RPOS 479Z/RPOS 599/RINT 599
Instructor: Christopher Clary (cclary@albany.edu)
Class Meeting Location: Massry (BB) B-002
Class Meeting Time: T and Th 2:45-4:05 pm
Office Hours: T and Th 1:30-2:30pm, Humanities B-16
Or By Appointment (Downtown Campus, Milne 220)

Course Description:
This course provides an introduction to the causes and consequences of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Each week we will explore a different dimension of WMD proliferation, drawing on academic theory and historical evidence. Questions the course will address include: How different are nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons in their physical and political effects? Do nuclear weapons make the world more or less dangerous? Will the future for new nuclear states be more or less dangerous than the historical superpower experience? Is nuclear deterrence easy or hard? Is nuclear terrorism a real or over-hyped threat? Do ethical concerns about nuclear weapons make them different than other weapons? Answers to these questions ought to inform how students understand historical events and contemporary policy problems.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of the course, all students should be able to:
1. Describe important differences between and among nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons and conventional military weapons
2. Assess the political consequences of acquisition and possession of such weapons
3. Identify key concepts in readings and describe the steps of an argument
4. Critically evaluate common readings in discussions with instructor and fellow students
5. Ask incisive questions of texts as well as of fellow seminar participants
6. Speak and write effectively about course topics

Accommodations:
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please go here http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml and arrange for an academic accommodation letter to be sent to me. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course, please also inform me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity:
Don’t do unethical stuff, or your grade could suffer catastrophically. For a good survey of potential dangers, see http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php.

Assignments and Grading:
The course will be assessed on a typical A-E scale (100-93% A, 92.9-90% A-, 89.9-87% B+, 86.9-83% B, 82.9-80% B-, 79.9-77% C+, 76.9-73% C, 72.9-70% C-, 69.9-67% D+, 66.9-63% D, 62.9-60% D-, 59.9-0% E). If you have not done so, please see university guidelines regarding “incomplete” (I) grades: https://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/grading.php and https://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/requirements_degree.htm#graduate_grades.
Participation: 20%
As a discussion-based course, active participation is a crucial component of the grade. This includes both regular attendance in class and contribution to class discussion. In some classes, professors assign ridiculous quantities of reading each session, and expect students to skim or skip it. I choose to assign a more modest amount of reading but expect you to do it. Students should therefore complete all readings before attending class. We will dedicate a few minutes from time to time to a discussion of current events related to weapons of mass destructions. Sometimes, I will distribute articles on noteworthy developments in class or electronically. Students are asked and expected to contribute to these discussions, as well. See participation grade rubric for more information.

Reaction Papers: 20%
Early in the semester, each student will pick/be assigned four course meeting sessions for which they are responsible. For that session, they will be responsible for generating an analytical reaction/review paper of 2-3 pages. That paper might critique portions of that week’s reading, it might situate the reading in terms of prior or subsequent scholarship, or it might attempt to extrapolate from the reading to a different context. Most importantly, it should show thoughtful engagement with the reading, and offer some interesting response to it. It should not merely summarize the reading, though a summary of arguments and evidence is fine as a component of the reaction paper. As part of the reaction paper, students should generate 1-2 questions that they think will spur discussion about the paper and help their peers understand the key components of the reading. Reaction papers must be received prior to the beginning of the class session in question for credit.

Short Papers: 60%
You will be asked to write two papers, each approximately 8-12 pages in length. The first paper is due on March 12. The second paper is due on April 18. You will have an opportunity to revise one paper. Revised papers must be submitted by May 7. The revised paper will receive a new grade, and the final grade for that paper will be an average of the original and revised grades. Whatever “late penalty” (see next section) is accrued on the original paper will also be applied to the revised paper grade.

Late Penalty: Other than reaction papers, students who do not have prior instructor permission to submit an assignment later than the due date will receive a full letter grade deduction off the assignment (10% of assignment grade) for the first day an assignment is late and a half-letter grade deduction (5%) for each subsequent day.

Course Schedule:

1. Thursday, January 24 – INTRODUCTION

2. Tuesday, January 29 – NUCLEAR WEAPONS EFFECTS


3. Thursday, January 31 – RADIOLOGICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS


4. Tuesday, February 5 – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS


5. Thursday, February 7 – CHEMICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS


6. Tuesday, February 12 – WHY DO STATES ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS?


7. Thursday, February 14 – WHY DO STATES ACQUIRE CHEMICAL WEAPONS?


8. Tuesday, February 19 – WHY DO STATES ACQUIRE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS?


9. Thursday, February 21 – PROLIFERATION NETWORKS


10. Tuesday, February 26 – CASE STUDY: NORTH KOREA, PART 1

11. Thursday, February 28 – CASE STUDY: NORTH KOREA, PART 2


12. Tuesday, March 5 – NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND COERCION


13. Thursday, March 7 – NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND FOREIGN POLICY


14. Tuesday, March 12 – CASE STUDY: IRAN

   Matthew Kroenig, “Time to Attack: Why a Strike is the Least Bad Option,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (January/February 2012): 76-86.


