International Affairs: 4430: United States National Security

School of Public and International Affairs, University of Georgia

Class Meeting: Sanford Hall 312, 9:55-10:50

Instructor: Dr. William Acosta

Office Hours: Candler 214, 11:00-11:50 & 2:00-2:50, MWF

Course Description

What powers does the president have to keep the nation secure? What are the limits of presidential authority? In this course, we will explore the tools of national security and how they are limited. Topics include the organization of the national security state, alliance and coalition building, civil-military relations, the balance between security and civil rights, nuclear strategy, and the return of great power politics in the twenty-first century.

In this course, you will step into the roles of presidents, advisors, military leaders, and policymakers as you confront the dilemmas of national security decision making. You will debate the justification for Executive Order 9066 in 1941, navigate the pressures of the National Security Council during the Vietnam War (1963-1965), and wrestle with the political and moral challenges posed by the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. You will also engage with two present-day scenarios that explore North Korean nuclear weapons policy and the emerging contest for Arctic security.

Required Reading Material

- All necessary material will be provided via eLC

- Be prepared: for this class to function smoothly, you must complete all assigned readings before the scheduled class meeting. See schedule below.

Course Requirements

1. Participation (30%): Your 30% is divided into three subcategories
    a. In-class contribution (10%): Students will be evaluated on in person attendance, contribution to class discussion, and participation during in-class activities. Each of these is required. I will take attendance every day. Attendance is critical in this course because missing will adversely affect not only you but also your classmates. Some assignments cannot be made up.
    b. Simulation participation (10%): The simulations have role specific assignments that students must complete. Students should submit these assignments via eLC.
    c. Reading quizzes (10%): To ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, I will give 6 unannounced reading quizzes. These will be in class and handwritten and will be turned in during class. These cannot be made up. If you anticipate being absent on any day, please inform me ahead of time.
2. Written Assignments (70%): Over the course of the semester, you must complete four written assignments.
    a. Assignment 1: Evaluate the restraints on executive power in matters of national security. Focus on the institutional limits that shape presidential decision making, including Congress, the courts, the national security bureaucracy, and the media. Use evidence from the Executive Order 9066 and NSC Vietnam simulations to

assess how effectively these institutions constrain or enable presidential action. **Due February 23rd**

b. Assignment 2: Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of acting unilaterally versus building alliances and coalitions in matters of national security. Consider how alliances shape the effectiveness, legitimacy, and flexibility of US policy. Use historical and contemporary examples to assess whether the United States is stronger when it acts with partners or when it acts alone. **Due March 23rd**

c. Assignment 3: Evaluate how national security policy balances the demands of counterterrorism with the protection of civil rights. Use evidence from the Alien and Sedition Acts simulation and the lessons on terrorism and counterterrorism to assess how democratic governments respond to internal threats while preserving constitutional principles. **Due April 10th**

d. Assignment 4: Evaluate the challenges facing US nuclear deterrence policy in an era of renewed great power competition. Focus on how the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, the persistence of North Korea's nuclear program, and Iran's nuclear ambitions shape American strategy and alliance commitments. In your analysis, assess whether existing deterrence policies and institutions are sufficient to manage these threats, or whether a new approach to nuclear stability is required. **Due April 27th**

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.
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. Attendance is required. You are permitted one unexcused absence and one excused absence before it begins to affect your grade. However, much of the work we do in class cannot be made up.
6. If you need extensions, please **inform me via email**. If you tell me in person I will forget.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. The University of Georgia prohibits students from recording class sessions or classmates. If you have formal recording accommodation from Accessibility and Testing you can record the class.
10. 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.

Schedule

Week 1

- Monday, January 12: Welcome
- Wednesday, January 14: Perils of Isolationism
    - Rice, Condoleezza. 2024. "The Perils of Isolationism: The World Still Needs America—and America Still Needs the World." *Foreign Affairs* 103(5): 8–25.
- Friday, January 16: Grand Strategy
    - Paine, S. C. M. 2025. "By Land or by Sea: Continental Power, Maritime Power, and the Fight for a New World Order." *Foreign Affairs* 104(5): 160–171.
    - Avey, Paul C., Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon. 2020. "Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy." *Texas National Security Review* 3(2): 28–69.

