POL 4810
The Politics of Nuclear Weapons

Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 9.45–11.00am
Room: Blegen 235

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do nuclear weapons affect international politics? How likely is nuclear war or nuclear terrorism? How dangerous is nuclear proliferation? Is nuclear disarmament possible? Is it desirable? This course examines these questions.

The course is organized loosely into three sections. In the first section, students are introduced to the major theories used to understand nuclear weapons. They will be exposed to the technological underpinnings of nuclear materials, nuclear weapons, and their effects; the classic theory of the nuclear revolution and more recent criticisms of it; deterrence theory; theories of escalation and nuclear strategy; and theories of why and how countries seek nuclear weapons. The goal of this section is to give students the technical and conceptual tools needed to understand nuclear weapons and the way they have affected international politics.

The second section introduces students to the history of the nuclear age. Major historical episodes and the political, strategic, and ethical debates surrounding them will be discussed. For example, the course will cover the Manhattan Project and bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the evolution of nuclear strategy and the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States; the proliferation of nuclear weapons to regional powers and the development of the global non-proliferation regime; nuclear crises including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Suez Crisis, and Able Archer; and the history of arms control and detente. The goal of this section of the course is to give students a solid empirical understanding of the nuclear age that will enable them to evaluate, use, and understand the limitations of the theories and concepts introduced in the first third of the course.

The third section considers a range of contemporary issues, including nuclear terrorism; the role nuclear energy will (and should) play in the future, the feasibility of nuclear disarmament; the role of nuclear
weapons in future US-China relations; the role of nuclear weapons in South Asia; the Iran nuclear deal and potential future proliferation; and the ways in which current and future technological developments may impact nuclear issues. In this section of the course, we will use understanding of both history and theory to evaluate the importance and impact of these ongoing and future challenges.

Although the class is separated into these sections, this distinction is somewhat artificial. In examining the theories, we will discuss whether historical events seem to validate or disconfirm those theories. When we discuss historical events we will ask which theories seem to explain these events best. And when analyzing current policy issues we will ask what effects the different theories suggest that these technological developments will have.

**COURSE PREREQUISITES**

There are no formal prerequisites for the class, but students who have taken a previous class on international politics (for example, POL 1025: Global Politics, POL 1026: U.S. Foreign Policy, POL 3835: International Relations, POL 3810: International Law, or POL 4885: International Conflict and Security) will likely get the most out of the class. If you don’t have any background of this sort, it would be advisable to speak with the TA or instructor before committing to take the class.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Participation. Passive learning does not work. You will need to come to class having done the reading, ready to engage with the material, and prepared to share your thoughts. All students are expected to complete all the assigned readings before the seminar meetings, attend class, and participate. Participation will not only include attending and contributing in class, but also submitting short responses to the readings online in advance of classes (by 9.00am the day of class). You will be expected to submit at least one response every week during the semester (except the weeks in which the midterms or policy memo occurs). Expectations for the content of the responses will be discussed at the first class meeting. 20% of your grade will be based on participation.

Midterm. There will be an in-class midterm exam which will combine short ID questions with longer essay questions. More details will be provided nearer the time of the exam. The midterm will count for 25% of your final grade.

Policy Memo. Writing a concise memo under time constraints is an incredibly important skill in a wide range of careers. Two thirds of the way through the semester, you will be given one week to write a short policy memo to a US policymaker about a policy issue connected to the class. Expectations for the memo will be discussed at the first class meeting, and the class when the topic of the memo is revealed will include information on how to write an effective memo. The memo topic will be revealed on March 29, and the memo should be uploaded to the class moodle before class on April 10. 20% of your grade will be based on the memo.
Final Exam. There will be a final exam, which will have a similar format to the midterm exam. Again, more details will be provided nearer the time of the exam. The final exam will count for 35% of your final grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are no required books for the class.

COURSE POLICIES

There will be no laptops in class. This is not because I’m a luddite, in fact exactly the opposite—it’s because of science. Research shows that students take better notes by hand, learn more if they don’t have their laptops open, and that using laptops negatively affects the learning outcomes of those sitting around you. If you have your laptop open, you will be considerably more likely to receive a question out of the blue from the instructor. If you have a medical or other legitimate need for a laptop in class, please let the instructor or TA know.
COURSE SCHEDULE

All course readings are available on the course Canvas website (log in with your UMN ID and password to view the page).

