

INTL 4415: Practicum – Methods and Issues in Security Studies

BB-CITS Richard B. Russell Security Leadership Program

University of Georgia – Fall 2026

BB-CITS (110 E. Clayton St, 6th Floor), MW 1:15-2:35pm

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Course Overview:

Welcome to the Benson-Bertsch Center for International Trade and Security's (BB-CITS) Richard B. Russell Security Leadership Program (SLP). As a member of the SLP you are joining a program with a rich tradition in training future leaders in national and international security. Throughout the year you will have the opportunity to develop your policy writing, analysis, and public speaking skills, and conduct independent research.

Beyond the skills training, a significant focus of the SLP is the community you will build with the 15 members of your cohort. These colleagues will become friends that you will stay connected to long after you leave UGA. You'll also join an esteemed group of SLP alumni who have gone on to pursue advanced degrees in security studies and careers working in government, particularly in the CBRN/non-proliferation field, as well as in corporations, journalism, law, and NGOs. Throughout this year you'll have the opportunity to get to know some of these alumni through visits and most significantly, through the spring break trip to Washington, DC.

This practicum course is an active learning seminar, which means the focus will be on discussion and application among the participants, not lectures by the instructor. Unlike a typical International Relations course in security studies where you would examine the academic field, our focus will be on the *practice* of decision making around security issues and the evaluation of policies. As you may note, many of the "readings" on the syllabus are not academic readings but are instead podcasts, videos, newspaper articles, and blogs. I've selected materials that are both informative and provocative to spark discussions. You will often do extensive research and reading beyond what's assigned on the syllabus to complete your assignments and are expected to stay up to date on national and international security news. While most students in the program are majoring in International Affairs, the SLP is strengthened by the participation of students from majors outside of SPIA including, but not limited to, psychology, computer science, and economics. The skills and knowledge you acquire in the SLP are intended to compliment your existing strengths, irrespective of your major, and prepare you for a career in national/international security.

The culmination of this half of the program is the U.S. National Security Council simulation, which will take place over several weeks in April. Through the simulation you'll be able to put into practice the skills you've developed, challenge each other, and try to find viable policy solutions to some of the most intractable security issues faced by the United States.

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Present complex national and international security issues in a brief format to various audiences with different knowledge levels
- Evaluate appropriate and effective tools available to policymakers for dealing with security issues
- Analyze the implications of different policy options available for addressing national and international security issues to create policy recommendations
- Model the professional behavior of policymakers
- Delegate and work alongside peers in creating security-related deliverables (i.e. policy briefs, policy recommendations, NSS, grant proposal)

Course Requirements:

- **Readings:** There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on the class ELC page. Readings are to be completed prior to class. Should you fail to complete the readings it will be evident by your (lack of informed) participation in class discussions.
- **Grading:** Your final grade will be determined by the following assessments:
 - Writing Portfolio = 40%
 - 2 Memos (10% x 2 = Memo 1 + Revised Memo 1) (*revision is optional – if you choose not to revise, memo 1’s grade will be doubled)
 - 1 Policy Brief (10%)
 - 1 Group Policy Brief - Midterm (10% = 5% written brief; 5% peer evaluation/self-reflection)
 - NSC Simulation = 25%
 - Policy analysis of 3 crises = 10%
 - Participation = 15% (Asking/answering questions in meetings; Contributions to National Security Strategy; Providing timely and accurate follow-up memos; slack “journal” documenting contributions; Peer evaluations)
 - Engagement = 20% (daily participation in class discussions, ELC discussion assignments/homework, engagement at alumni/guest visits, asking questions in briefings, **at least** 3 CITS events during semester w/ reflection)
 - Human Security Oral Briefing = 10% (5% brief; 5% reflection)
 - Nukes Quiz = 5%

Letter grades correspond to the following 0-100 scale:

94-100 A	74-76 C
90-93 A-	70-73 C-
87-89 B+	67-69 D+
84-86 B	64-66 D
80-83 B-	60-63 D-
77-79C+	00-59 F

- **Participation & Active Learning Pedagogy** – As a practicum course you will be learning and practicing the skills necessary for a career in national/international security. Students’ learning outcomes are centered in the design of this course; all activities and assignments are designed to facilitate your skills building and to give you the opportunity to reflect upon what you are learning. This is the essence of active learning. Research

shows that active learning increases students' long-term retention of information, improves conceptual understanding, and leads to better writing and critical thinking skills.

