

POLS 4490: Nuclear Weapons and International Politics

Term: Spring 2020

Time: M&W 12:30-1:45

Classroom: Classroom South 104

Instructor: Dan Altman

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Office: Langdale Hall 1051

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 or by appointment

Course Description

This advanced undergraduate lecture course explores the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. Topics include the following: Do nuclear weapons make war more likely or less likely? How successfully have states used nuclear weapons to deter aggression? How have they planned to use them in the event of war? Why do states attempt to acquire nuclear weapons, and under what conditions are they likely to do so? How effective have nonproliferation policy tools and arms control treaties been at stemming the spread of nuclear weapons? How grave a threat is nuclear terrorism, and what can be done about it?

Learning Objectives

- A strong understanding of nuclear history and the contemporary nuclear landscape, each from an International Relations perspective. Students should finish the course with the ability to analyze nuclear policy debates and digest media reports about nuclear events such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran Nuclear Deal).
- A basic understanding of nuclear weapons technologies.
- A strengthened conceptual understanding of important theories of International Relations. Examples include mutually assured destruction and the nuclear taboo.
- Improved analytical and writing skills.

Requirements

Grades will be apportioned as follows:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Proliferation Assignment	15%
Document Analysis Assignment	10%
Nuclear Use Assignment	20%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam	25%

Late work will be penalized. Extensions will not be given due to predictable events such as heavy workloads and extracurricular activities.

Instead of excusing absences, the attendance grade works as follows: each student's first two absences incur no grade penalty on the assumption that most students will deal with an illness or emergency at some point during the term. Further absences will reduce the participation grade. Consequently, there is no need to inform the professor about missing a single class, but please explain anything that will cause you to miss multiple classes. Students are advised to save their two unpenalized absences for illness or emergencies.

The use of phones or laptops for purposes other than coursework (note-taking, etc.) is prohibited and will reduce the participation grade. I encourage you to put your electronic devices away during class.

Exams

The exams will test students' knowledge and comprehension of terms and concepts found in the readings and the lectures. Most exam questions will be drawn from material covered in both readings and lecture, but any material given emphasis in lecture may appear on the exams. There will be no in-class essays. I require at least two weeks advance notice of a scheduling conflict for an exam.

Proliferation Assignment

The debate between "nuclear optimists" and "nuclear pessimists" focuses on the consequences of nuclear weapons *in general*. However, presumably the consequences depend in part on which country gets nuclear weapons. Surely it would have been better for Britain to have nuclear weapons during World War II than Nazi Germany. Perhaps Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is more (or less) worrisome than India's?

This assignment asks you to think about which countries have – or could have – nuclear weapons. Decide what characteristics of countries make nuclear weapons more or less dangerous. For instance, you might argue that high levels of corruption in a country make it more dangerous for that country to possess nuclear weapons because it increases the risk that they might fall into the hands of terrorists.

Identify eight conditions that you believe mediate the consequences of nuclear weapons. For each condition, start by concisely naming it (e.g., "Corruption"). Then explain why you think it make it more or less dangerous for some countries to possess nuclear weapons in comparison to others. Write a short paragraph (i.e., a few sentences) for each condition. Examples are welcome but not required. Students will also be rewarded for diversity and originality in their set of conditions as

well as the quality of their explanations. Diversity, in this context, means picking conditions that are different from each other.

Do NOT use corruption as an answer. Do NOT provide answers that give reasons why it is equally dangerous for all countries to have nuclear weapons (Sagan provides these in the assigned reading). Do NOT list reasons why countries build nuclear weapons.

Length: approximately three pages

Cuban Missile Crisis Document Analysis

For this assignment, analyze one or more of the declassified documents about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Each student will be assigned one or several documents. Be sure to analyze the document(s), not merely summarize it. In general, provide quotations from the document and then discuss their implications. Clearly specify which document(s) you are using. Do NOT analyze the movie or the Sherwin reading.

