

International Affairs 4430: United States National Security

Spring 2025

Classroom: Caldwell 102

Course Meetings: Tuesday-Thursday 3:55-5:10

Instructor: Dr. William Acosta

Email: williamacosta@uga.edu

Office Hours: Caldwell 214, 9:30-10:30

Course Description

This course examines key aspects of U.S. national security, including the institutions that shape policy, the decision-making process, nuclear deterrence, counterterrorism, and alliance management. Through active learning methods, such as simulations and debates, students will critically analyze how the U.S. addresses evolving global threats and propose solutions to complex security challenges.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to analyze the roles of U.S. national security institutions, understand the decision-making process, and critique strategies for nuclear deterrence, counterterrorism, and alliance management. They will engage in active learning activities, such as simulations and debates, to develop strategic thinking and propose evidence-based solutions to complex security challenges. Additionally, students will enhance their ability to communicate national security concepts effectively through writing and presentations.

Required Materials

There is one required textbook for this course. All other materials will be provided via eLC or through the UGA Library System. For the course to run smoothly, students should complete all assigned readings before the class meeting for which it is assigned.

Williams, John Allen, Stephen J. Cimbala, and Sam C. Sarkesian. 2022. *US National Security: Policymakers, Processes*.

Course Requirements

1. Participation (20%)

- a. In class contributions will encompass 10% of your class grade. Attendance is not enough. You must contribute to in-class discussions both in a quantitative and qualitative sense. To do this you must be in class in person. At the beginning of the semester, I will provide you with a name card. Write your preferred name on it and keep it with you all semester. If I learn your name without needing to read the card, you are in good shape.
- b. Talking points will encompass 10% of your grade. Before each class—except weeks we do our simulation—you will write two talking points to enhance our discussions. You will submit digital copies via eLC for grading purposes, but please bring hard copies of to class for your personal use. These talking points should serve as a jumping off point for discussion. What questions do you have from the readings? What points remain unclear? What would you like to know more about?

2. Reflection Papers (20%)

- a. Students will be asked to write four reflection papers throughout the semester.

You will choose which four weeks to do in the first week of the semester. These are two-page double spaced papers where you reflect on that week's materials.

Here are some ideas for how to do this. Explore how the topic connects to broader national security issues or recent events. Highlight its relevance and potential impact in the real world. Offer questions or critiques about the ideas presented.

Consider alternative perspectives or potential weaknesses in the arguments.

Reflect on the implications of these ideas for national security policy or practice.

How might they inform decisions, shape strategy, or address contemporary

challenges? These are due at 8am on Tuesday of your assigned week. For

example, if you choose to write a reflection paper civil-military relations, then your reflection paper is due on the Tuesday of that week.

3. Vietnam War Simulation (20%)

- a. Participation: This is included in the participation grade above. Your attendance and participation is required for a passing grade.

- b. Role-Specific Assignments (10%): As the simulation activity approaches, each student will receive a character to play within it. These roles have specific written assignments that students must complete during the simulation module. I will provide you with the parameters for the assignments in class. You will submit these via eLC.

- c. Reflection (10%): In addition to the four reflection papers, all students will write one additional reflection on the simulation. This means there are five reflection papers in total. For the simulation reflection, you will write a two-page paper that connects the simulation to other course content. This will be turned in via eLC.
4. Policy Analysis Paper (40%)
 - a. Students will be asked to complete a 10-page policy analysis paper.
 - b. The goal of this paper is to analyze a specific national security policy or strategy, assess its effectiveness, and propose informed recommendations. This assignment will help you apply course concepts to real-world issues, critically evaluate policy decisions, and develop practical solutions.
 - c. More instructions will be provided in class.