- As a member of the SLP you are expected to be enthusiastic and eager to discuss security issues with your colleagues. Your engagement should include:
 - Daily class discussions of readings and security-related news
 - Preparing questions for SLP alumni and other distinguished visitors, and attending BB-CITS events (i.e. Global Decisions and Signature Lectures), including **at least 3 reflections** on participation in BB-CITS events in your SLP reflection notebook
 - Class Discussion Assignments – there will be several discussion assignments/homework assignments throughout the semester, graded on completion
 - Peer Workshopping and Collaborative Assignments
- **Writing Portfolio** - One of the most important skills that we will focus on in this course is policy writing. You'll gain experience writing various types of policy memos as assignments, and then you'll write them in real time during the NSC simulation. Details on different types of policy writing and the parameters for each assignment will be given in class.
- **Oral Briefing** - Each student will brief the group on a human security policy issue. This exercise will give you practice at this important skill and allow you to receive feedback before you do it as part of your regular NSC meetings. Each student will have 2 minutes MAX to brief the class, followed by 4 minutes of Q&A.
- **NSC Simulation** – The capstone of this course is a two-week simulation of the US National Security Council (NSC). Each of you will be assigned a role on the NSC and will produce policy recommendations for the President based on several real-to-life crises. In addition to the memos prepared for the given crises, you can expect to write additional memos as requested by your colleagues and provide regular briefings the NSC on your area(s) of expertise. The entire NSC will contribute to writing a National Security Strategy that will be published on the SLP website. Details on the NSC simulation will be given later in the semester.
- **Professionalization Days and Alumni Visits** - a key feature of the SLP is the opportunity to connect with professionals in the security field. Alumni visits will allow you to learn about different career opportunities and build your professional network. We will also have several professionalization days throughout the year when we focus on issues related to careers in national security including resume and cover letter writing, internships and jobs, applying to graduate school, and publishing/presenting your research. There will also be a several BB-CITS events throughout the year, including the Global Decisions talks, that you are expected to attend and act as an ambassador of the center.
- **Attendance:** I'll take attendance each day and expect you to come to class unless you are unable to do so (i.e. you're sick, been exposed to someone who is unwell, etc.). If you do not feel well, do not come to class!

- As this is a pre-professional program, I'll expect you to email me in advance if you will be absent.
- As noted in your acceptance email, no more than 2 absences for university or club commitments will be excused.

AI Tools Policy:

I'm open to you using AI in this course if you adhere to the following 3 principles:

- **Originality of YOUR Ideas.** It is most important that the ideas and analysis presented are your own. AI may be useful in this course for editing purposes, but if you use it as your starting point - if it is generating the ideas and analysis - then you are not developing the skills at the heart of this pre-professional program. Do not undermine yourself and weaken your skills development for the sake of a grade. It's not worth it.
- **Openness.** If using AI, you must be open about doing so and document your use. **Using AI without documenting that you did so will be considered a VIOLATION of UGA'S Honor Code.** I will have a link to a Google form on ELC. **EACH TIME** you use AI for an assignment in this course, you **MUST COMPLETE THE GOOGLE FORM on ELC within 48 hours of submitting the assignment.** As a course that centers Active Learning, the form is there to help you (and me!) learn how AI was (or wasn't) useful for your assignment.
 - The form will ask you for (1) the site used, (2) **specific prompt/commands used** (copy and pasted) (4) a copy and paste of the output in response to your prompt and (5) any changes to those prompts/commands, explaining why the changes were made and what the effect was on the output.
- **Referencing and validating.** You take full responsibility for any AI-generated information included in your work. This means all *ideas* must be attributed to an actual source (not AI) with a citation that you have checked, and information presented as facts must be true and cited. AI can present some issues that you should be aware of before using it. (1) All AI relies on existing language/materials, which can be out of date, so be sure you know the most up-to-date information on a situation. Outdated information will lead to poor policy analysis. (2) AI can "hallucinate" by misattributing a reference (so be sure to go to the original source) or may not cite sources (but you must). (3) AI can produce biased outputs as it relies on data that is not fully representative, especially of marginalized communities. You will be held accountable for the information you provide and thus must validate all information included in your work.

Other important information:

- **Office Hours** – Office hours are **STUDENT HOURS!** This is the time to ask questions about class assignments, the major, my 2 cents on what you should do with your life, get recommendations for good food in Athens, etc. **The link to schedule an office hours meeting is on the class ELC page.**
- **Academic Honesty** – As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty>. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be referred to Judicial Affairs, as required by university policy.