   Wendy R. Sherman, “How We Got the Iran Deal: And Why We’ll Miss It,” *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 2018): 186-197.


**FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

15. Thursday, March 14 – NUCLEAR REVERSAL


16. Tuesday, March 19 – SPRING BREAK [NO CLASS]

17. Thursday, March 21 – SPRING BREAK [NO CLASS]
18. Tuesday, March 26 – U.S. NONPROLIFERATION POLICY


19. Thursday, March 28 – COUNTERPROLIFERATION STRIKES


20. Tuesday, April 2 – NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS


21. Thursday, April 4 – NUCLEAR TABOO, PART 1


22. Tuesday, April 9 – NUCLEAR TABOO, PART 2


23. Thursday, April 11 – NUCLEAR TABOO AND PUBLIC OPINION

Abigail S. Post and Todd S. Sechser, “Norms, Public Opinion, and the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” working paper, May 2017,

24. Tuesday, April 16 – THE OPTIMISM-PESSIMISM DEBATE, PART 1


25. Thursday, April 18 – THE OPTIMISM-PESSIMISM DEBATE, PART 2 & DISARMAMENT


SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS

26. Tuesday, April 23 – CBRN TERRORISM?


27. Thursday, April 25 – CHINA AND NUCLEAR BELIEFS


28. Tuesday, April 30 – INDIA-PAKISTAN, PART 1


29. Thursday, May 2 – INDIA-PAKISTAN, PART 2


30. Tuesday, May 7 – HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH? U.S. COLD WAR DEBATES


OPTIONAL REVISED PAPER DUE
SHORT PAPERS

Each paper will be assessed in four categories, totaling 30 points:

*Argument:* Was the argument clear? Was it falsifiable? Was it convincing? Were alternatives considered and rebutted adequately? (10 points)

*Evidence:* Did you offer evidence that buttressed the case? Did the evidence show thorough engagement with assigned readings? If additional research was done, was the evidence commonplace or did it show originality in research? (10 points)

*Organization:* Did the structure of your paper strengthen or distract from your argument? (5 points)

*Style:* Was the writing clear? Was it free from jargon and clichés? Were there typos, spelling errors, grammatical errors, or word choice difficulties? (5 points)

**Topic 1: The danger of nuclear proliferation to Iran [Due March 12]**

Assess the following argument, offering theory and evidence to support your assessment:

“The dangers of an Iran that acquires a nuclear weapon are sufficiently grave that the United States should disarm Iran by force if it cannot deter Iranian acquisition by other means.”

**Topic 2: The wisdom of global nuclear disarmament [Due April 18]**

Assess the following statement, offering theory and evidence to support your assessment:

“The world would be safer if all countries eliminated their nuclear stockpiles.”
Participation Grading Rubric

Often students may believe that being physically present is sufficient to obtain a good participation grade. Or that frequent absences can be compensated for by active participation when present. To avoid misperceptions, I have broken the participation grade down into three components.

Engagement with the Reading: 8%
When the student speaks, they show that they have read the reading and spent effort trying to understand the major arguments and supporting evidence.
   0/8% - Student does not demonstrate in any way having read the reading on most days.
   2/8% - Student demonstrates familiarity with reading topic, but not arguments or evidence, on most days.
   4/8% - Student demonstrates knowledge of some of the readings, some days, but not routinely.
   6/8% - Student routinely demonstrates knowledge of the readings, their arguments, and evidence, but occasionally misunderstands core elements.
   8/8% - Students demonstrate mastery of the reading, and only rarely misunderstands core elements.

Active Participation: 8%
Classrooms depend on the contribution of many students. It is better for students to contribute even if in so doing they demonstrate that they are struggling with a concept or idea, because that can help the instructor know what to clarify. Additionally, peers may benefit from knowing other students are also having difficulty. In other words, participation is valuable even if students are unsure. Additionally, the course will have components, such as the current events section as well as general discussions of problems in international security, where there may be no “right” answer, and participation helps those portions of the course. Finally, there will periodically be group work which is much improved if all members of the group are actively contributing.
   0/8% - Student rarely participates.
   2/8% - Student occasionally participates.
   6/8% - Student routinely participates.
   8/8% - Student almost always participates.

Physical Presence: 4%
Students sometimes believe regular attendance without engagement with the reading or active participation is sufficient to earn an adequate overall participation grade. It is not. But it is better, all things being equal, for students to be present, so the instructor can structure course material so that it works in a cumulative manner, and also to build a community in the classroom where individuals are more comfortable participating.
   0/4% - Student is routinely absent.
   2/4% - Student is frequently absent.
   4/4% - Student is rarely absent.

Note: The best grade a student can get in the course overall if they only show up is a B even if they get perfect grades on all written material.