Length: approximately two pages

Nuclear Use Assignment

This assignment will present you with a conflict between the United States and North Korea. It will lay out a series of different scenarios at various levels of escalation from normal peacetime conditions to unprovoked nuclear attack by North Korea. Your task is to determine where among these options you would begin to support using nuclear weapons (if ever): To win an otherwise non-nuclear war? To prevent a possible nuclear attack? To retaliate after a nuclear attack? Never? In short, you must decide where your personal line is with respect to nuclear use. Explain your reasoning in a short essay. You are welcome to comment on your thinking about this in general or to focus specifically on the North Korea scenarios. Structure your response as an essay with a clear argument. You are expected to address and rebut obvious counterarguments.

Length: approximately four pages

Books to Purchase

Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). ANY EDITION

Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton Limited, 2012). ANY EDITION

COURSE OUTLINE

Introduction (1/13)

OPTIONAL (Warning: Contains Graphic Images of Victims): The Atomic Archive, "The Effects of Nuclear Weapons," pp. 1-24.

<http://www.atomicarchive.com/Effects/effects1.shtml>

OPTIONAL: Nukemap. Available at <https://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/>

How to Make Nuclear Weapons (1/15)

Joseph Cirincione et al, "Nuclear Weapons and Materials," in *Deadly Arsenals* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), Ch. 3, pp. 45-54.

Nuclear Terrorism (1/22)

Matthew Bunn and Anthony Wier, "Seven Myths of Nuclear Terrorism," *Current History* 105, No. 681 (2005): 153-161.

The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation (1/27)

Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, No. 3 (1996-1997): 54-86.

William Langeweische, "The Wrath of Khan," *The Atlantic* (November 2005).

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/11/the-wrath-of-khan/304333/>

Nonproliferation (1/29 and 2/3)

The Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), 1968.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>

Nicholas Miller, "The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions," *International Organization* 68.4 (2014): 913-944.

Counterproliferation (2/5)

Reiter, Dan. "Preventive Attacks against Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons Programs" in William W. Keller and Gordon R. Mitchell ed., *Hitting First, Preventive Force in U.S. Security Strategy*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2006.

Kreps, Sarah E., and Matthew Fuhrmann. "Attacking the Atom: Does Bombing Nuclear Facilities Affect Proliferation?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 161-187.

Iran (2/10)

Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Iran: Nuclear." Available at <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>

Zachary Laub, "What is the Status of the Iran Nuclear Agreement?," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, July 31, 2019. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-status-iran-nuclear-agreement>

Waltz, Kenneth N. "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability." *Foreign Affairs*. 91 (2012).

North Korea (2/12)

Nuclear Threat Initiative, "North Korea: Nuclear." Available at <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/nuclear/>

Hecker, Siegfried S. "Lessons Learned from the North Korean Nuclear Crises." *Daedalus* 139.1 (2010): 44-56.

North Korea Simulation (2/17)

No Additional Readings

The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation (2/19)

Sagan, Scott D. and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, Ch. 1-4.

Midterm (2/24)

The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict and the Kargil War (2/26)

Michael Gerson, "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict: Deterrence, Escalation, and the Threat of Nuclear War in 1969," CNA Report, 2010.

T. Negeen Pegahi, "Nuclear Weapons Did Not Embolden Pakistan: Drawing the Right Lessons for North Korea," *War on the Rocks*, January 22, 2018.

<https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/nuclear-weapons-not-embolden-pakistan-drawing-right-lessons-north-korea/>

Sagan, Scott D. and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*, Ch. 5.

The Purposes of Nuclear Weapons? (3/2)

*****Proliferation Assignment DUE 3/2*****

Schelling, Thomas. *Arms and Influence*, Ch. 1-2.

Robert Jervis, "Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter," *Political Science Quarterly* 94, No. 4 (1979-1980): 617-633.

Nuclear Crises (3/4)

Schelling, Thomas. *Arms and Influence*, Ch. 3. Skim the rest of the book.

Cold War Nuclear Crises (3/9)

Garthoff, Raymond L. "Berlin 1961: The Record Corrected." *Foreign Policy* 84 (1991): 142-156.