- **Accessibility:** UGA is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities and reasonable modifications to students with disabilities. Students in need of academic accommodations need to request such services from the Accessibility and Testing office located at 114 Clark Howell Hall (for more information visit <https://accessibility.uga.edu/>) and should make an appointment to see me with their appropriate paperwork within the **first two weeks** of classes.
- UGA's code of conduct protects student privacy and intellectual property and thus **prohibits recording and digital release of classroom lectures and conversations unless a student has an accommodation from the Accessibility & Testing office**. Students with A&T approved accommodations for recording should make an appointment with me to discuss a plan that protects your right to privacy, that of your classmates, and everyone's intellectual property.
- UGA has a vast array of resources to support students facing a variety of challenges. Please don't hesitate to speak with me or contact these resources directly. *Please be aware that UGA faculty and staff are obligated to report any knowledge of sexual assault/harassment and/or relationship violence to UGA's Equal Opportunity Office.* UGA's Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (info below) can speak to students confidentially.
 - **Office of Student Care & Outreach** (coordinate assistance for students experiencing hardship/unforeseen circumstances) – 706-542-7774 or by email sco@uga.edu
 - **Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)** - 706-542-2273 (during regular business hours) *After Hour Mental Health Crisis:* 706-542-2200 (UGA Police—ask to speak to the CAPS on-call clinician)
 - **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP)** – 706-542-SAFE (The advocates at RSVP can provide students confidentiality).
- **This syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester**

Topic and Reading Schedule

Weeks 1 & 2 – Introduction & Security Basics

***Post your bio to ELC Introduction discussion board by 1/11*

- *Comment on 2 other SLPeeps' posts before class on 1/12*

Monday, January 12 (class 1) – Introduction & Professionalization 101

- Read syllabus and set up ANNOUNCEMENT notifications on ELC

***“Bellingcat” discussion assignment due on ELC by Tuesday 1/13*

Wednesday, January 14 (class 2) Security in the 21st Century

- Eliot Higgins. 2021. *We are Bellingcat: Global Crime, Online Sleuths, and the Bold Future of News.*

Mon. Jan 19 – No Class: MLK Day

Wednesday, January 21 (class 3) - What is “security”?

- Paul D. Williams “Security Studies: An Introduction” Chapter 1
 - Read Only read pgs. 1-10
- Listen: “Race and National Security” *Horns of a Dilemma*. (podcast – 42 mins). July 10, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/07/race-and-national-security/>
- Dick K. Nanto. 2011. “Economics and National Security: Issues and Implications for US Policy.” CRS. (ELC) ***Read only P. 3-8*
- Lorena O’Neil. 2023. “These Women Tried to Warn Us About AI” *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/women-warnings-ai-danger-risk-before-chatgpt-1234804367/>

Weeks 3 - 5 – National Security Institutions, Decision-making, & Learning to BLUF

Monday, January 26 (class 4) Achieving Security & Addressing Threats: Security Policy from Goals to Tactics

- Jonathan Masters. “Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia” CFR Backgrounder. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia#chapter-title-0-5>
- *IN CLASS*: choose topics for first policy memo

**Complete BLUF Google Form before start of class on Wednesday, 1/28*

Wednesday, January 28 (class 5) BLUF-ing & Memo Writing

- Maria Repnikova. 2022. "The Balance of Soft Power: The American and Chinese Quests to Win Hearts and Minds." *Foreign Affairs*.
- Read my policy writing guidelines in “Policy Writing & Samples” folder under ELC “Contents” – focusing just on “memo” (not the policy briefs or analysis)

***Complete Policy Memo 1 Prep ELC discussion before the start of class Mon. 2/2*

Monday, February 2 (class 6) - Institutions & Process in US National Security

- Whittaker et al. 2008. “The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System”: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep11925.6.pdf>
 - ***Read only 97-135*
- Nikolas K. Gvosdev. March 24, 2022. “Waiting for the Documents: The Function of the U.S. National and Defense Strategic Documents.” FPRI. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/waiting-for-the-documents-the-function-of-u-s-national-and-defense-strategic-documents/>

**Complete NSS Comparison Discussion on ELC before start of class on 2/4*

Wednesday, February 4 (class 7) - Comparing Biden & Trump (x2) National Security Strategies

- Biden Admin NSS:
 - October 2022 National Security Strategy: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>
- Trump (1.0) Admin NSS:

- 2017 US National Security Strategy <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>
- Trump (2.0) Admin NSS:
 - November 2025 US National Security Strategy: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>
- Tip: **You DO NOT have to fully read all 3! Read the introductions and contents then skim the rest as you decide upon your point of comparison.

