Nuclear Structures and Political Leaders
POSC 230
Professor Eleonora Mattiacci
Amherst College

Office: 304 Morgan Hall
Office Hours: Th 3:30PM–4:30PM
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Class Location: SCCE E108
Class Time: Th 1:00–3:30 PM
Phone: (413) 542-5833

Course Description

Following the tense foreign policy exchanges between North Korea and the United States in the fall of 2017, experts disagreed on how to interpret the two leaders’ choices of actions and words. Some of them pointed to their personal experiences and traits, such as their lack of prior exposure to foreign policy or their propensity for risky behavior. Other experts emphasized the role of structural factors, such as China’s interests and the US position in the counterproliferation context. These disagreements highlight questions on the interplay between leaders and structural conditions that are both crucial and enduring in the field of nuclear and international security: under what conditions do leaders’ personal inclinations and experiences become pivotal in explaining nuclear policies and strategies? When instead do structural factors such as the balance of power, the spread of nuclear technology, the salience of nuclear concerns among the public, play a key role?

Course Objective

This course will explore these puzzles by analyzing key facts and salient debates in nuclear security. The course will familiarize students with the multiple techniques of analysis that are used in the social sciences to elaborate and test theories of events as they unfold in the international political arena.

Course Structure

We will employ traditional teaching techniques, such as lecture and discussion, to explore archival documents and cutting-edge research on this topic. We will also have experts guest-lecture for us. Finally, we will listen in class to students’ projects and discuss their original research.
Intellectual Responsibility

Students should consult the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and the Amherst College Honor Code, both available on the Amherst College website, for an outline of the appropriate and productive behavior that is expected from participants in the class.

Logistics

Readings are available on Moodle. The following book should be purchased:
Ferguson, Charles D. Nuclear energy: What everyone needs to know. OUP USA, 2011, Chapter 2 and 4.
Reiter, Dan, Understanding War and Peace, Online Book. Chapters can be purchased individually. YOU WILL ONLY NEED TO PURCHASE CHAPTERS 3 AND 4. AVAILABLE HERE: https://www.understandingwarandpeace.com/

On average, each class meeting entails 100–150 pages to read. We meet once a week. Students are expected to read the chapters or papers assigned for a specific day before coming to class, so that they can participate in our class discussion. Papers and other assignments will be turned in on Moodle.

Evaluation

Activities in class (which I explain more in detail below) will contribute to your final grade in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Strategy</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance

I expect everyone to attend class. If you must miss class one day, please send me an email beforehand with an explanation of why you are missing class. I take attendance both at the beginning of class and at random moments in class. To score your attendance point, you have to be there in both circumstances. PLEASE NOTICE: Missing class will lower your grade—both directly, via your attendance grade, and indirectly, via your participation grade (see table above). So, systematically missing class might impact 20% of your final grade.

Participation
Attendance is important, but it is not the same as participation: you will have to be an engaged and engaging participant in the class! Please do bring questions that you had on the material covered in class, and try to provide answers to your classmates’ questions.
Calendar

Please see a comprehensive calendar, with the relevant due dates, on Moodle.
Leadership Strategy

See updated description and due dates on Moodle.
Questions
See updated description and due dates on Moodle.
Projects

LENGTH: Varying. See details on Moodle.

DUE: Varying. See details on Moodle.

MEDIUM: Upload the relevant material on Moodle.

CONTENT: see link above.

PURPOSE: See link above

INSTRUCTIONS: See description on Moodle.

EVALUATION: See description on Moodle.
Feedback
INSTRUCTIONS: See description on Moodle.
Topics

Meeting 1: Introductions and Syllabus

DATE: January 31.


Recommended (but not required) readings:


Meeting 2: Leadership Style and Nuclear Weapons

DATE: February 7.

Guest lecturer: Professor Sarah Kreps.


How to make a podcast. Reading 1: https://www.buzzsprout.com/how-to-make-a-podcast

How to make a podcast. Reading 2: https://lifehacker.com/how-to-start-your-own-podcast-1709798447

How to make a podcast. Reading 3: https://live365.com/blog/how-to-write-a-podcast-script/

How to make a podcast. Reading 4: https://tools.cdc.gov/medialibrary/docs/AudioScriptWritingGuide.pdf

How to make a podcast. Reading 5: https://castos.com/podcast-script/

Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 3: Introducing Nuclear Weapons and Political Leadership

DATE: February 14.

Reiter, Dan, *Understanding War and Peace*, Online Book. Chapters can be purchased individually. YOU WILL ONLY NEED TO PURCHASE (and read) CHAPTERS 3 AND 4. AVAILABLE HERE: [https://www.understandingwarandpeace.com/](https://www.understandingwarandpeace.com/)

*Recommended (but not required) Readings:*

Meeting 4: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict

DATE: February 21.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 5: Political Leadership and Counterproliferation

DATE: February 28.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 6: Nuclear Strategy

DATE: March 7.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 7: Beyond the Dichotomy: Nuclear Latency
DATE: March 21.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 8: The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Proliferation

DATE: April 4.

Guest lecturer: Professor Nuno Monteiro.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Yarhi-Milo, Keren, Alexander Lanoszka, and Zack Cooper. “To arm or to ally? The patron’s dilemma and the strategic logic of arms transfers and alliances.” International Security 41.2 (2016): 90-139.
Meeting 9, Professor Valentino: Nuclear Weapons and Taboos?
DATE: April 11.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 10, Professor Erickson: Social Reputation, Public Opinion, and US Nuclear Non-Use in the Cold War
DATE: April 18.


Recommended (but not required) Readings:
Meeting 11, Professor Pauly  
DATE: April 25.


Meeting 12: Deterrence, the Mad Man Way  
DATE: May 1.

Meeting 13: Conclusions:
DATE: May 2. No Readings Assigned.