ choice between domestic and foreign fighting?

Is terrorism a nuisance or an existential threat? Or something in between?

10. **Military Interventions: The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq** (Thurs. March 26, 2020) (117)

*POLICY MEMO TOPIC 2 DUE DATE*


**Discussion Questions**

Why do some military occupations succeed while others fail?

Why did the US fail in Afghanistan?

Did the surge in Iraq work?

Should the US negotiate with the Taliban?

Is it time for the US to leave Afghanistan?

**11. Humanitarian Interventions and R2P** (Thurs. April 2, 2020) (99)

*POLICY MEMO TOPIC 3 DUE DATE*


**Discussion Questions**

When should external actors (e.g. states, international organizations, etc.) intervene in internal conflicts?

Should the US (or others) choose sides when intervening?

**Easter Break – No class (Thurs., April 9, 2020)**
12. **Emerging Technologies: Drones, Cyber, and Information Warfare** (Thurs. April 16, 2020) (104)

*QUIZ 3* // *Mandatory Film*


- **Mandatory Film:** Watch *Eye in the Sky* (2015)

**Discussion Questions**

How are new technologies changing the nature of warfare (or are they)?

Is cyberwar real war?

**Film Questions - TK**

13. **Weather Cancellation/Instructor Travel (Make-Up Date)** (Thurs. April 23, 2020)

14. **Review Session** (Thurs, April 30, 2020)

    Take-Home Exam Due Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 5:00 pm.