**Complete Memo Draft due to ELC (Policy Drafts Discussion Board) as word doc or PDF (NOT Google Doc) before start of class 2/9*

Monday, February 9 (class 8) – Peer Workshopping Memo 1

- We'll discuss peer-evaluating and rubric for memo before peer-workshop

**Upload your resume to the "Resume Swap" Discussion Board by Tues 2/11*

Wednesday, February 11 (class 9) – Professionalization Day 1: Resumes & LORs

- **Bring a hard copy of your resume to class
- For info on resume writing, see "Professional Development" folder

***Final Policy Memo 1 due by Friday, Feb 13 to ELC Assignments Drop box*

Weeks 6-8 – Policy Evaluation, WMD Nonproliferation, & Strategic Trade Management

Monday, February 16 (class 10) - Different Types of Policy Writing & Analysis: Practicing PEST & 2nd/3rd Order Effects

- Jason Bordoff and Meghan L. O'Sullivan. 2022. "Green Upheaval: The New Geopolitics of Energy." *Foreign Affairs*.
- Read my policy writing guidelines and assignment under "Policy Writing & Samples" folder under ELC "Contents" – focus on directions for "brief" (not memo or analysis)
- Read the following on policy writing:
 - Luciana Herman. 2012. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard. "Policy Memos"https://www.umass.edu/pep/sites/default/files/policy_memo_workshop_final.docx
 - "Policy Briefs." The Writing Center. University of North Carolina. <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/policy-briefs/>
 - *Note: See Folder on ELC for examples of policy writing*
- *IN CLASS: Distribute 4 topics for CBRN/STC Brief*

***Nuclear Quiz in class Wed 2/18 (30 min, in-class, open written notes)*

Wednesday, February 18 (class 11) - Nuclear Proliferation and the Non-Proliferation Regime – Reading Quiz!

- Waltz & Sagan (excerpt)

- Peter Lavoy. “The Enduring Effects of Atoms for Peace” *Arms Control Today*.
https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_12/Lavoy
- “Baby Nukes: When a Little Boom is All You Need” Things that Go Boom Podcast. Inkstick Media. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/baby-nukes-when-a-little-boom-is-all-you-need/id1324629357?i=1000511093627>
- Complete the following 2 NTI Educational Tutorials
 - Nuclear 101: <https://tutorials.nti.org/nuclear-101/>
 - Non-Proliferation Regime: <https://tutorials.nti.org/nonproliferation-regime-tutorial/>

Monday, February 23 (class 12) - Putting the CBR back in CBRN

C:

- Chemical Weapons Nonproliferation Tutorial. NTI. <https://tutorials.nti.org/chemical-weapons-nonproliferation/>
- Mary Beth D. Nikitin and Cyrus A. Jabbari. 2018. “Resurgence of Chemical Weapons Use: Issues for Congress” Congressional Research Service.
https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1228580/m2/1/high_res_d/IN10936_2018July24.pdf
- Edith M. Lederer. “Watchdog: Syria has likely used chemical weapons 17 times.” *AP*.
https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-middle-east-syria-europe-business-f82ffb6c25fa46583b16fc2c23614153?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2021Jun4&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief

B:

- Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Tutorial. NTI. <https://tutorials.nti.org/biological-weapons-nonproliferation/>
- Matt Field. 2023. “Can a 1975 bioweapons ban handle today’s biothreats?” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <https://thebulletin.org/2023/03/biological-weapons-convention/>
- Carl Zimmer and James Gorman. June 20, 2021. “The Fight Over Covid’s Origins Renews Debates on Risks of Lab Work.” *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/20/science/covid-lab-leak-wuhan.html?searchResultPosition=2>

R:

- Nuclear and Radiological Security Tutorial. NTI. <https://tutorials.nti.org/nuclear-and-radiological-security/>
- Shea Cotton, Sam Meyer, and Anne Pellegrino. 2018. “CNS Global Incidents and Trafficking Database” NTI. https://media.nti.org/documents/global_trafficking_2017.pdf
 - Focus on the summary of findings and policy recs pgs. 1-6, skim rest
- “Preventing a Dirty Bomb: Why Radiological Security Matters” The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation <https://armscontrolcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Radiological-Security-Factsheet.pdf>
- Joby Warrick and Loveday Morris. July 22, 2017. “How ISIS Nearly Stumbled on the Ingredients for a Dirty Bomb.” *Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-isis-nearly-stumbled-on->

the-ingredients-for-a-dirty-bomb/2017/07/22/6a966746-6e31-11e7-b9e2-2056e768a7e5_story.html

