

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Political Science 446, Summer 2024

Portland State University

[ONLINE COURSE](#)

[David Kinsella](#)

[Department of Political Science](#)

Office: [Urban Center Building](#), room 650L

503.725.3035 | kinsella@pdx.edu

Office Hours: By appointment, in person or via [Zoom](#)

Description

The foremost function of the state is to provide for the security and well-being of its people. The pursuit of security involves governments in a wide range of both domestic and international activities -- political, economic, and military. How do governments promote national security? What challenges do they face, and what tools have they developed to meet those challenges? How secure can states expect to be in the modern world, and at what cost?

The course explores these and other questions related to national and international security policy in contemporary world politics. We examine the role of national power, strategy, and the use of military force; the workings of the American national security establishment, including the intelligence community; the tradeoffs between homeland security and civil liberties; and domestic sources of insecurity. On all these topics, the course will emphasize both theoretical and practical issues. We also spend a fair amount of time on national security law.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- Analyze and critique various national and international security issues by engaging with contemporary case studies and theoretical frameworks. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of key concepts, such as deterrence, power dynamics, and the impact of globalization on security.
- Understand the structure and functions of the American national security establishment, including key actors like the Department of Defense and various agencies within the intelligence community. Analyze their roles in promoting national security, decision-making processes, and the interplay between different branches of government in shaping security policy.
- Efficiently locate, assess, and apply relevant online resources and information pertaining to security policies. Develop research and analytical skills through assignments that require critical evaluation of sources, synthesis of diverse perspectives, and the application of theoretical knowledge to practical security issues.
- Evaluate ethical dilemmas related to national security by examining real-world scenarios and historical precedents. Articulate well-reasoned normative positions that consider the balance

between security needs and civil liberties, while addressing the moral implications of actions taken by state actors.

Workload, Assignments, and Assessment

Workload

This a 4-credit course and generally covers the same topics as the on-campus version of PS 446/546. However, the on-campus version revolves mainly around lectures, while the online version requires somewhat more of students in regard to reading and videos. And as a summer course, ten weeks of course content is squeezed into four weeks. The upshot is that students need to complete a lot of work in short amount of time. Be prepared for an intensive learning experience.

Assignments

Students are assigned three kinds of work in each of eight course modules

- Readings. All assigned readings are available online; there are no books to purchase for the course. Unless the reading includes a link, it is available online from the PSU library. You must retrieve these readings (all journal articles) by logging into the [PSU library website](#) and locating and downloading the article from one of the library's full-content subscription services. If you haven't done this before, or are rusty, there are instructions here – or you can contact me and I will walk you through it. Where a link is provided, it will take you to the reading on the web. You should be reading, on a regular basis, some newspaper that provides thorough coverage of international affairs and U.S. foreign policy (e.g., the [New York Times](#) or the [Washington Post](#)).
- Video. Most assigned videos are documentaries or episodes from documentary series. Total viewing time is 1 to 2 hours per module. Some videos are available through the PSU library and require logging in before viewing. Do keep in mind that some of the documentaries chosen for this course are distinctly slanted in favor of a particular point of view, in which case it will be important to consider from whose perspective the story is being told. Feel free to raise such issues as topics for discussion in the Discussion Forum.
- Mini-lectures. These are relatively brief write-ups of lecture topics I deliver in the on-campus version of this course, sometimes with screenshots from PowerPoint presentations. As is true of class lectures, they are intended to highlight the most important lessons to be drawn from the module. In some cases, they summarize and reinforce material covered in the reading and video assignments; in other cases, they take up a topic not covered by the other assignments. The link will take you to a PDF file, which you may then download or read online. There are two or three per module and each runs 2-4 pages.

I try to keep all links up to date, but sometimes URLs get changed. Please email me if a link is no longer working.