Grade Distribution

- A = 95-100
- A- = 90-94
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 80-86
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 70-76
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 60-66
- F = 0-59

Course Guidelines

1. Students are expected to read the assigned course materials before all class meetings and participate actively within in-class discussions and activities.
2. Check eLC regularly for updates on the course.
3. The class will follow a primarily seminar (i.e., discussion) format. I will lecture when necessary. I will break you up into groups of 5. You will work with this group for the

whole semester, so exchange contact information. One of you will be the discussion leader for your group. This can change depending on the dynamics of the group. If one member of the group is missing, then 20% of that group is missing. If you are going to miss class, you must inform both me and your group members that you will not be in attendance so that they may plan accordingly. Once your group has thoroughly discussed the day's assigned readings, I will ask each group to contribute a wider class discussion.

4. Assignments are due on the dates and times given. Late work will be penalized 10% for each day it is late. After 5 days, the work will be maxed out at 50%.
5. If you need extensions, please **inform me via email**. If you tell me in person I will forget.
6. Be respectful to one another. I will not tolerate students being disrespectful or making others uncomfortable. We will discuss controversial topics in this class. Passion is fine but respect is necessary. Furthermore, only one person speaks at a time. Do not interrupt or speak over each other.
7. This is a digital free space unless I say otherwise. No laptops, tablets, or phones are allowed. Thus, bring hard copies of your talking point for your personal use. Do not work on other coursework in this class. It is disrespectful to both me and your classmates.
8. As a University of Georgia student, you are expected to adhere to the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must comply with the standards outlined in "A Culture of Honesty," which can be found at: [UGA Academic Honesty Policy](#). Ignorance of the academic honesty policy is not an acceptable excuse for violations. If you have questions related to course assignments or the academic honesty policy, please direct them to the instructor.

Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be referred to Judicial Affairs, as mandated by university policy.

9. Avoid using generative AI. While AI has its uses, particularly in creating reference pages, it creates sloppy work.
10. It is the policy and practice of the University of Georgia to create an inclusive learning environment. Students requiring accommodations should discuss such matters with the me at the outset of the course. Students requesting accommodations must register with the Disability Resource Center on campus (706-542-8719, <http://www.drc.uga.edu>).
11. UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.
 - Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
 - Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
 - University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
 - Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
 - Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
 - Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu
12. Any exceptions to or modifications to these rules or the syllabus are given at my discretion.
13. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Schedule/Topics

The following pages contain a general plan for the course. If deviations become necessary, I will announce them to the class via eLC. All readings are required unless I state they are optional.

Students are expected to read/know required materials by the date listed.

Part I: Institutions of US National Security and the Policy Making Process

Week 1: Syllabus and Introductions

- Tuesday January 7: Introduction and Learning the Syllabus
 - Look through the syllabus and rank six weeks you would like to write reflection papers on. Submit these to eLC for one point. This will count toward your participation grade. I will select the four weeks you will write papers. I will try to stay as close as possible to your rankings.
- Thursday January 9th
 - Rice, Condoleezza. 2024. "The Perils of Isolationism: The World Still Needs America - And America Still Needs the World." *Foreign Affairs* 103 (5): 8–25. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=fae42917-5821-3890-af0c-9a7c82bbad97>.
 - Caldwell, Dan, and Reid Smith. 2024. "Trump Must Not Betray 'America First': The Case for a Foreign Policy That Eschews Primacy and Embraces Restraint." *Foreign Affairs*. November 13. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/trump-must-not-betray-america-first>.
 - Drezner, Daniel W. 2024. "The End of American Exceptionalism: Trump's Reelection Will Redefine U.S. Power." *Foreign Affairs*. November 12. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/end-american-exceptionalism>.