**Complete Strategic Trade Controls Short Assignment Discussion before the start of class 2/25*

Wednesday, February 25 (class 13) – Strategic Trade Management (aka Export Controls)

- **Watch ELC video and read** “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Strategic Trade Controls but Were Afraid to Ask” (by Laredo Loyd, former MIP)
- Jeanne Whalen and Ellen Nakashima. June 3, 2021. “Biden Expands Trump Order by Banning US Investment in Chinese Companies Linked to the Military or Surveillance Technology.” *Washington Post*. (ELC)
- RUSI. “Silicon Lifeline: Western Electronics at the Heart of Russia’s War Machine” (interactive page) <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/special-resources/silicon-lifeline-western-electronics-heart-russias-war-machine/interactive-summary>
- Jade Leung, Sophie-Charlotte Fischer, and Allan Dafoe. 2019. “Export Controls in the Age of AI” *War on the Rocks*. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/08/export-controls-in-the-age-of-ai/>

Suggested for big picture:

- Ian Stewart. 2023. Export Controls in an Era of Strategic Competition: Implications for the Existing Landscape and the Need for a New Multilateral Trade Review Regime. *Strategic Trade Review*.

**Draft of Policy Brief #1 due to ELC discussion board before the start of class 3/2*

Monday, March 2 (class 14) - Peer Workshopping Brief 1 & Preparing for DC Trip

- Completed Brief Draft due to ELC (Policy Drafts Disc Board) as word doc or PDF (not Google Doc)

Wednesday, March 4 (class 15) - Going over Midterm Terrorism Assignment (Group Policy Brief) & OSINT

- Read Midterm Assignment on ELC

**Final Policy Brief #1 due by Friday March 6 to ELC Assignments Folder*

March 8-12 BBCITS SPRING BREAK IN DC

Week 9 - 12 – Security, Non-State Actors, & Human Security

***DC trip reflection due before the start of class Mon. March 16*

Monday, March 16 (class 16) – Debriefing the DC Trip & Discussing the NSC Sim

- Read NSC Directions

Wednesday, March 18 (class 17) - Terrorism & Counter Terrorism – Evaluating Effectiveness

- Jenna Jordan. 2014. "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes" *International Security* 38(4): 7-38.
<https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/38/4/7/12293/Attacking-the-Leader-Missing-the-Mark-Why>

Monday, March 23 (class 18) - Presentations: Group briefings on terrorist threats in GA

- No reading
- *Choose human security policy topic for oral policy brief #3 & groups*

Wednesday, March 25 (class 19) – (Dr. G at Rotary – Independent research for: terrorism brief, oral brief & NSC)

**Final Group Policy Brief #2 (aka your Midterm) due Friday 3/27 by email (sent by one person per group with rest CCed)*

Monday, March 30 (class 20) - Changing the Reference Point in Security Studies

- Carol Cohn. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs*.
- Lloyd Axworthy. 2001. *Human Security and Global Governance: Putting People First. Global Governance*.

**Upload a cover letter to the "cover letter" discussion board before the start of class 4/1*

Wednesday, April 1 (class 21) – Professionalization Day: Crafting your Narrative for Cover Letters

Monday, April 6 (class 22) – Group 1: Human Security Oral Briefings

- No Readings

**Group 1 Oral Brief Reflections due by Wed 4/8*

Wednesday, April 8 (class 23) - Group 2: Human Security Oral Briefings

- No Readings

**Group 2 Oral Brief Reflections due by Fri 4/10*

***NSC Policy Recommendations Due by Thurs April 9*

Weeks 13 – 15: The National Security Council Simulation

Monday, April 13 (class 24) Simulation Day 1

Wednesday, April 15 (class 25) Simulation Day 2

Monday, April 20 (class 26) Simulation Day 3

Wednesday, April 22 (class 27) Simulation Day 4

*NSS finalized by NSC released by 5pm Thurs 4/23

*POTUS Final Decisions Released by 5pm Thurs 4/23

Friday, April 24 - SLP Senior Cohort Presentations @ the SPIA URC

- You are required to attend at least 1 session

**NSC peer and self-evaluations due by Saturday 4/25*

Monday, April 27 (class 28) - Debriefing the NSC

- Read: POTUS's Decisions & NSS

Tuesday, April 28 – CITS End of Semester Celebration