Week 2

- Monday, January 19: MLK Day
- Wednesday, January 21: "What Roles Do Congress and the Presidents Play in U.S. Foreign Policy?" https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-roles-do-congress-and-president-play-us-foreign-policy

- Ma, Erica H. 2021. "The War Powers Resolution and the Concept of Hostilities." *Northeastern University Law Review* 13(2): 519–574.
- Friday, January 23: Executive Order 9066

Week 3

- Monday, January 26: Civil-Military Relations
    - "To Support and Defend: The Principles of Civilian Control and Best Practices of Civil Military Relations." https://warontherocks.com/2022/09/to-support-and-defend-principles-of-civilian-control-and-best-practices-of-civil-military-relations/
    - Blankshain, Jessica D. 2020. "A Primer on US Civil–Military Relations for National Security Practitioners." *Wild Blue Yonder* 1 (4): 1–30.
- Wednesday, January 28:
    - Urben, Heidi, and Peter D. Feaver. 2021. "The Consequential Chairman: How Colin Powell Changed Civil-Military Relations." *Foreign Affairs*, October 27.
    - Brooks, Risa. 2025. "The Dangerous New Civil-Military Bargain: Trump's Demands for Loyalty Will Weaken the U.S. Armed Forces." *Foreign Affairs*, April 8.
- Friday, January 30: Blankshain, Jessica D., Theo Milonopoulos, and Derek S. Reveron. 2025. "Called to Testify: Congressional Oversight of the Armed Forces." *Texas National Security Review* 8 (2): 75–96

Week 4: A Different Kind of War

- Monday, February 2: Vietnam: Background, Rules, and Roles
- Wednesday, February 4: Vietnam: Role Distribution

- Friday, February 6: Vietnam: Session 0

Week 5: A Different Kind of War

- Monday, February 9: Vietnam: Session 1
- Wednesday, February 11: Vietnam Session 2
- Friday, February 13: Vietnam Session 3

Week 6: A Different Kind of War

- Monday, February 16: Vietnam Session 4
- Wednesday, February 18: Vietnam Session 5
- Friday, February 20: Debrief

Week 7: Coalition Building and Alliance Management

- Monday, February 23: "Introduction" and "Fighting with Friends"
- Wednesday, February 25: "Desert Strom and Desert Shield"
- Friday, February 27: "Operation Allied Force"

Week 8: Coalition Building and Alliance Management

- Monday, March 2: "Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force"
- Wednesday, March 4: "Operation Iraqi Freedom and the War in Iraq"
- Friday, March 6: "Operation Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector" and "Conclusion"

Week 9: Spring Break March 9-13

Week 10: Civil Rights and Terrorism

- Monday, March 16: Alien and Sedition Acts: Background, Rules, and Roles
- Wednesday, March 18: Alien and Sedition Acts Session 1
- Friday, March 20: Alien and Sedition Acts Session 2

Week 11

- Monday, March 23: Debriefing
- Wednesday, March 25: Learning Journey: Introduction to Terrorism
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/learning-journey/terrorism-introduction/what-is-terrorism
- Friday, March 27: Learning Journey: Who Counts as a Terrorist?
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/learning-journey/terrorism-confronting-terror/who-counts-as-a-terrorist

Week 12

- Monday, March 30: Bush's War Part 1
- Wednesday, April 1: Bush's War Part 2
- Friday, April 3: Learning from the War on Terror: https://warontherocks.com/2024/03/learning-from-the-war-on-terror/

Week 13: Specter of Hiroshima—These readings are hard! It is okay if they don't make sense on your first read

- Monday, April 6:
    - "The Nuclear World:" https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/nuclear-world & Primary Source Analysis
    - Unleashing the Atom
- Wednesday, April 8: "Classic Deterrence Theory" & "Rationality and Deterrence
- Friday, April 10: "Perfect Deterrence Theory"

Week 14: North Korean Nuclear Threat, featuring Iran

- Monday, April 13:

    - "Negotiating with North Korea in the Shadow of Great Power Rivalry" https://warontherocks.com/2025/10/negotiating-with-north-korea-in-the-shadow-of-great-power-rivalry/
    - "America's Failing Iran Nuclear Policy: Time for a Course Adjustment" https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/americas-failing-iran-nuclear-policy-time-for-a-course-adjustment/
- Wednesday, April 15: North Korean Nuclear Threat
- Friday, April 17: North Korean Nuclear Threat

Week 15: The Return of Great Power Politics

- Monday, April 20:
    - "The Return of Great Power Politics: Re-Examining the Nixon Doctrine" https://warontherocks.com/2014/03/the-return-of-great-power-politics-re-examining-the-nixon-doctrine/
    - "Great Power Competition will Drive Irregular Conflicts" https://warontherocks.com/2024/04/great-power-competition-will-drive-irregular-conflicts/
- Wednesday, April 22:
    - "China and the Alliance Allergy of Rising Powers" https://warontherocks.com/2023/05/china-and-the-alliance-allergy-of-rising-powers/
    - "Why U.S. Naval Power Needs Asian Allies" https://warontherocks.com/2024/01/why-u-s-naval-power-needs-asian-allies/

- Friday, April 24: “Mind the Middle Powers” https://warontherocks.com/2023/04/mind-the-middle-powers/

Week 16:

- Monday, April 27: Final Day Q&A