Wilson Center, "Able Archer 83: The War Game That Almost Became Real," YouTube, November 2, 2016. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LTMcf6mthU>

KGB Headquarters Moscow to the London KGB Residency, "Permanent Operational Assignment to Uncover NATO Preparations for a Nuclear Missile Attack on the USSR," and enclosed documents, February 17, 1983. Available at:

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//dc.html?doc=5028361-Document-09-KGB-Headquarters-Moscow-to-the>

Nuclear vs. Non-Nuclear Conflicts (3/11)

Christensen, Thomas J. "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams." *International Security* 17.1 (1992): 122-154.

Avner Cohen, "The Last Nuclear Moment," *New York Times*, 6 October 2003.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/06/opinion/the-last-nuclear-moment.html>

Avner Cohen, "Nuclear Arms in Crisis Under Secrecy: Israel and the Lessons of the 1967 and 1973 Wars," in *Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz, eds., Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000),

SPRING BREAK

The Cuban Missile Crisis: Thirteen Days (3/23 and 3/25)

Sherwin, Martin J. "One Step from Nuclear War," *Prologue*, Fall 2012. Available at

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html>

The Cuban Missile Crisis in Declassified Documents (3/30 and 4/1)

*****Document Analysis Assignment Due 3/29*****

Selected U.S., Soviet, and Cuban Declassified Documents

Cuban Missile Crisis Simulation (4/6)

No Additional Readings

Nuclear Strategy (4/8)

Narang, Vipin. *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict*. Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 13-26.

Colin Gray and Keith Payne, "Victory is Possible," *Foreign Policy*, 39 (1980): 14-27.

Russia and the Potential for Nuclear War (4/13)

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, "The Myth of Russia's Lowered Nuclear Threshold," *War on the Rocks*, September 22, 2017. Available at <https://warontherocks.com/2017/09/the-myth-of-russias-lowered-nuclear-threshold/>

China and the Potential for Nuclear War (4/15)

Nuclear Threat Initiative, "China: Nuclear." Available at <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/china/nuclear/>

Cunningham, Fiona S., and M. Taylor Fravel. "Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and US-China Strategic Stability." *International Security* 40.2 (2015): 7-50.

Explaining Nuclear Non-Use since Hiroshima and Nagasaki (4/20)

Harry S. Truman, "Presidential Statement about the Bombing of Hiroshima," August 6th, 1945. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/august-6-1945-statement-president-announcing-use-bomb>

Scott D. Sagan and Benjamin A. Valentino, "Would the U.S. Drop the Bomb Again?," *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/would-the-u-s-drop-the-bomb-again-1463682867>

Tannenwald, Nina. "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use." *International Organization* 53.3 (1999): 433-468.

Simon Denyer, "One-Third of Americans Would Support a Preemptive Nuclear Strike on North Korea, Researchers Say," *Washington Post*, June 25, 2019.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/one-third-of-americans-would-support-a-preemptive-nuclear-strike-on-north-korea-researchers-say/2019/06/25/25ed1314-9711-11e9-a027-c571fd3d394d_story.html

Disarmament and Arms Control (4/22 and 4/27)

*****Nuclear Use Assignment DUE 4/23*****

George P. Schultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB116787515251566636>

Remarks by President Barack Obama (Prague Speech), Hradcany Square, Czech Republic, 2009. (Skip to nuclear discussion.)

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>

Final Exam as Scheduled

Students with Disabilities

Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The Georgia State University Policy on Academic Honesty applies to all assignments in this course. Violations of the academic dishonesty rules are grounds for an “F” in the course. For more detailed information on acts of academic dishonesty and procedures taken when students are suspected of plagiarism or cheating, see the GSU Undergraduate Catalog 2016-2017. See also the GSU Student Code of Conduct website and its link to policies on academic conduct: <http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu/>

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the theft of someone else’s intellectual property or presenting another person’s work as one’s own. To avoid plagiarism, it is essential that you use proper quotation and citation in all the written work you submit for the course. You are responsible for handing in original work and for citing all of your information sources.

Evaluations

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take the time to fill out the online course evaluation.