- Week 2: Defining and Defending the National Interest
 - Tuesday January 14th: Talking Points Begin
 - Williams, Cimbala, and Sarkesian (2022): Chapter 1
 - Trump, Donald J. 2017. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC: The White House, December.
<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-PR-PURL-gpo187710>.
- Week 3: National Security Institutions & The Policy Making Process
 - Tuesday January 21: Williams, Cimbala, and Sarkesian (2022): Chapter 6 & 7
 - Thursday January 23: Williams, Cimbala, and Sarkesian (2022): Chapter 8, 9, 10
- Week 4: The Policy Making Process and Civil Military Relations
 - Tuesday January 28: *Bush's War, Part 1*: [PBS Frontline](#) & *Bush's War, Part 2*: [PBS Frontline](#).
 - Thursday January 30: Williams, Cimbala, and Sarkesian (2022): Chapter 13: "Civil-Military Relations"
 - Urben, Heidi, and Peter D. Feaver. 2021. "The Consequential Chairman: How Colin Powell Changed Civil-Military Relations." *Foreign Affairs*.
- Week 5: Preparing the Simulation
 - February 4: Simulation Preparation: Rules of the game and the Strategy of Containment. Read *A Different Kind of War: Historical Background*
 - February 6: Workshopping
- Week 6: Beginning the Simulation
 - February 11: Session 0
 - February 13: Session 1

- Week 7: Simulation
 - February 18: Session 2
 - February 20: Session 3
- Week 8: Simulation
 - February 25: Session 4
 - February 27: Session 5 & Debriefing
- **Week 9: Spring Break March 3-March 7**

Part II: Deterrence

- Week 10: Conflict and Deterrence
 - Tuesday, March 11
 - Quackenbush, Stephen L. 2015. *International Conflict: Logic and Evidence / Stephen L. Quackenbush*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=d6d9a6a9-94e0-39d7-81aa-7ed82ebf8492> Chapter 4
 - Quackenbush, Stephen L. 2023. “The Problem with Accidental War.” *Conflict Management & Peace Science* 40 (6): 675–91.
doi:10.1177/07388942221149672.
 - Thursday March 13
 - Quackenbush, Stephen L. 2015. *International Conflict: Logic and Evidence / Stephen L. Quackenbush*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=d6d9a6a9-94e0-39d7-81aa-7ed82ebf8492>. Chapter 9

- Week 11: Alliances and Deterrence
 - March 20: Johnson, Jesse C., Brett Ashley Leeds, and Ahra Wu. 2015. “Capability, Credibility, and Extended General Deterrence.” *International Interactions* 41 (2): 309–36. doi:10.1080/03050629.2015.982115.
 -
 - RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED:
 - Timothy Andrews Sayle. 2019. *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order*. Ithaca [New York]: Cornell University Press.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=b79806c0-85a5-3ada-8028-1e983e6e8691>.
- Week 12: The Specter of Hiroshima: Nuclear Deterrence
 - Tuesday, March 25
 - Kerr, Paul K. Defense Primer: Strategic Nuclear Forces. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 19 May 2023.
 - U.S. Department of Defense. The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. Washington, DC: Secretary of Defense, 2022. (READ the Nuclear Posture Review, 1-25.
 - Thursday, March 27
 - Talmadge, Caitlin, and Joshua Rovner. 2023. “The Meaning of China’s Nuclear Modernization.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 46 (6/7): 1116–48. doi:10.1080/01402390.2023.2212871.
 - Woolf, Amy F. 2019. “Russia’s Nuclear Weapons: Doctrine, Forces, and Modernization / Amy F. Woolf.” *CRS Reports (Library of Congress)*.

Congressional Research Service), January.

<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=a3b1fc84-5b53-30a4-ad18-bfc2e83e2428>.

- Week 12: When Deterrence Fails
 - Weitsman, Patricia A. 2014. *Waging War: Alliances, Coalitions, and Institutions of Interstate Violence* / Patricia A. Weitsman. Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press.

<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=2bf6ce75-cb72-3f2f-a94a-9a1cb64d0fea>.

 - April 1: Chapter 1 & 2
 - April 3: Chapter 3& 4

Part III: The Return of Great Power Competition

- Week 13: April 8-10 The World According to Xi Jinping
- Week 15: April 15-17 South and East China Seas Disputes
- Week 16: April 22-24 Putin's Revanchist Empire

Endgame

- **Tuesday May 6: Policy Paper Due, Final Deadline No Submissions Past This Date**