

**RPOS 479Z/RPOS 599/RINT 599**Instructor: Christopher Clary ([cclary@albany.edu](mailto: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](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](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

Lynn Eden, *Whole World on Fire: Organizations, Knowledge, and Nuclear Weapons Devastation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), 15-36.

Eric Schlosser, *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 35-55.

## 3. Thursday, January 31 – RADIOLOGICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS

Kishore Kuchibhotla and Matthew McKinzie, “Nuclear Terrorism and Nuclear Accidents in South Asia,” in Michael Krepon and Ziad Haider, eds., *Reducing Nuclear Dangers in South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, February 2004), 17-44.

## 4. Tuesday, February 5 – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS

Jeanne Guillemin, *Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 20-39.

Jeanne Guillemin, *American Anthrax: Fear, Crime, and the Investigation of the Nation’s Deadliest Bioterror Attack* (New York: Times Books, 2011), 16-48.

## 5. Thursday, February 7 – CHEMICAL WEAPONS EFFECTS

Amy E. Smithson, “Rethinking the Lessons of Tokyo,” in *Ataxia: The Chemical and Biological Terrorism Threat and the U.S. Response*, ed. Amy E. Smithson and Leslie-Anne Levy (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2000), 71-111.

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

Scott Sagan. 1996/1997. “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb.” *International Security* 21(3): 54-86.

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

Richard Price. 1995. “A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo.” *International Organization* 49(1): 73-103.

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

Gregory Koblenz. 2004. “Pathogens as Weapons: The International Security Implications of Biological Warfare.” *International Security* 28(3): 84-122.

## 9. Thursday, February 21 – PROLIFERATION NETWORKS

David Albright and Corey Hinderstein. 2005. “Unraveling the A. Q. Khan and Future Proliferation Networks.” *The Washington Quarterly* 28(Spring): 111–128.

Sheena Chestnut. 2007. “Illicit Activity and Proliferation: North Korean Smuggling Networks.” *International Security* 32(1): 80-111.

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

Nicholas Miller and Vipin Narang, “North Korea Defied the Theoretical Odds: What Can We Learn from its Successful Nuclearization?” *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 2 (2018): 58-74.

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

Andrei Lankov, “Why the United States Will Have to Accept a Nuclear North Korea,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 3 (2009): 251-264.

Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang, “North Korea’s Nuclear Program Isn’t Going Anywhere,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 13, 2018.

12. Tuesday, March 5 – NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND COERCION

Todd Sechser and Matthew Furlmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-61.

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

Mark S. Bell, “Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (2015): 87-119.

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.

Colin H. Kahl, “Not Time to Attack Iran: Why War Should Be a Last Resort,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March/April 2012): 166-173.

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.

Barry Posen, “We Can Live with a Nuclear Iran,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2006.

Ray Takeyh, “John Bolton is Threatening Iran. Good,” *Politico*, January 15, 2019.

<b>FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS</b>
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15. Thursday, March 14 – NUCLEAR REVERSAL

Ariel Levite. 2002/2003. “Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited.” *International Security* 27(3): 59-88.

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

17. Thursday, March 21 – SPRING BREAK [NO CLASS]

## 18. Tuesday, March 26 – U.S. NONPROLIFERATION POLICY

Nicholas L. Miller, “Nuclear Dominos: A Self-Defeating Prophecy?” *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 33-73.

## 19. Thursday, March 28 – COUNTERPROLIFERATION STRIKES

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

## 20. Tuesday, April 2 – NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS

Eric Schlosser, *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 307-334.

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

Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use,” *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 433-468.

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

Nina Tannenwald, “Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo,” *International Security* 29, no. 4 (2005): 5-49.

## 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,  
[http://abigailpost.com/docs/post\\_sechser\\_normsnuclearweapons.pdf](http://abigailpost.com/docs/post_sechser_normsnuclearweapons.pdf).

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

Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 3-81.

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

Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 82-134, 215-228.

George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007.

Thomas Schelling, “A World Without Nuclear Weapons?” *Daedalus* 138, No. 4 (2009): 124-129.

**SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

26. Tuesday, April 23 – CBRN TERRORISM?

Gregory D. Koblentz, “Predicting Peril or the Peril of Prediction? Assessing the Risk of CBRN Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 501-520.

27. Thursday, April 25 – CHINA AND NUCLEAR BELIEFS

Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel, “China’s Search for Assured Retaliation,” *International Security* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 48-87.

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

S. Paul Kapur, “India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe,” *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 127-152.

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

Sumit Ganguly, “Nuclear Stability in South Asia,” *International Security* 33, no. 2 (2008): 45-70.

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

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

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

**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.