Assessment

Course grades are based on two exams (a midterm and a final), each worth 50 percent of your course grade. The midterm covers the first half of the course (modules 1-4); the final covers the second half

(modules 5-8). Each exam consists of 15 multiple choice questions and one essay question and is timed for 90 minutes. This being an online course, students will obviously have access to course materials while taking the exams. However, 90 minutes is not a lot of time to complete the exams, so the course materials will not be of much use unless the reading and viewing assignments have been completed ahead of time. See the Organization and Course Calendar section of the syllabus on the timing of the quizzes and exams.

Discussion

The course includes a Discussion Forum, which is open for comments and debate on any topic related to national security policy that might arise during the term, whether or not it is explicitly covered in the course material. Items appearing in the news may be especially pertinent topics for discussion. As your instructor, I may occasionally weigh in on the discussion, but my preference is for this to remain primarily a forum for students.

Participation in the discussion forum is not a requirement, but students who are especially active, insightful, and/or helpful with their posts and replies will receive a small bump in their course grades at the end of the term.

You are always welcome to discuss course-related matters with me. See Instructor and Contact Information. That's the best way to engage in lengthier substantive discussions about topics in U.S. foreign policy. I am also happy to field briefer questions by email, as well as anything having to do with the logistics of the course itself.

Organization and Course Calendar

Organization of Course Content

The content of the course is organized into eight modules. Each module addresses a broad topic in national security policy. All modules are available to students upon the start of the second summer session (22 July), but it is best to complete the modules in sequence. The modules have been assembled with the intent that students will complete two modules per week. Students may work faster or slower than that, with the understanding that there may be no deviation from the exam schedule.

Course Calendar

The topics covered by each module are listed below:

- Module 1: Security and Strategy
- Module 2: Military Power
- Module 3: National Security Establishment
- Module 4: Intelligence and Counterintelligence
- Midterm Exam (1 to 4 August)
- Module 5: National Security and Civil Liberties
- Module 6: Homeland Security During Crisis
- Module 7: Counterterrorism: Law and Ethics
- Module 8: Right-Wing Extremism and Domestic Insecurity
- Final Exam (15 to 18 August)

Exams

The midterm exam covers Modules 1-4, the first half of the course, while the final exam covers Modules 5-8. Exams are available to take after 8:00 am on Thursday and until 5:00 pm on Sunday. They are timed – you have two hours to finish the exam once started, and Canvas will enforce the time limit.

Exams may not be repeated; you get one shot. My strong advice is to complete the assignments, take notes, and study prior to commencing an exam. Although you will obviously have access to any course materials you have downloaded or can otherwise link to while you are taking the exam, the imposed time limits will constrain your ability to consult the assigned readings, videos, and lectures for assistance. That's intended.

Courtesy, Conduct, and Resources

Academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for being familiar with the PSU [Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility](#), especially the section concerning academic misconduct -- that is, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure of the definition or consequences of academic misconduct, please consult with me.

Use of Generative AI tools. Using tools to check and correct your own writing (built-in spelling and grammar checkers or third-party tools like Grammarly) is different from using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to create content or structure in response to your prompts (like ChatGPT). In your work for this course, use of the first sort of tool is encouraged, while use of the second sort of tool is subject to the following limitations. Using generative AI to complete written assignments, including examinations, is not permitted. However, you may use these tools to study, help conduct research, or brainstorm ideas and argument. The use generative AI tools outside these parameters qualifies as [academic misconduct](#). If you are uncertain about the allowable use of generative AI in the course, please consult with me in advance.

Discrimination. PSU's policies require faculty members to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about these experiences with an employee who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact a confidential advocate (503.725.5672 or [online](#)) or another confidential employee listed on the sexual misconduct resource [webpage](#).

Disabilities. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The [PSU CARES](#) Team, hosted by the Dean of Student Life, is available to consult with you regarding any issues of students in distress, including sexual misconduct.

This syllabus is available online at <http://web.pdx.edu/~kinsella/ps446a24.pdf>. Last updated on 21 July 2024.