PART I: Theories of Nuclear Weapons

Class 1, January 16. Introduction and Overview of IR Theory


Class 2, January 18. The Technology of Nuclear Weapons


Class 3, January 23. Canceled due to weather

Class 4, January 25. The Theory of the Nuclear Revolution


Class 6, February 1. Nuclear Strategy


Class 7, February 6. Criticisms of the Theory of the Nuclear Revolution


Class 8, February 8. Norms and Taboos


- Carol Cohn, “The Perils of Mixing Masculinity and Missiles,” *New York Times*, Jan 5, 2018

Class 9, February 13. Bureaucratic and Organizational Politics


Class 10, February 15. Theories of Proliferation


PART II: THE NUCLEAR AGE

Class 11, February 20. Robert Oppenheimer and The Manhattan Project (guest lecture by Michel Janssen)


Class 12, February 22. Hiroshima and Nagasaki


- Note: During class, we will watch the short film “Hiroshima/Nagasaki August 1945,” which contains harrowing footage of the effects of nuclear weapons. If you have any concerns about this, please contact the instructor or TA so that arrangements can be made.
Class 13, February 27. Cold War Nuclear Crises


Class 14, March 1. The NPT and Arms Control

- “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”

Class 15, March 6. Midterm Review

- No readings, come with questions!

Class 16, March 8. Midterm

- No readings

March 13 & March 15. No Class: Spring Break

Class 17, March 20. The Late Cold War


Class 18, March 22. U.S. Nuclear Strategy


Class 19, March 27. U.S. Nonproliferation Policy and Counterproliferation. POLICY MEMO TOPIC PROVIDED.


Class 20, March 29. NO CLASS: WORK ON YOUR MEMOS!

Class 21, April 3. Failed efforts: Iraq and Libya (guest lecture by Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer)


• See canvas website for additional primary documents to read before class: 1) a meeting between Saddam and his advisors; 2) a 1981 public statement from Iraq; 3) a 1983 US government report on the Iraqi nuclear program

PART III: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Class 22, April 5. Nuclear Energy and Proliferation


Class 23, April 10. Nuclear Terrorism and Accidents. POLICY MEMO DUE


Class 24, April 12. Nuclear Weapons in South Asia


Class 25, April 17. Iran (guest lecture by Colin Kahl)


• Indira Lanshmanan, “If you can’t do this deal...go back to Tehran: The Inside Story of the Obama Administration’s Iran Diplomacy,” Politico EU, 26 September 2015.


Class 26, April 19. North Korea


Class 27, April 24. Nuclear Weapons and U.S.-China Relations


Class 28, April 26. Nuclear Weapons and Cyber


Class 29, May 1. Nuclear Disarmament
• George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” 

• Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal “The Logic of Zero: Toward a World Without Nuclear Weapons,” 
  *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 6: 80–95.

  129.

  112–128.

**Class 30, May 3. The Future: Wrapping Up, Conclusions, Review for Final Exam**
STANDARD STATEMENT ON COURSE REQUIREMENTS
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Student Conduct Code:
The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see here.

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means “engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor’s ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.”

Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom:
The University establishes the right of each faculty member to determine if and how personal electronic devices are allowed to be used in the classroom. For complete information, please see here.

Scholastic Dishonesty:
You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an “F” or an “N” for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see here.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty here. If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences:
Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. For further details, please see here.

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials:
Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor
interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see here.

**Grading and Transcripts:**
The University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale. The two grading systems used are the ABCDF and S-N. Political science majors and minors must take POL courses on the ABCDF system. An S grade is the equivalent of a C- or better. Inquiries regarding grade changes should be directed to the course instructor. Extra work in an attempt to raise a grade can only be submitted with the instructor’s approval. For additional information, please see here.

**Incompletes:**
The instructor will specify the conditions, if any, under which an “Incomplete” will be assigned instead of a grade. No student has an automatic right to an incomplete. The instructor may set dates and conditions for makeup work.

Department of Political Science Policy: The instructor may set dates and conditions for makeup work using a “Completion of Incomplete Work” contract form. All work must completed no later than one calendar year after the official last day of the class.

**Sexual Harassment**
“Sexual harassment” means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy.

**Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action:**
The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy.

**Disability Accommodations:**
The University of Minnesota is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DS at 612-626-1333 to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

If you are registered with DS and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact your instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course. For more information, please see the DS website.
Mental Health and Stress Management:
As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health website.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility:
Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

Students are responsible for class attendance and all course requirements, including deadlines and examinations. The instructor will specify if class attendance is require or counted in the grade for the class.